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VOL. XVII

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VOLUME XVII

CONTAINING

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CONTENTS.

Sermons on Several Texts of Scripture, Part I.— Continued.

Sermons upon Mark x, 17-27 — Continued.

Sermon VIII. "And take up the cross," &c.,

IX. " And he was sad at that saying," &c.,

X. " And Jesus looked round about," &c.,

XI. \*'And the disciples were astonished at his

words," &c.,

XII. " It is easier for a camel to go through the eye

of a needle," &c., .

XIII. " And they were astonished out of measure,

&c., ....

XIV. " And Jesus, looking upon them, saith," &c.,

XV. " With God all things are possible," .

SERMONS UPON 2 Thessalonians i. 3—

Sermon I, " We are bound to thank God always," &c.,

11. " We are bound to thank God always," &c.,

III. " Your faith groweth exceedingly," &c.,

IV. " Your faith groweth exceedingly," &c.,

V. " Your faith groweth exceedingly," &c.,

Sermon upon Matthew viii. 5-10,

Sermon upon Matthew xv. 21-28,

Sermon upon John viii. 5Q, .

Sermon upon Romans iv. 18-21, .

3

13

24

36

48

59

72

82

95

105

117

12b

135

146

155

167

179

VI CONTENTS.

PAGE

Sermons upon Mark iii. 5 —

Sermon I. "And Jesus looked round about on them with

anger, being grieved for the hardness of

their hearts," . . . . 191

II. " And Jesus looked round about on them with

anger," &c., . . . ,199

III. " And Jesus looked round about on them with

anger," &c., . . . .209

Sermons upon Exodus iv. 21 —

Sermon I. " I wiU harden his heart, that he shall not let

my people go," &c., . . .221

II. " I will harden his heart," &c., . . . 231

Sermon upon Genesis iii. 15, . . . . . 241

Sermons upon Genesis xxiv. 63 —

Sermon I. " And Isaac went out to meditate in the field

at the eventide," .... 263

II. " And Isaac went out to meditate," «fcc., . 274

III. " And Isaac went out to meditate," &c., . 281

IV. " And Isaac went out to meditate," &c., . 288

V. " And Isaac went out to meditate," &c., . 298

VI. " And Isaac went out to meditate," &c., . 306

VII. " And Isaac went out to meditate," &c., . 314

VIII. " And Isaac went out to meditate," &c., . 323

IX. " And Isaac went out to meditate," &c., . 331

X. " And Isaac went out to meditate," &c., • 339

Sermons on Several Texts of Scripture, Part II. —

Epistle Dedicatory, ..... 351

Sermons upon Luke xvi. 30, 31 —

Sermon I. " And he said, Nay, father Abraham : but if

one went unto them from the dead," (fee, . 353

II. " And he said, Nay, father Abraham," &c., . 363

Sermon upon Hebrews xiii. 20, 21, . . . . 373

Sermon Preached on a Day of Public Thanksgiving, . 383

CONTENTS. vii

PAOE

Sermon UPON Luke xxii. 31, 32, . .... 395

Sermon ui-on Hebrews 19,. . , . . 407

Sermons upon Acts xxiv. 14-16 —

Sermon I " Believing all things -which are written in the

law and the prophets," &c., . . 419

II. " Believing all things which are written," &c., 428

Sermon upon Zechariah xiv. 20, 21, . . . . 441

Sermon upon John iii. U, 15, . . . . . 453

Sermons upon 1 Thessalonians v. 16 —

Sermon I. " Eejoice evermore," . , , , 469

11. " Rejoice evermore," .... 479

Sermon upon 1 Thessalonians v. 17, . . . . 491

SERMONS

SEYEEAL TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE.

VOL. xvri.

SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27.

SEKMON VIII.

And take up the cross. — Maek x. 21.

DocT. 3. All those that follow Christ should prepare their shoulders

for the cross.

Here I shall show — (l.)What it is to take up the cross ; (2.) The

reasons why they must so do.

I. What it is to take up the cross.

1. Negatively.

[1.] Not to devise a voluntary affliction to ourselves ; as Baal's

priests gashed themselves : 1 Kings xviii. 28, ' They cried aloud, and

cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances, till their

blood gushed out upon them ; ' and the pharisees had their self-dis-

ciplines. Christ is a lover of human nature, and he hath put no such

severe penance upon us. This is to make the cross, not to take it up.

Origen, that was too allegorical in plain texts, was too literal when he

castrated himself upon that text. Mat. xix, 12, 'There be eunuchs

which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake.'

Christ only intended power over our natural affections.

[2.] Not to draw sufferings upon ourselves by our own rashness and

folly : James i. 2, ' My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into

divers temptations.' He saith, when ye ' fall into them/ not when ye

draw them upon yourself. It was Tertullian's error to say that afflic-

tions are to be sought and desired. Man is never satisfied with his

present condition ; sometimes we question God's love when we have

no afflictions, and anon when we have nothing but afflictions. In all

these things we must refer ourselves to God's pleasure, not desire

troubles, but bear them and improve them when he layeth them on us.

Christ hath taught us to pray, ' Lead us not into temptation ; ' it is but

a fond presumption to cast ourselves upon it. Philastrius and Theodoret

speak of some that would compel men to kill them out of an affectation

of martyrdom ; this was a mad ambition, not a true zeal. And no less

fond are they that seek out crosses and troubles rather than wait for

them, or by their own violence and miscarriage draw a just hatred upon

themselves. Christ would not that for his sake we should run head-

4 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeK. VIII.

long into dangers, and without necessity ; there is a mediaui between

faintness and rashness. Christ himself did not take up the cross till

it was laid upon him. If a man set fire to his own house, he is liable

to the law ; if it be fired by accident he is pitied and relieved. There-

fore we are not to seek the cross, or make it, but bear it, and take it

up ; not to fill the cup ourselves, but to drink it off when God puts it

into our hands to take it up ; when we cannot avoid it without sin, or

a breach upon our consciences, we are not to shift then, or avoid it by

unlawful means.

2. Positively. To bear it patiently and willingly when we cannot

avoid it without sin. When we are brought into a necessity of either

suffering or sinning, in such cases there must be a cheerful, free,

voluntary submission of ourselves to suffer the whole will of God.

To take up the cross implieth — (1.) Faithfulness and integrity without

shifting ; (2.) Patience and submission without murmuring ; (3.) Joy

and cheerfulness without fainting.

[1.] Faithfulness and integrity without shifting. Many distinguish

themselves out of their duty, and when God calleth them to suffering

put a fallacy upon their souls : Gal. vi. 12, 'As many as desire to make

a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised, only lest

they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.' They cannot

live without honour, and ease, and plenty, and therefore turn and wind

themselves to shift the cross. Our Lord Jesus offered himself: Ps.

xl. 7, 8, ' Then said I, Lo, I come ; in the volume of the book it is

written of me, I delight to do thy will, my God, yea, thy law is within

my heart.' So should we resign ourselves when the will of God is so,

and give up the comforts of our lives when we can hold them no longer,

and be glad we have something of value to esteem as nothing for Christ.

The apostle speaks of some ' who are enemies of the cross of Christ,

whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind

earthly things,' Phil. iii. 18, 19. Multurri interest inter iheologum

glorice et iheologum crucis. Men that have no love to God, but only

serve their fleshly appetites, and look no higher than riches, and

honours, and pleasures, and applause, will never be faithful to Christ.

There are a sort of men that study to save themselves, not from sin, but

from danger, and accordingly accommodate themselves to every interest.

As the men of- Keilah dealt with David, they entertained him for a

while, but when Saul pursued him, they resolved to betray him, they

would come into no danger and trouble for him ; so they deal with

religion.

[2.] Patience and submission without murmuring. We show our

obedience to God in suffering his will, as well as doing his will. He

is sovereign in his acts of providence as well as in his laws. And this

we must do without murmuring or repining against God, as if he did

us wrong, or did deal hardly with us : Isa. xxx. 15, 'In quietness and

confidence shall be your strength ; ' that is, in faith and patience,

humbly submitting to God's will, and depending on his favour and

gracious protection. There must be a submissive attendance upon

God : Ps. Ixii. 1, ' Truly my soul waiteth upon God ; from him cometh my

. salvation ; ' Ps. xxxix. 9, ' I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because

thou didst it;' not uttering impatient words; God's will silenceth all.

VeR. 21.] SERMONS UPOX MARK X. 17-27. 5

[3.] Cheerful behaviour under the cross : Kom. v. 3, ' And not only

so, but we glory in tribulation also ; ' James i 2, ' My brethren, count

it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.' Afflictions to God's

people do not only minister occasion of patience, but great joy : 2 Cor.

vii. 4, 'I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation,' VTrepTrept aaeuofiac

TTj %apa ; I overflow with joy. A dejected spirit doth not behave

itself answerably to its principles, privileges, and. hope.«. Are you at

peace with God, and have you communion with him at every turn ?

And have you hopes of glory, and are you so troubled when you are a

little cut short in your temporal comforts ? A christian should be at

an indifferency, to rejoice as if he rejoiced not, and mourn as if lie

mourned not. Dejection of spirit argueth too great addictedness to

worldly comforts, and love of ease and flesh-pleasing, and. ingratitude

for all the spiritual good we have received. Shall God lay in such

great comforts, and after such great receivings do you take it ill to be

put to a little expense ? Job xv. 11, ' Are the consolations of God

small with thee ? ' If you had a due sense of the world to come, you

would be glad to keep your conscience, though you lose your coat : Heb.

X. 34, ' Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in your-

selves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance,' Eom.

viii. 18, ' For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not

worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.'

Do you look for a glory to be revealed in you ? Then look upon all

the sufferings of this life as a feather put into the scales against a talent.

We are to have a sense of our condition, yet in regard of the honour

done to us to bear a part of Christ's cross, and in regard of the com-

fort and happiness provided for us we should be cheerful, that it may

not be known to be an unwilling patience, and. extorted by force.

There is one expression more : Luke ix. 23, ' Let him take up his cross

daily.' How daily ? There are fair days as well as foul days, and the

face of heaven doth not always look sad and lowering. How then are

we to take up the cross daily ? I answer —

(1.) It notes a daily expectation of it ; the first day that we begin to

be christians, we must reckon on the cross : Mat. xvi. 24, ' If any man

will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and

follow me.' These words are the christian's indenture, and every one

must seal to this before he can call Christ master. As porters stand in

a street waiting for a burden for them to carry, so must a christian be

ready and prepared to meet with any hardship which God may lay out

for him in his christian course ; or as the Israelites ate the first pass-

over 'with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff

in their hand,' Exod. xii. 11, as ready for a journey, so should a

christian be ready to go forth at God's call : Acts xxi. 13, iroifiax;,

e^&), ' I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for

the name of the Lord Jesus.' Evils familiarised are less burdensome;

by renewing our daily resolution the evil is the less when it cometh.

(2.) The frequency of our conflicts, as if every day there were some

exercise for our faith and patience. We are not to prescribe to God

how long or how much affliction he shall exercise us with. No; though

it were all the days of our lives, we must be content ; it is but a

moment to eternity. We must take up our cross as often as it lieth in

6 SERMONS UPON MARK X, 17-27. [SeR. YIIL

our way, and we cannot baulk it without sin : Gen. xlvii. 9, ' Few and

evil have the days of the years of my life been.' Man is born to

trouble. The world is a valley of tears, not the mount of the Lord,

where is fulness of joy, If there were no cross, we should not be in

tune and consort with the rest of the world, for here all the creatures

are a-o^roaninfi:.

(3.) The word ' daily' showeth that private and personal calamities

are a part of the cross, as well as the afflictions of the gospel, and for

the profession of the name of Christ. Afflictions are either for God or

from God. Sickness and death of friends and loss of estate by an

immediate providence are a part of our cross. Tiiere is an enduring

persecution for the name of Christ, and an enduring affliction at the

will of Christ. Ordinary crosses do not exclude the comforts of Chris-

tianity ; these occasion experience of God and trial of grace, and are a

l)art of God's discipline for the mortifying of sin, and are happy oppor-

tunities to discover more of God and of grace to us. Yea, there is

more reason for submission in these, because God taketh us into his

own hands. A man that stormeth when a bucket of water is cast

upon him, is patient when he is wet with the rain that cometh from

heaven.

II. The reasons why those that follow Christ should prepare their

shoulders for the cross.

1. That we may be conformed to our head. He had a bitter cup

tempered for him by his Father's hand: John xviii. 11, 'The cup that

my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ? ' and we must pledge,

liim. Jesus Christ was 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,'

Isa. liii. 3, and there would be a strange disproportion between head

and members if we should altogether live in delicacy, ease, and plea-

.sures. The bitter cup goeth by course and round, first to Christ, then

10 his apostles, and it goeth from hand to hand ever since. The

jipostle speaks of vareprj^aTa tcov dXt^ecou x^Larov, Col. i. 24, 'that

which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.' There is Christ personal

and Christ mystical. Christ personal, as he is complete in himself, so

his sufferings are complete ; but the sufferings of Christ mystical are

not perfect until every member have their own alloted share and por-

1 ion. Indeed our sufferings are but the drops upon the brim of the cup ;

he drank up the dregs. The great wave of affliction did first beat

upon him, and being thereby broken, some small sprinklings of it do

light upon us ; we bear the hinder part of the cross of Christ. It is

but reason that those that will partake with Christ in his kingdom

should be partakers with him in his sorrows, and that the soldiers

should follow ' the captain of their salvation,' Heb. ii. 10, and fare as

he fared : John xv. 20, ' Kemember the word that I said unto you,

The servant is not greater than the Lord ; if they have persecuted me,

they will also persecute you.' We cannot in reason expect better

entertainment than he found in the world. If you had an high esteem

of Christ, and a low esteem of yourselves, you would easily consent to

submit to the will of God herein. It is an unseemly daintiness to be

nice and tender of carrying the cross after Jesus Christ, as if we were

better than he. Many christians will seem to express much devotion

to a crucifix, or those chips of wood which importers cry up for pieces

YeR. 21.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 7

of the cross of Christ ; but here is true respect to the cross of Christ,

to be willing for Christ's sake to bear afflictions with patience and

humble submission. The apostle counted all things but dross and

dung: Phil. iii. 10, ' That I may know him, and the power of his resur-

rection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable

to his death.' There is a great deal of sweetness and spiritual comfort

in suffering after, for, and with Christ; we should count all things

dung and dross to gain this experience. This should be comfort

enough to a gracious heart, that thereby he is made more like his Lord

and master.

2. Because of the world's hatred: John xv. 19, 'If ye were of the

world, the world would love its own ; but because ye are not of the

world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world

hateth you.' A thorough christian will be sure to meet with opposi-

tion. We are told, 2 Tim. iii. 12, ' Yea, and all that will live godly

in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.' If a man will be lukewarm,

not caring how things go, he may find friendship with the world ; but

he that hath any zeal and conscience, and would be faithful, the world

will hate him as an object reviving guilt : 1 John iii. 12, ' Not as Cain,

who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother ; and wherefore slew

he him ? because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.'

The spiritual and carnal seed cannot agree ; Gal. iv, 29, ' For as then

he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the

spirit, so it is now.'

3. It is needful, in order to our following Christ, that our pride and

carnal affections should be broken by the cross : 1 Peter i. 6, ' Now for

a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.'

There is a need of the cross to reclaim us from our wanderings, to cut

off the provisions and fuel of our lusts, to make us mindful of heavenly

things, and that we may retreat to our great privileges, and to humble

us for sin, to stir us up to prayer, and to wean us from the world.

Trihulatio tarn Qiobis necessaria est quam ipsa vita, immo magis

necessaria, et multo utilior quam iotius mundi opes et dignitates — •

Affliction is as necessary to us as life itself, yea, more necessary arid

profitable than all the wealth and honours of the world ; and therefore,

being so necessary and profitable for us, we should be willing to take

up the cross.

Use 1. Is of information. It informeth us —

1. With what thoughts we should take up the stricter profession of

Christianity, namely, with expectations of the cross. We cannot but

expect great inconveniences and troubles in Christ's service, therefore

let us not flatter ourselves. Many think they may be good christians,

and yet live a life of ease and peace, free from troubles and afflictions ;

this is all one as if a soldier, going to the wars, should promise himself

peace and continual truce with the enemy, or as if a mariner, committing

himself to the sea for a long voyage, should promise himself nothing

but fair weather and a calm season, without waves and storms ; so

irrational it is for a christian to promise himself a life of ease and rest

here upon earth.

2. That a christian had need be a mortified and resolute man.

[1.] A mortified weaned man : ' That which is lame is soon turned

8 SEKMONS UPON MARK X, 17-27. [SeR. VIII.

out of the way,' Heb. xii. 13. If we have any weak part in our souls,

there the assault will be most strong and fierce. A garrison that

looketh to be besieged takes care to fortify the weak places, and where

there is any suspicion of entrance ; so should a christian mortify every

•corrupt inclination lest it betray him, be it love of honour, pleasure, or

profit.

[2.] He had need be a resolved man : ' His feet shod with the pre-

paration of the gospel of peace,' Eph. vi. 15 ; or else in hard ways he

will soon founder and halt. That eToi/Maaia, that preparation is a

resolved mind to go through thick and thin, and to follow Christ in all

conditions. Well, then, it is no easy matter to be a christian indeed.

Nature in the general is against bearing the cross. Christ himself,

his human nature recoiled and shunned it without sin ; and to us it is

more grievous to suffer : Heb. xii. 11, 'No affliction for the present

seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.' And besides, lusts ,if they be not

purged out, will tempt us to stumble, and we need to be armed with

great resolution, or else after we have launched out into the deep with

Christ, we shall be ready to run ashore again. Now most christians

are not mortified, and so they trip up their own heels. Most christians

are not resolute, and do but take up religion as a walk for recreation,

not as a journey, so as to be prepared for all weathers.

[3.] What fools they are that take up religion upon a carnal design

of ease and plenty in the world : they quite mistake it. There are in-

conveniences that attend religion in peaceable times, but the profes-

sion will afterwards engage us in the greater troubles ; and therefore

men do but make way for the shame of a change, and other incon-

veniences to themselves, that hope for temporal commodity by the pro-

fession of the gospel. The great drift of the gospel is to draw us off

from the comfort of this Avorld to the concernments of a better, and

to bring us to follow a naked Christ upon unseen encouragements;

therefore they that have temporal things in their eye quite change the

nature of the gospel, and make Christ another Christ.

[4.] That the course which Christ taketh to draw in proselytes is

quite different from that of Satan and the world. Satan showeth us

the bait and hideth the hook, but Christ telleth us the worst at first.

The world useth to invite followers with promises of honours and

riches, and Christ telleth us not of the crown, but the cross. Why so?

Partly to discourage hypocrites, who will come and cheapen and taste,

but will not buy. Christ will not deceive them, but have them count

the charges. Partly to forearm his people, that they account afilictions

will come, and prepare accordingly. We entered upon the ways of

godliness on these terms, to be willing to suffer afilictions when the

Lord seeth fit, and therefore we should arm ourselves with a mind to

endure them, whether they come or no. God never intended Isaac

should be sacrificed, yet he will have Abraham lay the knife to his

throat. Partly because sorrows foreseen leave not so sad an impression

upon the spirit, the evil is more familiarised before it cometh : Job iii.

25, ' For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that

which I Avas afraid of is come unto me.' When we suffer our fears to

prophesy, and do expect evils, they smart less ; prcecogitati mali mollis

ictus ; but when they come unlooked-for, it is the more burdensome.

VeR. 21.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27, 9

He saith his lesson best that often conned it over. Partly because it

allayeth the offence -when we see nothing befalleth us but what we were

warned of beforehand : John xvi. 1 , ' These things have I spoken to

you, that you should- not be offended ; ' and ver. 4, ' But these things

have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember

that I told you of them.' The scripture speaketh nothing at random ;

we pretend to believe them when they are read, and yet we complain

when they are fulfilled. For all these reasons it is necessary that those

that will be Christ's disciples must be forewarned in peaceable times

of approaching troubles, and the rather because we are so apt still to

promise great things to ourselves.

Use 2. Is of reproof of several sorts.

1. Of those that suffer per force, by compulsion and constraint, not

willingly. It is not enough to bear the cross, but we must take it.

It is said of the three children, that ' they yielded their bodies that

they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God/ Dan.

iii 28 ; that is, they cheerfully suffered themselves to be cast into the

furnace, rather than worship any but the true God. Many suffer, but

it is unwillingly and against stomach, with repining and impatience

under the hand of God, like refractory oxen, that draw back, and are

loath to submit then- necks to the yoke, especially such as have not

been acquainted with sufferings. Patience per force is no true patience,

little better than the patience of the devils and damned in hell, who

suffer misery and torment against their wills, being forced to it. Rebel-

lion and want of subjection is the very curse of crosses ; it maketh the

burden heavier than otherwise it would be, and causeth God to redouble

his strokes, as a stubborn child under the rod hath the more blows.

2. Those that murmur not against the cross in general, but such a

cross ; if it were any other they could bear it. Christ saith, ' Take up

the cross,' indefinitely, whatever God is pleased to lay on us ; we must

not be our own carvers, but stand to God's allowance. The patient is

not to choose his own physic ; God knows what is best for us. Men

under their troubles wish that God would afflict them in another kind,

lay any trouble upon them rather than that which is laid, and think

they could bear it better. The poor man wishes any other cross but

poverty, the sick man he could bear poverty better than the pain of

sickness. He that hath a long and lingering sickness wisheth for a

sharp fit so it might be short ; and, on the contrary, another feeling a

sharp and violent sickness, could wish for a longer, so it were less

painful. Thus we are apt to dislike our cross, which God layeth on us

for the present. But this is disobedience to God and folly too, for if

God should leave us to ourselves to choose our own crosses, we should

choose worse for ourselves than the Lord doth, that affliction which is

hurtful and dangerous for us. The Lord knows what is best for us and

in what vein to strike us.

3. Those that desert their duty and their station, as being discouraged

by the cross ; these are more culpable than the former : Ps. cxxv. 5,

' As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead

them forth with the workers of iniquity.' He had been speaking of

' the rod of the wicked resting on the lot of the righteous,' ver. 3 ; and

therefore by them ' that turn aside ' he meaneth such as dare not trust

10 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27, [SeR. VIII.

God, nor adhere to the comfort of the promises ; these are in the same

rank with open enemies : Eev. xxi. 8, ' The fearful and unbelieving '

are joined together.

4. Those that seek to make their worldly advantage and the profes-

sion of the gospel agree further than they ever will ; and when they

cannot frame the world and their conveniences to the gospel, they will

fashion a gospel to the world and their carnal courses in it. It is a

pity such had not been of the Lord's counsel, when he first contrived

and preached the gospel, that they might have helped him to some

discreet and mild course, that would have served the turn for heaven

and earth; but do what ye can, 'the way is narrow that leadeth to

life,' Mat. vii. 14 ; ' Take my yoke upon you, &c., and ye shall find rest

unto your souls,' Mat. xi. 29.

5. Those that suffer, but it is for their evil-doing ; these take not

up the cross of Christ, but the cross of the thieves. Or if a man put

himself upon needless danger, he taketh not up Chi-ist's cross, but his

own, and so hath his amends in his own hands. Afflictions so coming

may be sanctified by repentance, good in their use, though not in their

cause. When we suffer for our faults, we ought to bear it patiently,

but we cannot suffer so cheerfully : 1 Peter iv. 15, ' But let none of

you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-

body in other men's matters.'

Use 3. To press us to take up the cross, and to take heed of grudging

and heartless discouragement. Now, that you may so take up the cross,

see the hand and counsel of God in it. So it was as to Christ's cross :

Acts ii. 23, ' Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-

Ivuowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified

and slain ;' John xviii. 11, ' The cup which my Father hath given me,'

&c. ; and so as to the christian's cross : 1 Thes. iii. 3, ' That no man

should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we are

appointed thereunto.' All things must obey God's appointment, and

every one must yield up himself to the disposal of God. And we have

Christ's example, who took up his cross for us, and doth not call us

but to walk in such ways as he hath trodden before us : 1 Peter ii. 21,

' For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us,

leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.' He hath paved

the way with the blessing of his example, whatever the cross be. Are

we banished our country ? Our Lord Jesus was a stranger upon earth,

and when he was in the cradle he was carried into Egypt. Are you

poor ? You cannot be poorer than Christ, who had not where to rest

his head. Are you constrained to hard fare ? He thought a draught

of water a courtesy: John iv. 7, 'Jesus saith unto her, Give me to

drink ; ' and on the cross they gave him vinegar to drink when he was

athirst. Christ preached in a boat in the midst of the waves. Do but

read the history of Christ's life, and the hardship he endured, and will

you be scandalised at a little suffering ? Are you reproached ? Chri.st

himself was called a devil, accused of blasphemy and sedition, and you

must not think to be better used than he was. Quum Cliristus ipse

C7'ucem et supj^licia passus sit tantum illis preiii accessit, ut 7iemo istis

dignus sit, saith Luther — Since Christ hath endured the cross, there

hath such a value and honour accrued to it thereby, that no man

YeR. 21.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 11

is worthy to have this honour put upon him. We bear it together

with Christ : Eom. viii. 26, ' The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities,'

avvavrLKajx^dveraL ; 1 Cor. x. 13, ' He will with the temptation also

make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' Such a

master may well expect cheerful servants. He will give us peace and

comfort in all our sufferings : John xvi. 33, ' These things I have

spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace : in the world ye

shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the

world ; ' 2. Cor. i. 5, ' For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us. so

our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.' Jacob, when he slept, and

had a heap of stones for his pillow, had then the visions of God ; and

usually when we are taken off from the comforts of the world, then we

have the clearest manifestations of the love of God : Eom. v. 5, ' The

love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is

given unto us.' It is an honour for us to suffer with Christ and for

Christ : Phil. i. 29, ' For unto you it is given in behalf of Ciirist, not

only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.' And all this,

how bitter soever it be for the present, will end well : Acts xiv. 22,

' We must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God.'

After this howling wilderness there will be a Canaan. We have had

our times of good, and is it nothing to pass over so much of our time

in peace and comfort ? Job ii. 10, ' Shall we receive good at the

hands of God, and shall we not receive evil ? '

Use 4. If all that enter themselves disciples of Christ must prepare

for the cross, then are we indeed prepared for it ? You will think all

this needeth not in times of peace, when religion is under the covert

and protection of the laws, and we are not called to the afflictions of

the gospel, yet certainly such questions as these are not to be entertained

coldly and carelessly. Have you prepared your shoulders for the cross

of Christ ? It is necessary to put it to you —

1. Because of private crosses, which are incident to all, such as loss

of goods and relations, pains of body, sickness, reproach, contempt, and

the like. There is none get out of the world without some exercises :

1 Peter v. 9, ' Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in

your brethren that are in the world ; ' Heb. vi. 12, ' That ye be not

slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit

the promises.' All the heirs of salvation have their conflicts before

tliey come to enjoy their hopes. The earth is a middle place between

heaven and hell, and partaker of both ; it is only evil that is in hell

and only good that is in heaven ; but here our state is mixed, our

afflictions are tempered with some comforts, and our comforts seasoned

with some afflictions. Earth must be earth, and heaven must be heaven ;

here we must expect our trials : Job ii. 10, ' Shall we receive good at

the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil ? ' therefore we

need to be provided ; there is good that need to be tried, and bad that

need to be purged out.

2. Because we should be always ready to encounter the greatest

difflculties. Though we do not always lie under tribulations and per-

secutions, yet we should be always prepared, praparatione animi, as

Joseph prepared for the years of scarcity in the years of plenty. The

wise virgins had not only oil in their lamps, but oil in their vessels ;

12 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. VIII.

we should not only have grace for present use, but against future temp-

tations. Now have yon indeed this preparation of heart ? And because

a man may crack and vaunt it before the temptation cometh, let us

consider who hath this preparation of heart, so as cheerfully, willingly,

and patiently to bear the cross, and who hath it not.

[1.] He that is not strict and holy in a time of peace will not be

cheerful in a time of trouble: Acts ix. 31, 'Then had the churches

rest, &c. ; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of

the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.' When we are not called to passive

obedience and suffering, our active obedience should be more cheerfully

performed. Now where is it so ? Our fathers suffered more willingly

for Christ than we speak for him ; they were not ashamed to die for a

crucified Jesus, they endured the fire better than we can a frown or

scoff.

[2.] He that is not mortified to the world, but loveth a flesh-pleasing

life, is but ripening himself for apostasy : James v. 5, ' Ye adulterers

and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity

with God ? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the

enemy of God.' A fond and delicate person, that hath a value for

worldly contentments, will be grieved when he cometh to part with

them ; he that is corrupted with prosperity, will be dejected with adver-

sity ; but no man is prepared but he that is crucified to the world by

the cross of Christ, that liveth in a holy weanedness in the midst of

his present enjo3'ments: Gal. vi. 14, 'But God forbid that I should

glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world

is crucified to me, and I unto the world.'

[3.] He that is not abounding in charity, and willing to part with

temporal things in a way of free distribution, will be loath to part with

them by constraint, and by way of sacrifice and voluntary surrender to

God, when he calls for them. I offer this, because the churches that

were free from persecution are still charged with the duty of charity ;

and it is a general precept, Gal. vi. 10, ' As we have therefore oppor-

tunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of

the household of faith ; ' because he that will not part with his super-

fluities willingly to God, will never part with his substance and the

main of his estate with rejoicing, when it is made a prey to the violence

of men. It is irrational to think that he that grudgeth at a command

that requires him to part only with a little of his temporal conveni-

ences, will not storm at the violence when all is taken away : James

V. 1, ' Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that

shall come upon you,' There are their howling times, when that

wealth which they sat abrood upon is taken away in an instant.

[4.] He that cannot digest lighter afflictions, how will he bear

greater ? Jer. xii. 5, 'If thou hast run with the footmen, and they

have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses ? and if

in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then

how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan ? ' The prophet was all

in a pet because the men of his town and neighbourhood had conspired

against him, and were very troublesome to him. God tells him, If thou

canst not bear this, how wilt thou do when thou art exposed to greater

trials ? There are private persecutions, therefore father and mother

VeR. 22.] SEUMOXS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 13

are put into the catalogue of things to be renounced by us when we

take to Christ ; Luke xiv. 26, ' If any man come to me, and hate not

his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters,

yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' If a frown and

disgrace, and loss of preferment, be so much, how will you endure

rapine, and torture, and all manner of violence and evil ?

[5.] He that begrudgeth a little pains for God, and counts it so

tedious to converse with him a little while in duties of holiness, and

reckons all labour too much, and is loath to ' strive to enter in at the

strait gate,' Luke xiii. 24, how will he endure torments, and expose the

body to all kind of sufferings ? Necesse est, ut ei lioneshim vile sit, cui

coi'pus camm est — He that is so tender of his ease, so delicate that

he cannot endure the labours of the gospel, how will he bear the afflic-

tions of the gospel ? If it be irksome to put the body to a little trouble

in prayer or meditating, or other holy duties, how will he rejoice in the

midst of all tribulations that shall befall him for Christ's sake ? Thus

you see how few are prepared for the cross.

SEKMOJ?' IX.

And Tie was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great

possessions. — Maek x. 22.

We have hitherto seen the young man at his best ; now we shall find

him discovered and laid open in his own colours. It was well that he

came to Christ with such reverence and seriousness about such a

■weighty question as ' What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life ? '

It was well if he could say truly, ' All these have I kept from my youth.

But now, here is the event and issue of this interlocutory discourse

between him and Christ ; when Christ bid him ' Sell all, and take up

his cross, and follow him,' then ' he went away sad/ &c.

Here observe —

1. How he was affected with Christ's advice, ' He was sad at the

saying, and went" away grieved.

2. The reason of his sorrow, or why he was thus affected, ' For he

had great possessions.'

In the first part we may observe —

[1.] The kind of the affection ; he was not angry, but sorry ; he doth

not fret and fume, but goes away sorrowful.

[2.] Observe the degree of it ; it is expressed here by two things — a

sad heart, and a heavy countenance. The sadness of his countenance

I gather from the word aTv^vu(ja<i iirl rS \o76>, ' He was sad at that

saying." The word properly signifies he lowered at that saying; the

lowering of the heavens is expressed by that word, ' So the sky was red

and lowering,' Mat. xvi. 3, irvppdleL yap a-Tvyvd^cov 6 ovpavo^. Then the

sadness of his heart, aTrPjXdj] Xvirovfievo^, ' He went away grieved.' la

Luke xviii. 23, it is irepiXviro^ iyipero, ' He was very sorrowful.' N"ote,

14 SKItMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. IX.

that he went away, and we hear no more of him ; Hke those, John vi.

66, ' At that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no

more with him.'

Secondly, here is the reason of this, ' For he had great possessions.'

In Luke it is said rjv <yap TrXovato^ a-cjioSpa, ' He was very rich ; ' he had

both KTi]ixaTa possessions, and ')(^pi]/j,aTa, riches too, as appears by the

next verse. And observe, that the bare having is rendered as the

reason, ' He had great possessions,' and therefore he went away sad. It

is hard to have them without lustful affections to them. It may be, if

he had so little as the poor fishermen, or the other disciples whom

Christ called, he would sooner have left all and followed Christ ; but

having so much to lose, it was the more difficult for him to forsake

all : ' He went away, for he had great possessions.

To give you a few brief points —

1. That a man may go very far, and be zealous and forward at first,

yet afterwards cool and fall away.

2. That trials bring men forth to the light, and make them manifest

what they are.

3. A man wedded to the world will renounce Christ and his com-

mands rather than the world whenever it comes to a proof.

4. A carnal worldly man may be very sorrowful when he cannot have

heaven in his own way.

5. The disease of worldlings is very incident to great men, and it is

a very hard matter to keep the heart of such open and free for Christ.

Doct. 1. That a man may go far, and be zealous and forward at first,

and yet cool and fall away at last.

Witness this young man, who comes to Christ to learn of him the

way of life, and that in such an humble and reverent manner, and

makes profession that he hath kept the commandments from his youth ;

and yet when Christ tells him what he must do more, he was troubled,

and falls off. So Judas walked with Christ for a while, but afterwards

proveth a traitor to him : John vi. 70, ' Have not I chosen you twelve,

and one of you is a devil ? ' When others were turning away from

Christ, and were offended at his doctrine, he continues in Christ's com-

pany, and yet a devil for all that. Judas was not carried away with

the stream of the defection ; he kept the bag, and his temptation was

not yet come, yet his heart was not sound. So ' Herod heard John

gladly, and did many things,' yet afterwards put him to death : Mark

vi. 20, ' Simon Magus, he believed, and when he was baptized, he con-

tinued with Philip and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs

which were done,' Acts viii. 13. Here was faith and solemn profes-

sion and fellowship with Philip, and this not feignedly, but out of a

sense and conviction of a power that accompanied his doctrine, and yet

afterwards he discovered that he was but ' in the gall of bitterness and

bond of iniquity,' ver. 23. The reasons of this are —

1. They take up religion upon foreign and extrinsic reasons, and when

those reasons fail, their religion faileth also. As puppets moved hj the

wires to which they are fastened, so they are moved by credit and

esteem and countenance in the world ; they court religion while it hath

a portion for them. Thus we read of some that followed Christ for

the loaves : John vi. 26, ' Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles,

VeR. 22.] SEllMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 15

but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled ; ' and \* ye rejoiced in

his light for a season,' John v. 35. Curiosity and novelty made them

rejoice in his light for a while. Vix queritur Jesus, propter Jesum.

Religion is scarce received in the world for religion's sake. Now

foreign things, as they are accidental to veWgion, 'possunt abesse et adesse,

so must the respect built upon them be casual and accidental, and very

uncertain, even as those reasons vary. Men upon these foreign reasons

may be very zealous for a time, as interest will urge men more than

conscience ; and when it is their interest to follow or promote such

a way, they are vehement sticklers for it. Therefore the difference

between false and sincere professors is not altogether taken from their zeal

and outward diligence ; they may be exceeding zealous and forward

upon the impulsion of false principles who have a base heart lurk-

ing under it, because the motions of lusts disguised with religion

are rapid and earnest, and byends have a powerful influence. Though

lust be served, yet because it is in the way of religion, men's affec-

tions are much aloft, and they may seem to have great fits and zealous

pangs in the service of God, and yet all this comes to nothing.

2. Because they many times rest in externals without internal grace.

This young man for outward conformity went very far. There is no-

thing for external duties that a child of God doth but a hypocrite may

do also ; he may pray, preach, confer, hear the word, though not in a

holy and gracious manner. A painter may paint the external colour of

fire, but not the internal virtue and heat of it, or the limbs, shape, figure,

and colour of a man, but the life cannot be painted, there is no counter-

feiting that ; so many men deceive themselves and others by a show of

religion, and their diligence in external duties, when they are void of

the truth and power of it ; the power of religion cannot be counter-

feited. Now externals will in time be cast off, where there is not the

root to feed them,

3. Because that internal affection which they seem to have to the

ways of God is not rooted and fixed, only a slight tincture, that may

easily be worn off: Luke viii. 13, 'They on the rock are they which,

when they hear, receive the word with joy, and these have no root which

for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.' At first men

have some taste, and seem to feel some sweetness in the word, and that

begets a little affection to it, and that affection begets profession, and

that profession begets external reformation; so far it is good ; but in time

they lose their relish and taste, and then their affection is gone and

dried up, and then their leaf falls, and afterwards run from their pro-

fession into profaneness and a plain distaste of the ways of God.

4. Their corrupt lusts were only restrained, not mortified and

weakened, and so it is but like a sore that is skinned over, and festers

inwardly, and will at length break out again. This is the case of

many : Luke viii. 14, ' That which fell among thorns are they which,

when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches

and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.' Many an

unsound professor seems to cast the world and their old fashions behind

their back, yet their hearts are not wholly weaned from them, nor are

they wholly cast out ; some prevalent lust remains that will make them

turn back to their old vomit again ; so dangerous it is to have Satan

16 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. IX.

only gone out for a while, and not cast out, Luke xi. 24, to have any-

thing wherein to delight besides Christ when we close with him, or to

have those things which we formerly seemed to slight to seem great

and lovely again, and bear bulk in our e3^es. This point is but reductive

to this place, therefore I shall not handle it at large.

Use. It dotli press us unto two things — to search for a sound work,

and to watch against declinings.

1. To search for a true sound work. "We have need to shift and

ransack all the corners of our souls, to see that there be no one reserved

lust as a seed of our revolt and apostasy from Christ. One leak let

alone will ruin the ship, so will one lust the soul : Ps. cxix. 133, ' Order

my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.'

Whilst any one sin remains unbroken, all that we do in conformity

to God will be lost ; and therefore let us search and see, that our love

to the ways of God be founded in a complete resignation to his use and

service, and a renouncing of every fleshly interest, if we would constantly

persevere with Christ. Profession will fail unless there be a good and

an honest heart to bear it out ; and what is that but a resolution to

make this our great business and interest, to get the love of God in

Christ whatever it cost us ? It is not enough to have good offers and

inclinations ; one idol left in the heart will estrange us from God :

Ezek. xiv. 4-6, ' Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his

idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity

before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him

that cometh according to the multitude of his idols ; that I may take

the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged

from me through their idols. Therefore say unto the house of Israel,

Thus saith the Lord God, Eepent and turn yourselves from your idols,

and turn away your face from all your abominations/ And what is

prized besides Christ will be soon prized above Christ ; therefore,

unless the sweetness of his grace makes all the baits of the flesh

unsavoury to us, we cannot be sound.

2. To watch against declinings, for we lose ground every day, as a

thing running down the hill falls lower and lower, if we do not keep up

a constant relish and savour of good things. When you lose your

first love, you will leave your first works : Eev. ii. 4, 5, ' Nevertheless

I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do

thy first works,' We see it is very ordinary for new converts to be

carried on with a great measure of affection and zeal, because of the

newness of the thing, and the edge upon their affections is not yet

l)lunted by change of condition, or multiplicity of business, and the

Lord restrains furious temptations, till they be a little confirmed and

engaged in his way, and he has a deeper sense of comfort. Now take

heed to keep up this, for when this edge is blunted and taken off, a

man loses ground. Therefore the apostle saith, Heb. iii. \_ 6, ' Whose

house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the

hope firm unto the end.' Upon our first acquaintance with Christ

there is a mighty joy of heart, and comfort in the hopes of a pardon

and of eternal life. Oh ! you must keep up this to the end. If you

quite lose your savour, you run into total apostasy ; and if you lose it

VeR. 22.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 17

in part, you grow remiss and lazy. If you have not such delight in

•God, you can read and hear the offers of grace and eternal life without

any considerable joy and thankfulness, you have not that lively sense

you were wont to have ; take heed, you are upon decay.

Doct. 2. That trials bring men forth to the light, and make them

manifest what they are.

Here upon the trial the young man is discovered. Who would but

have thought this young man good till now ? But when he heard Christ's

terms, \* he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved." As lime

seems cold, and to have no heat and warmth in it, till you pour water upon

it, then it burns and smokes, so our corrupt affections lie hid till there be

an occasion to try them. Trials are either extraordinary or ordinary.

Extraordinary, as that of Abraham : Gen. xxii. 1, ' Audit came to pass

after these things that God did tempt Abraham ; ' that is, try him for

his discovery, by the command for sacrificing of his son, his only son,

the son whom he loved, the son of the promise. So this young man,

Christ tries him, \* sell all.' But then God's ordinary trial is in the

course of his providence or by his word. By his providence, either by

affliction : Dan. xi. 35, \* And some of them of understanding shall fall,

to try them ; ' 1 Peter i. 7, ' That the trial of your faith, being much

more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire,

might be found unto praise ; ' or some other occasion offered to dis-

cover either grace or sin, as Joseph was tried by the temptation of his

mistress. Or by his word, which doth search and try our hearts, when

it pursueth them within, and followeth them home to their consciences :

John vi. 60, ' When they heard this, they said, It is a hard saying,

who can hear it ? ' They are offended when it toucheth upon a bosom

sin, pride, sensuality, or covetousness, or unlawful pleasure, they are

tried by it.

Again, trial is either for the discovery of grace or corruption, to

discover the corruption of their hearts or the weakness of their graces.

So God trieth his people, as he tried Hezekiah : 2 Chron. xxxii. 31,

' Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon,

who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land,

•God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.'

So Christ tried his apostles : John vi. 6, ' And this he said to prove

them, for he himself knew what he would do.'

Reasons.

1. It is for good that men should be discovered, the graces of his

people to their comfort, and their weakness that it may be repaired ;

as when a man tries a leaky vessel with an intent to make it more

stanch, and a man that is diseased, by walking and stirring the disease

appears ; it is better it should be discovered that it might be remedied,

than to lie hid in the body till it kill us. The hypocrite is tried that

he may be discovered : Prov. xxvi. 26, ' His wickedness shall be showed

before the whole congregation.' It is a great part of God's providence

to uncase hypocrites. It is for the church's good, lest men get a name

to do religion a mischief; and —

2. It is for the glory of God, that men may appear what they are,

and for the reclaiming of offenders. Many were likely to have grace,

if they were discovered to themselves and knew they had no grace.

VOL. xvn. B

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18 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. IX.

Trials are ordered by God for this end and purpose. God is wise, and

knows in what vein to strike. God tries not to inform himself, but

to discover us to ourselves : Ps. cxxxix. 2, ' Thou understandest my

thoughts afar off'.' God knows not only conclusions and events, but

the first contrivances, though afar off. As a man in the .air may

see a river in the rise, fountain, and course all at once, so God doth

see things altogether, but he tries us, that we may be discovered to

ourselves, and suits the means accordingly.

Use. Well, then, expect trials, and see to it how you behave your-

selves under them.

1, Expect trials. Mat. vii., we read of two builders, the one built

upon the sand, the other on the rock ; when they had built, the tight-

ness of the building was to be tried ; the winds blew, the rain fell, the

waves did swell and arise ; that that was built on the rock stood, that

that was built on the sand fell. Whosoever buildeth a confidence for

lieaveu must look to have his building tried. Count it not strange

we are loath to forecaste and to think of trials. You shall see even

the people of God many times are subject to security when trials are

nearest. When the shejoherd was to be smitten and the sheep scat-

tered, then the disciples were asleep, Mat. xxvi. 40 ; and they were

dreaming of ease and of dividing kingdoms when the cross was at their

heels : Acts i. 6, ' Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the king-

dom to Israel ? \* We promise ourselves perpetual exemption, if we have

but a little breathing time : Ps. xxx. 6, ' In my prosperity I said I

shall never be moved,' We take a carnal pillow, and lie down upon

it, and count it strange when it comes.

2. Be careful how you acquit yourselves in trials. When the hour

of temptation is come upon the earth, then we should be cautious :

Eev. iii, 10, ' Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also

will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all

the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.'' Whatever a man

doth, he will behave himself well when he is upon his trial.

Doct. 3. That a man wedded to the world will renounce Christ and

his commands rather than the world when it comes to a proof.

When two persons walk together, you cannot tell to whom the

servant that follows them belongs, but when they part company then

it is seen ; so when Christ and the world part, then the servant of the

world and the servant of Christ is seen ; for he that is addicted to the

world will break all the commands of Christ for the world's sake. It

must needs be so, for the world diverts the heart from Christ, and sets

the heart against Christ.

1. The love of the world diverts the heart from Christ, that there is

no room for holy things. The heart will be where the treasure is.

Mat. vi. 21, and so the delight that we should have in heavenly things

will be intercepted, the stream will be carried another way, the heart

will be withdrawn from God, whom we should love with all our soul

and might. Look, as in a pair of balances, what you take out of one

scale, you make the other so much the more weighty ; just so our souls

hang like a pair of balances between God and the world ; what you

give to the world you take from God, and what you give to heavenly

things you take from the world : Col. iii. 7, \* Set your aflfections on

VeR. 22.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 19

things above, not on things of the world.' Our desires cannot be

carried out after heavenly things with any intention unless they be

remitted to the world.

2. The love of the world sets the heart against Christ, and carries

it to contrary things. I shall prove it by three considerations — it dis-

poseth and inclineth the soul to all evil ; it incapacitateth us for the

doing of any good ; and it liinders us from the receiving any good.

[1.] It disposeth and inclineth the soul to all evil. It makes a man

break every command of the law of God : ' The love of money is the

root of all evil/ 1 Tim. vi. 10. Let it once reign in the heart, and

then a man sticks at no sin, and he becomes a ready prey for Satan

when bis heart is intoxicated with the love of present things : Micah

ii. 2, ' Covet fields, and take them by violence, and houses, and take

them away ; so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his

heritage.' First they covet, and then they will stop at nothing, but

break out into all that is unseemly. Let Judas but enchant his

thoughts with the pleasure of a supposed gain that he can make of

his master, and he will soon come with a Quid dabitis ? — What will

you give me ? Gehazai, let him but affect a reward, and he will dis-

honour God and lay a stumbling-block in the way of a new and noble

convert. Let Achan's heart be tickled and pleased a little with the

sight of it, and he will be purloining the wedge of gold and Babylonish

garment. Let Balaam hear of gold and silver, and lie will curse Israel

against his conscience, and venture though there be an angel in the

way to stop them. Ahab will consent to Naboth's blood when his

vineyard is in the chase. Ananias and Sapphira will keep back part

of what was dedicated to God, if they look upon what they part

withal. Simon Magus will deny religion, and return to his old sor-

ceries, that he may be some great one among the people. So that

there is no sin so foul but the love of the world will make it plausible,

and reconcile it to the thoughts of men.

[2.] It incapacitateth us, and makes us incapable of doing service to

God in our general and particular calling.

(1.) In our general calling.

(\st?) It destroys the principle of obedience, which is the love of God :

] John ii. 15, 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not

in him.' The great principle which sways and inclines the heart to do

the will of God is love ; now the love of the world and the love of God

are contrary and inconsistent. Love anything besides Christ, and you

will soon love it above Christ. Why ? Because the love of God is a

stranger and foreigner, the love of the world is a native.

(2c/.) It is contrary to the matter of our obedience. The commands

of God and the commands of mammon are contrary : Mat. vi. 24, ' No

man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the

other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot

serve God and mammon.' God saith. Pity the afflicted, relieve the

miserable, venture all for a good conscience, seek heaven in the first

place with your most ardent affection, with yotirmost earnest diligence.

But now mammon saith, Be sparing of your substance, follow the

world as hard as you can, stick at nothing, lie, steal, comply with the

lusts of men, and then you shall be rich. Well, now, he that is ruled

20 . SERMOXS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. IX.

by mammon, whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded, that is,

enchanted with the love of worldly goods, he can never serve God ;

he loves wealth above all, he trusts it above all, he serves it more

than God himself ; though his tongue dare not say earth is better than

heaven, and that the things of this life are better than everlasting

blessedness, and therefore they shall have more of his heart and care,

yet his life says it ; he can part with God for the matters of this world.

In short, it unfits us not only for one duty, but for all duties required

of us. God's laws are for our respects to God, neighbour, and self; this

inordinate love of the world denies what is due to God, what is neces-

sary for our neighbour, and what is comfortable for ourselves. A man

that loves the world is unthankful to God, unmerciful to his neighbour,

and cruel to himself.

{3d.) It slights the encouragements of obedience, which are the

rewards of God, as it weakeneth all our future hopes, and depresseth

our heart from looking after spiritual and heavenly things. They de-

spise their birthright, Heb. xii. 16, and when they are invited to the

wedding, Mat. xxii., they prefer their farm, oxen, and merchandise,

before the rich feast of grace which God invites us to.

(2.) He that loves the world will break with God in the duties of

his particular calling for the world's sake. What manner of men

ought magistrates to be ? Exod. xviii. 21, ' Such as fear God, men of

truth, hating covetousness ; ' not only not covetous, but hating covet-

ousness ; for let this once possess his heart, it will make him base, and

act unworthily ; nay, for a piece of bread will that man transgress.

Then for a minister, what a poor meal-mouthed creature will it make

him ! One qualification of a minister is, 1 Tim. iii. 3, ' Not to be greed}'

of filthy lucre.' If his heart be set upon that, it makes him sordid,

low-spirited, flattering and daubing to curry favour with men, more

intent upon his gain and profit than the saving of souls. See the work

of a minister : 1 Peter v. 2, ' Feed the flock of God that is among you,

taking the oversight thereof, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready

mind.' What a low flat ministry will that be that is inspired with no

other aim but outward profit ! If that be their inducement to under-

take, and their ])rime encouragement to discharge the work of their

calling, how soon will they strain themselves to please men, especially

great ones, and writhe themselves into all postures to soothe the humours

and lusts of others ; as Balaam : 2 Peter ii. 15, ' Who loved the wages

of unrighteousness,' and therefore would fain curse the people whom

God ble.ssed. This base, powerful, imperious lust will draw men to

very base and unworthy actions. Saith God, Ezek. xiii. 19, ' Will ye

pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread,

to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls of people

alive that should not live by your lying to my people that hear your

lies.' That is to say, What ! wiU you declaim against the good, and

harden the evil in their evil, and comply with the fashions of the world

thus to humour men ? So if a man be a master of a family : Prov. xv,

27, ' He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house.' What a

burden and trouble will he be to his servants and all about him ! In

short, it is love of the world that makes one an oppressing landlord,

another a false tradesman and an ill neighbour, that makes him study

YeR. 22.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 21

iniquity of traffic : Ezek. xxviii. 5, ' By thy great wisdom, and by thy

traffic hast thou increased thy riches.' So that it is the pest and bane

of human societies.

[3.] It hinders the receiving of good, and those means of reformation

that should make us better. A man that is under the power of worklly

lusts is prejudiced against whatever shall be spoken for God, and for

the concernments of another world : Luke xvi. 14, ' The pharisees also,

who were covetous, heard all these things, and derided him.' If the

word stir us a little, and men begin to have some anxious thoughts

about eternal life, these thorns, which are the cares of this world, will

choke the good seed, and stifle our convictions, so as they come to

nothing : Mat. xiii. 22, ' He also that receiveth seed among the thorns

is he that heareth the word, and the cares of this world and the deceit-

fulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.' They

will distract the head with cares, and put out all thoughts of our

eternal condition. If a man begins to do some outward thing, it will

make us soon weary of religion and attendance on holy duties, as if all

time laid out upon God were lost ; and they cry out, ' When will the

sabbath be over that we may set forth wheat,' Amos viii. 5. The

heathens counted the Jews a foolish people, as Seneca saith, because

they lost a full seventh part of their lives ; he speaks it with respect to

the sabbath ; so other men are of his mind ; they think all lost that is

laid out upon God. And it distracts us in duty, and carries away our

heart : Ezek. xxxiii. 31, ' They come unto me as the people cometh,

.and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy word, but they

will not do them ; for with their mouth they show much love, but their

heart goeth after their covetousness.' It interlines our prayers and holy

services with worldly projects and thoughts ; nay, it turns religion into

a trade and market. Men live by it ; it makes religion to serve their

worldly ends ; they make a market of their devotion, as the Shechem-

ites, for then, say they, ' their substance and their cattle will be ours.'

Use. To inform ns of the evil of worldliness. We need to be set

right in that, for most men stroke it with a gentle censure. They will

say. He is a good man, but a little worldly, as if it were no great

matter to be so ; nay, men are apt to applaud those that are guilty of

this sin : Ps. x. 3, ' They bless the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.'

He that by hook and crook gets honour and riches is the only pru-

dent man in their account. If our children are loose, and drunkards,

and riotous, we are offended, but if we see them worldly, we are not

troubled. Oh ! it is a foul sin, but the men of the world will not

believe it. Surely we have too mild thoughts of it, and therefore we do

not watch and strive against the love of the world : Luke xii. 15, ' Take

heed and beware of covetousness.' The words are doubled for the more

vehemency ; he doth not say, ' Take heed ' only, but ' Take heed and

beware of covetousness.' Sins that are more gross and sensual are

easier discovered, and such a sinner is sooner reclaimed, but this is a

secret sin that turns away the heart from God. And to make you

more careful to avoid it, in scripture a covetous man is called ' an

idolater,' Eph. v. 3, and covetousness is called idolatry. Col. iii. 5 ; and

is that a small crime ? What ! to set up another god ? Who are you

that dare to harbour such an evil in your bosoms, and make no great

22 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. IX.

matter of it ? Will you dethrone that God which made you, and set up

the world in his stead ? It is called ' adultery,' James iv. 4 ; it is a breach

of your conjugal vow. You did promise in your baptism to renounce

the world, and give up yourselves unto Christ's service, and will you

cherish such whorish and disloyal affections as will carry you to the crea-

ture instead of God ? Oh ! we cannot think bad enough of such a sin.

Doct. 4. A carnal worldly man may be sorrowful when he cannot

win heaven in his own way.

When he cannot get heaven, and his own will in the world also, as

this young man was, when he could not be a christian at a cheaper

rate. He departed from Christ sad, as loath to miss this felicity, and

yet loath to pay so dear for it. There is a sorrow ' that worketh repent-

ance to salvation never to be repented of,' 2 Cor. vii. 10 ; but this is

of another nature ; it makes a wound in the conscience, and doth no

more. It troubled him much that he had moved this question when

he did not find Christ's answer according to his desire and expectation ;

and this is just the disposition of a man that hath a sense of eternity,

and yet is wedded to his lusts. Fain he would be happy hereafter,

but will not leave his lusts now ; so they are troubled ; they cannot have

Christ and the world too, Christ for their consciences, and the world

for their affections. They love this world, and yet would fain be saved

in the world to come, and therefore are grieved when they cannot have

both. On the one side they are troubled with a sense of religion, and

on the other side with a fear of losing their worldly interests. See a

like trouble in Herod : Mat. xiv. 9, ' The king was sorry ; neverthe-

less for his oath's sake, and for them that sat with him at meat, he

commanded it to be given her.' He was loath to put John to death,

and yet loath to deny her. So Balaam would have the reward, and yet

loath to go against the express command of God, Num. xxi., xxii. So

Pilate was loath to condemn Christ against his own conscience. Thus

shall we be affected till we seek God with our whole hearts.

This sorrow of the young man will give us some light as to the

difference between those conflicts that are in a gracious and renewed

man, and those conflicts that are in the unregenerate. There are con-

flicts in both, yet they differ much. In the unregenerate graceless soul

the conflict is between conviction and corruption ; conscience wrestles

with their lusts, and lusts wrestle with conscience, and so men are

sorrowful upon carnal, not godly reasons ; whereas the conflict in the

regenerate is in the same faculty, carnal reason against spiritual reason,

and carnal will against spiritual will, carnal affections against spiritual

affections ; the battle is fought in every faculty. In the conflict betwixt

the flesh and spirit in the regenerate, the spiritual part prevails. Herod,

and Pilate, and Balaam had a conflict, natural conscience did restrain

them for a while, but at last they yielded ; and here the young man

yielded, and went away sorrowful. This conflict and sorrow may leave

u wound in the conscience, but it doth not prevail to cause them to

look after heaven on Christ's own terms.

The last j)oint is taken from the reason of his heavy and sorrowful

departure, ' For he had great possessions.' He had them ; is that a

fault ? Here is no note of crime put upon him as to his getting of them.

He is not taxed with an insatiable desire of riches, nor with uncon-

VeR. 22.] SERMONS UPON JIAUK X. 17-27. 23

Bcionable means to get them ; only it is said that he was marvellously

rich and had great possessions, and therefore he went away sorrowful ;

so that the point will be this —

Doct. 5. That the disease of worldliness is very incident to great

persons and men of quality.

If we have not a mortified heart, the very having an estate may prove

a snare to us. I observe this, because many please themselves in this,

that they have not got what they have by extortion or cosenage, or by

■any fraudulent or unlawful means, that their heritage comes to them

lawfully, in the fair way of providence ; but if they have it, and they

look not to their hearts, it will enchant them. It is not the means of

gathering wealth, but the deceitfulness of it, however gathered, that

chokes the word. The very possession and presence, though it be not

greedily sought for nor unlawfully purchased, may enchant our minds,

and render us unapt to obey Christ's commandments. Take three

propositions —

1. That it is possible, yea, very likely, that our hearts may be inor-

dinately set upon wealth lawfully gotten ; and therefore God gives us

that caution : Ps. Ixii, 10, ' If riches increase, set not your heart upon

them.' Though they should increase by God's providence, yet con-

sider, a man may drink too freely, and be intoxicated with his own

wine. The mind may be enchanted with a secret delight and desire

to retain and increase riches lawfully gotten. A man may be a slave

to his wealth, and loath to part with it upon religious reasons. It is

very likely it will be so when men have anything in the world. Saith

Austin, Nescio quomodo cum supey-flua et terrena diliguntur, arcfius

adepta quam concupita comprimunt ; nam unde jiivenis, iste tristis

discesstt, nisi quia magnas Jiabehat divitias? Aliud est enim nova

incorpoyare, quia desunt ; aliud. jam incmporata diveUere ; ilia enim

velut cihi repudiantur, istavero velut membra prceciduntur — I do not

know how it comes to pass, but so it is, there is more danger in pos-

sessing wealth than in getting it ; this young man went away sad, for

he had great riches ; and it is one thing, saith he, to refuse that we

have not, another thing to part with what we have : we may refuse

that we have not, as we do some meats ; but that we have, we are loath

to part with it, as we are with the members of our bodies. Covetous-

ness is not to be determined by a greedy thirst only, but also by com-

placency, delight, and acquiescence of soul in worldly enjoyments.

Though we would not desire more, yet if our hearts be glued to that

we have already, we are unapt for the kingdom of God ; these are

torn from us as members. In short, it is the corruption of our hearts

that we are very prone to affect worldly goods too much, and so much

the more by how much the more plenty and abundance of them is

enjoyed. The moon is never in an eclipse but when she is at the

full ; so when we are at the full these things prevail over us. They

that have much flax and gunpowder in their houses had need be care-

ful to keep fire from it ; so a christian, that enjoys a great store of

wealth, had need look to his heart, that corruption do not meet with

it ; that aversion from God, and conversion to the creature is so natural

to us, that when we have great store of the world's goods, we are ready

to set our hearts too much on them.

24 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. X.

2, That the gathering of a spiritual disease is very secret and insen-

sible. Bad humours breed in the body, and are not discovered till a

strain ; much more distempers breed in the soul ere we are aware,

and therefore the more caution is necessary : Prov. xxx. 9, ' Give me

not riches, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord ? '

Every man is afraid of want and poverty, but who is afraid of riches ?

Yet Agur is as much afraid of that as of poverty. Our greatest learn-

ing is to learn how to abound. The worldly-minded judge riches and

abundance a happy condition : Oh ! blessed is the man, they will say,

that is in such a case. It is the sum of every man's wish ; but to be

shy of the world, to suspect danger in plenty, it can never enter into

their hearts. But alas ! as a rank soil is apt to breed weeds, so many

snares are incident to this condition and this sort of life. Alas ! they

that have great and plentiful estates, how apt are they to pamper tbe

flesh, to grow forgetful of God, slight in holy things, to be wedded to

worldly greatness. A corrupt heart will take mischief in every course

of life, as a drunken man will stumble in the plainest way, but espe-

cially in a plentiful condition. As soon as men have anything in the

world, their heads are lifted up above their brethren, and they grow

proud, scornful of God's word, slighting of holy things, and we are

wholly enchanted with pleasures of such an estate, but consider not the

snares that secretly are laid for their souls.

3. There is no means to prevent the danger but by the continual

exercise of good works, and a prudent carefulness to improve our sub-

stance for God's glory and helpfulness to others. Look, as we clip

the wings of birds that they may not fly away from us, or as we cut

off the superfluous boughs of trees that they may not hinder their growth

and height, so this should be your care, not to join house to house,

and field to field, for then our desires will swell into so vast an excess

and proportion, as will not become grace and hopes of heaven. No ;,

but your business should be how you should honour God : Prov. iii.

9, ' Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all

thy increase ; ' Give alms, and all shall be clean unto you,' Luke xi. 41.

A man's care should rather be for contracting and cutting short his

desires, and how to make use of it in order to eternal life. Unless

there be this constant solicitude upon tbe heart, it is impossible ' for a

rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.'

SERMON X.

And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, Hoio hardly

shall tliey that have riches enter into the hngidom of God 1 —

Mark x. 23.

You have heard this young man was loath to sell all, and yet loath to

quit his hopes of eternal life. He did not go away murmuring and

frowning against Christ, but, because he could not bring both ends

7eR. 23.] SERMONS UrON MARK X. 17-27. 25

together, 'He went away sad, for he had great possessions.' The

instance of this young roan had raised them all into wonder, and there-

fore when they were full of thoughts about it, our Lord would make

use of this for the instruction of his disciples. You find our Lord

edifying his disciples upon all occasions, and improving every occurrence

for their good. As a wise man passing by the field of the sluggard

learns wisdom, and hath a sensible discovery of the loss and ill effects

of idleness and careless indiligence ; so by this young rich man's re-

fusal of Christ's terms, the disciples might know the snares of the

wealthy, and what a pull-back from Christ the love of the world is.

Surely they that were sent forth to gain the world need such an instruc-

tion partly that they might be more diligent in warning rich men of

their danger and duty : 1 Tim. vi. 17, ' Charge them that are rich in

this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches,

but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy ; ' and

partly that they might not be offended if their doctrine should be

despised by men of that rank and order. The rich and full-fed world-

lings were likely to despise the doctrine of a crucified Saviour and

oppose his worshippers : James ii. 6, 7, \* But ye have despised the

poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment

seats ? Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are

called ? ' "Now they are forearmed against this contempt by seeing

Christ hinself refused by a rich man. And partly for themselves, that,

laying aside all thoughts of worldly greatness, they might the better

bear their own poverty, riches being such a hindrance and impediment

to the kingdom of God ; for they were leavened with the conceit of a

carnal Messiah, that they should be mighty men in the world, and

until the Spirit was poured out they had this conceit ; for these and

such like reasons, ' Jesus looked round about him, and saith to his dis-

ciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom

of God ! ' In this verse we have —

1. Christ's gesture, 'And Jesus looked round about him,' irepijSXe-^d-

fi6vo<;, the gesture of one that is to speak or do some notable thing :

Luke vi. 10, ' And looking round about upon them all, he said unto

the man, Stretch forth thy hand.' So here he looked round about to

every one of them, to see how they entertained this passage and occur-

rence of providence, and to stir up their attention, and to cause them

to be affected with it as a matter of some great weight and moment,

that, when this moi'al, sweet-natured, forward young man came with

such respect, kneeling to him, and asking him such a question, and

went away, sad, Jesus looked round about, as if he had said, How do

you entertain this ?

2. Here is Christ's speech, ' He saith to his disciples, How hardly

shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.' I will take

notice of the matter and the form.

[1.] The matter, where the persons spoken of, ' They that have riches.\*

The privilege denied, entering into the kingdom of God.

[2.] The form. It is by way of question, ' How hardly ? ' he would

appeal to them. See now what the love of the world did. They were

leavened with it, and thought of great offices in the kingdom of the

Messiah : but how hard is it for a rich man to enter into the kinordom

26 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. X.

of heaven. ' How hard ? ' It is — (1.) Questio admiraniis. It is pro-

pounded in the form of an admiring question. (2.) It is questio do-

lentis, of one that bewails the corruption of human nature, that men

should turn God's good gifts and blessings into a snare. Alas ! ' How

hard ! ' &c.

For the matter, there is not an utter impossibility, but a very great

difficulty. It is spoken of such men as have riches only ; and Christ

explains himself in the next verse, ' Children, how hard is it for them

that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God ! ' It doth not

lessen the wonder, but increase it, for then ' they were astonished out

of measure among themselves, saying, Who can be saved ? '

By the kingdom of God is meant the kingdom of grace, or the

kingdom of glory. How hardly do they submit to the doctrine of

Christ, or enter into the kingdom of grace liere ! Or how hardly are

they made partakers of his glory in the kingdom of heaven hereafter !

Doct. It is a very hard matter for such as abound in worldly wealth

to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

1. I shall explain the point by the circumstances of the text.

2. Show whence the difficulty doth arise.

3. Make application.

I. To explain the point by the circumstances of the text. And

here —

1. The persons spoken of, ' They that have riches.' The veiy having

layeth us open to a snare. It is true Christ explains himself in the

next verse, ' Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to

enter into the kingdom of God ! ' The plain sense of the words is this,

It is hard to have them and not trust in them. The disciples were

astonished at his words when he said, ' How hardly shall they that

have riches,' &c. ; but when lie said, ' How hard is it for them that

trust in riches,' &c., they were astonished out of measure. And we see

Agur, when he prays to God, not only deprecates the sin, but the estate,

\* Give me not riches, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the

Lord ? ' Prov. xxx. 8, 9. James ii. 6, ' Do not rich men oppress you,

and draw you before the judgment-seats? ' He doth not sa}^, Do not

wicked rich men oppress you ? but simply ' rich men.' As a fat and

fertile ground produceth weeds, if it be not carefully tilled and planted

with better seed, so do riches usually prove a temptation to us.

But you will say, Why doth he speak so hardly against one order

and sort of men whom God hath set up in the world ? Are not riches

in themselves God's blessings ? Prov. x. 22, ' The blessing of the Lord

maketh rich ; ' and are they not promised to his people ? . \_Ps. cxii. 3,

'Wealth and riches shall be in his house ; ' and accordingly are bestowed

upon them. For we read of Abraham, Gen. xxiv. 25, 'The Lord hath

blessed my master greatly, and he is become exceeding great ; ' saith

Eliezer. So was Job, chap. i. 3, ' The greatest of all the men of the

East.' So David, Solomon, and Lazarus of Bethany, Joseph of Arima-

thea, and others ; and therefore is it not to calumniate our Master's

bounty to say, that the very having of riches is an impediment to us

in our heavenly pursuits, and a snare to us ? I answer — No.

[1.] The fault is not in riches, but in our abuse of them : 2 Peter

i. 4, ' The corruption that is in the world through lust.' It is your

VeS. 23.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 27

unmortified corruption that spoils all, not wealth in itself. The poison

is not in the flower, but in the spider. The carnal disposition which

remains in us maketli us ready to drown our mind, our time and affec-

tions, our life and love in the world, and the cares and pleasures thereof,

and so they are ensnared thereby, and hindered from looking after

heavenly happiness. Riches are an advantage of doing liberal, magni-

ficent things, if they be used well ; and to blame riches simply, were

to blame him that made them, and distributeth them according to his

will, as if he did bait his hook with seeming blessings, and did set

golden snares to entangle the souls of men. The goods of this world

are profitable to them that can make a good use of them, as giving

them the means of being more God-like, and more useful in their

places ; for certainly \* it is more blessed to give than to receive,' Acts

X. 35. They do not make us corrupt, or put corruption into us, but

only discover the corruption that is there already ; as when we fill a

leaky vessel, the unsoundness of it is seen, as soon as it is filled it begins

to run out. Our corruptions are drawn out by these things, and plainly

discovered to the world, when the fault is not in the riches, but in the

lust.

[2.] When wealth is spoken of as an estate full of spiritual danger,

it is rather to check our desires of it than to lessen God's bounty, as if

there were no obligation upon us by those temporal blessings. If we

covet and seek great things for ourselves, we do but run into the

mouth of temptation : 1 Tim. vi. 9, ' They that will be rich fall into

temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which

drown men in destruction and perdition.' We are to bless God for his

bounty, but we are to guard our own hearts, and contract our desires

before the will of God is declared. When we ask riches, we know not

what we ask. Do not aim at great things for yourselves in the world.

[3.] Wealth, considered not as sought by us, but as given by God,

needeth peculiar and special grace to improve it, because we must not

only look to the manner of acquisition, but to the manner of fruition.

It is true we have honestly acquired it, it comes to us fairly, but then

we must see how we enjoy it. Some are rich because they are wicked,

having gotten their wealth by unjust and indirect means ; but others

are wicked because they are rich, being corrupted by the enjoyment of

them. There are some gifts of God that are ahsolufe bona, so abso-

lutely good that they can never be evil, such things do certainly make

the owner, or him that possesseth them, good too ; as the graces of

the Spirit, faith in Christ, the love of God, fear of his name ; but one

may be rich, but yet never the better. Nay, consider man in statu

lapso. fallen from God to the creature : he is easily made worse, and

usually is too, and that by the good things he doth enjoy, if the Lord

doth not vouchsafe to him his grace.

[4.] I answer again — When temporal blessings follow eternal, then

it is well, as wisdom with an inheritance is good ; and Solomon asked

wisdom, and with it God gave him riches and honour in great abun-

dance ; but where they are given singly and apart, so they are given

to God's enemies. Elijah was poor, and Ahab rich : Paul, that holy

man, was in prison, and bound with a chain, and Nero at the same time

emperor of the world. God hath gifts for all his creatures : some in

28 SERMONS UPON MAEK X. 17-27. [SeR. X.

one way, some in another, shall find him a ^ootl God. Jesus Christ,

that gave his Holy Spirit to the best of the apostles, gave the bag to

Judas. Nay, Jesus Christ himself, that had the Spirit without measure,

chose a poor estate. He that made a fish to pay him tribute could as

well have made men to do so ; he that multiplied a few loaves could

have increased his stock; he that made the world could have built

himself a stately palace ; but ' when he was rich, yet for our sakes he

became poor,' 2 Cor. viii. 9, that he might sanctify holy poverty in his

own person, and honour it by his own example ; and usually he cuts

his children short, while wicked men live in plenty. Therefore they

that merely have riches, that is, that have it apart from grace, are in a

worse condition than those that are kept low and bare. As a child

may be dieted for its health, while a servant is left to a free allowance,

so God knows our weakness ; and they understand nothing in divinity

that do not know this, that God works congruously, and will not only

give strength, but will also abate the temptation itself, and not sufier

us to have overmuch in the world, lest it should become a snare to us.

So much for the persons spoken of, ' They that have riches.'

2. The privilege in debate, that wliich is denied or hardly vouch-

safed to them is, ' Entering into the kingdom of God.' By which is

meant —

[1.] The kingdom of grace; and so the meaning is, they are in-

capable of the doctrine of Christ, as the thorny ground was of the good

seed. Now what are they that answer to the thorny ground ? ' They

that are choked with the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life,'

Luke viii. 14 ; that is, the heart wherein Christianity cannot enter with

any good eff"ect and success : these choke and destroy many hopeful

seeds of grace, which would otherwise spring forth in a lively diligence,

and earnest pursuit of that one thing necessary. And this may be the

meaning of 'How hardly do they enter ! ' viz., the great difficulty of

rich men's becoming the disciples of Christ ; and the truth is, at the

first setting forth of the gospel, it was verified by plain experience, for

it is said, Mat. xi. 5, among other miracles which Christ wrought, he

tells us ' the poor have the gospel preached unto them ; ' it is tttcoxoI

evayyeXl^ovrai, they are all to be gospelled ; and ov ttoWoI, \* Not many

wise men after the flesh, nor many mighty, nor many noble are called,'

1, Cor. i. 26 ; not many of that order and rank.

[2.] Entering into the kingdom of God may be expounded of being

made partakers of his glory in the kingdom of heaven ; this follows

necessarily upon the former, for if they are incapable of grace, they are

incapable of glory. And this is true too : James ii. 5, ' Hath not God

chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom ? '

And this was such a truth that even the scoffers and opposers of the

christian religion took notice of it. Julian the apostate, in his epistle

to Ecebolius, speaking scoffingly of those passages, saith, I have taken

away from these Galileans some of their wealth, that they might not be

deprived of the heavenly kingdom which their master promised them.

3. The thing spoken of these persons with respect to that pri-

vilege ; there the form, ttw?, ' How : ' it is OavfjidaTiKov eTnpprj/uia, saith

Hesichius, a form of admiration ; and the matter, ' How hardly ! ' It

is not an utter impossibility, but a very great difficulty. All men are

VeR. 23.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 29

saved with difficulty : ' If the righteous scarcely are saved,' 1 Peter.

iv. 18. It is no easy matter, but it is more difficult for them than

others. It is passionately expressed, ' Oh, how hardly ! ' it is the

greatest difficulty imaginable, such as made the disciples wonder :

' They were astonished at his words,' ver. 24. Afterwards it is set forth

])y the j^roverb of ' a camel passing through the eye of a needle,' ver. 25.

Many foolish conceits men have about this, whereas in truth it is

nothing but a Jewish proverb, to show it is a very unusual thing, of extra-

ordinary difficulty, not to be removed but by the almighty power of

God, ' but with God all things are possible,' ver. 27. Not that riches

are evil in themselves, but that it is hard for such creatures as we to

possess them without sinful and inordinate affections.

4. Consider who it is that speaks it. Alas ! if it had been the say-

ing of any private divine or particular minister, we might tax it as

rash and rigorous ; but the mouth of truth itself hath spoken it, even

Jesus Christ, whom we own as our Lord and Master. He knew the

way of salvation, and knew the state and danger of souls, and he hath

interposed his authority, and represents the difficulty. It is Jesus

Christ, that had so much wisdom to judge aright of matters, Jesus

Christ, that had so much regard to the comfort and happiness of men,

that he would not fright them with a needless danger ; and therefore

certainly you should take such an admonition to heart from the mouth

of him whom you call your Lord and master, and from whom at last

you expect your doom and judgment ; he hath said it. If any wise

man had said it from the experience of almost all ages and persons,

you ought to have regarded it ; but when our Lord hath said it, he

who is the ' Amen, the faithful and true witness,' why should we not

believe him ? I pray what do you think of Christ ? Was not he

able to judge of the case ? It was the saying of Plato, ayaOov ehai

BLa<f>6p6vTco<;, Koi iryo'uaiov eXvai hiai^epovTfo^ ahvvarov — It is impos-

sible to be excellently good and eminently rich ; therefore Celsus, a

heathen who sought all occasions to disgrace the gospel, saith that

Christ borrowed this saying of Plato, but he is confuted by Origen in

his book against him. This proud heathen was sensible there was

wisdom in the speech, therefore he would deprive Christ of the honour

of it. But now since we believe the doctrine of Christ, and own it as

the speech of Christ, who is our Lord and master, therefore it should

more sink into our hearts. Thus for the explanation of the point,

from the chcumstances of the text.

II. Let us see whence this difficulty doth arise ? I answer — Because

of the sins to which u wealthy estate doth expose us.

1. Eiches are apt to breed atheism and contempt of God. They

that are wholly drowned in pleasures of sense do not look into the in-

visible world, and see God which is the Father of spirits : Prov. xxx.

9, ' Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say. Who is the Lord ? ' There

is a practical atheism when men forget or despise God, and a specu-

lative atheism when they deny God. Now the rich are apt to do both.

A man that tumbles in wealth, ease, and plenty is apt to forget and

despise God : ' But Jesurun waxed fat, and kicked ; thou art waxen

fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness, then he for-

sook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salva-

30 SERMONS UPON MAIIK X. 17-27. [SeR. X.

tion,' Dent, xxxii. 15. Nay, in some sort they deny God ; they live

as if there were no God at all, none to call them lo account. Men that

have seen no changes, and were never humbled under God's mighty

hand, never think of an invisible power. I remember the psalmist

saith, Ps. Iv. 19, ' Because they have no changes, therefore they fear

not God ; ' they have not an awe or reverence, or due sense of a divine

power upon their hearts, because they never have been acquainted

with changes ; the condition they have lived in hath been a constant

tenure of worldly happiness. So Zeph. i. 12, ' They are settled upon

their lees ; ' that is, are not tossed from vessel to vessel, as wine that

is racked. They live in an even coufse of worldly prosperity, and in

abundance of worldly comforts, without a change, and this chokes and

gluts the heart, that they have no sense of the Lord's goodness.

Changes do more awaken us, and make us look to God, as the foun-

tam^ of good and evil. Istce vices magis in nobis excitant sensum divince

honitatis, quam continuus tenor fodicitatis, qui nos inebriat. In short,

the pleasures and thoughts of the world do so take up their hearts,

that there is no place for any serious thought and solemn remembrance

of God, such as should beget an awe in us. It is said, Isa. v. 12,

\* The harp and the viol, and tabret and pipe, and wine are in their

feasts ; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the

operation of his hands.' Thoughts of God are suppressed as soon as

they do arise, and they take no notice of the work of God's hands, nor

what he doth in their days to revive the sense of his eternal power and

Godhead ; nor do they take their comforts out of God's hands, but

look altogether to natural and to second causes, as being sufficient to

themselves, to live of themselves. Indeed, they may seem in opinion

to own a God, as others do ; they take up the current opinions, and

perform customary worship, but they do not glorify him as God, or

repair to him with that life and fervency as those that stand in need

of him, nor consecrate their best time, and strength, and affections to

his service. It is usually the broken-hearted godly poor, and those

that have had frequent experiences of the changes of providence, that

exercise themselves to godliness, and seek after God in good earnest.

The great landlord of the world hath more rent from many poor cot-

tages than from divers great palaces, for they wallow in plenty, and

never think of God.

2. Kiches keep men from being broken-hearted and seeing their

need of Christ. It is the poor needy soul, sensible of its own sin and

misery, that is likely to thrive in religion, and prosper in any heavenly

design and pursuit. Now those that are rich have so many entertain-

ments of sense to inveigle their minds and divert their thoughts, and

are so besotted and enchanted with present delights and pleasures, that

they have no feeling of their condition, or sense of the necessity of

God's grace ; therefore it is our Lord begins his description of blessed-

ness : Mat. v. 3, ' Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the king-

dom of heaven.' How few of them that are rich in estate are poor in

sj)irit ! The sense of their present ease and welfare makes them for-

get all thoughts of their spiritual condition, and reconciling themselves

to God by Christ. The prodigal never thought of going to his father

till he began to be in want, Luke xv. 17, 18. While men have any-

VeR. 23.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 31

thing in the world, they are senseless and secure in the midst of all

their sin and misery ; and if they can live without God and apart from

God, they will not come at him : Jer. ii. 31, ' Wherefore say my

people. We are lords, we will come no more unto thee ? ' As if this

merry world would always last, and there were no judgment to come,

and God would never bring them into his presence, but they live a

life of estrangement from God ; they can live upon themselves, and

their own supplies, and things that fall to them by the bounty of God's

providence.

3. Suppose these worldly rich men should take to the serious pro-

fession of religion, as some of them do, and so mask and varnish over

a heart wholly wedded to the world and worldly things with some kind

of form and garb of religion, and it may be the strictest too, yet they

can never walk worthy of it, nor hold and maintain it with any power

and vigour : ' They are enemies to the cross of Christ ; ' and why ?

'They mind earthly things,' Phil. iii. 18, 19. Christ speaks of selling

and forsaking all, and they are for getting and taking all into their own

hands. Now it is more difficult for them that have anything in the

world to comply with Christ's commands. Surely they that live in a

lower condition have less temptations. The young man here went

away sad, ' For he had great possessions.' I shall mention a story of

a soldier of Antigonus, which is well known, because it helps to set

forth what we have now in hand. This person had a very loathsome

disease U})on him, which made his soul desire to be divorced from his

body, and then none so ready and forward to venture himself in all

battles as he, and when the general, admiring his valour, got him to

be cured, then he, that had been so prodigal of his life before, was as

shy, tender, and wary of it as others ; when he had a life worth the

keeping, he was loath to venture and expose it to danger. I apply it

to this purpose. It may be when the world disappoints thee thou art

ready to venture thy little all for Christianity, but if anything may

make the world sweet to thee, none so sparing, so afraid and asliamed

to own Christ as they. Certainly it conduceth much to the safety of

grace to have the temptation removed, as well as to have the lust

abated : Bebus in angustis facile est co7itemnere vitam — He that hath

little can soon part with it, whereas riches expose to apostasy : 2 Tim.

iv. 10, ' Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world.'

4. It maketh men apt to take up their rest here, and to sit down

satisfied with the world as their chiefest good, without any earnest

longing for or looking after a better estate : Ps. xvii. 14, ' From men

of the world, which have their portion in this life ; ' small hope or

desire of the pleasures of another world ; they will have their heaven

here, and therefore ' How hardly shall they enter into the kingdom of

heaven.' The Lord will not remove us a deliciis ad delicias, from

Delilah's lap to Abraham's bosom, from carnal to spiritual delights ;

and the truth is they have no mind to be removed : James v. 5, ' Ye

have lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanton.' Here we are

in a place of exile, banishment, separation from God, where God doth

not exhibit himself in that latitude which he doth in the other world,

and yet here they seek their felicity : Luke vi. 24, ' Woe unto you that

are rich, for you have received your consolation.' God requires of us

32 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. X.

contentation, and allows us a temperate use, and holy delight in t"he

blessings of his providence, but we are not to take our whole comfort

here (for that is meant by our consolation), and sit down drunk with

temporal happiness, that will make us mindless of those other things

offered to us in the gospel, and kept for us in the world to come.

5. They are apt to wax proud and scornful, and impatient of reproof,

and so grow licentious, and lose the benefit of the remedies that might

reclaim them from their errors : 1 Tim. vi. 17, ' Charge them that are

rich in this world, that they be not high-minded.' I interpret it of

this sort of pride, when men grow scornful of admonition, licentious in

sin, and hate reproof. All pride is incident to riches, but especially

this pride ; for as soon as a man hath anything about him, he begins

to speak higher, and look higher, and fare higher, and to display the

ensigns of his vanity in his apparel ; but chiefly his heart is higher,

and so grows impatient of check, and so cannot bear the means God

hath appointed to warn him of his danger and duty. They think we

are too bold thus to deal with them and speak to them. It is observed

of beasts, that they never grow fierce but when they are in good plight ;

so usually men when they are full, grow scornful and fierce, and cannot

endure to hear the mind of God powerfully and plainly set forth.

Great men have great spirits, and they will not stoop to such base and

mean persons as the messengers of Christ : Jer. v. 5, 'I will get me to

the great men, and will speak unto them, &c., but they have altogether

broken the yoke and burst the bonds ; ' Jer. xiii. 15, ' Hear ye, and

give ear, be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken.' Men are high and

scornful, and if they have anything to bear them out in contempt of

the Lord's message, they set themselves to oppose Christ and his

interest, and dash against the corner-stone, though they are broken in

pieces. They are the great and yokeless men of the world that will

come under no rule, and no awe of Christianity.

6. They are wanton and sensual, and so must needs be careless of

heaven and heavenly things : partly as sensuality brings a brawn and

deadness upon the heart, and takes off all sense and feeling and

savouriness of spirit: Hosea iv. 11, 'Whoredom and wine and new

wine take away the heart;' that is, infatuate men, and make them of

such a base brutish spirit, that they are incapable of sound reasoning,

or of entertaining the doctrine of godliness : 1 Tim v. 6, ' She that

liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.' A life of pleasure brings

on a strange deadness and infatuation upon the soul, partly as sen-

suality engrosseth the time, and causeth us to waste those precious hours

in which we should make provision for eternity ; to eat, drink, and be

merry, and knit one carnal pleasure to another, and so leaves no room

for any serious sober thoughts of God, Christ, and the world to come,

and necessity of regeneration and taking the way of holiness : Luke

xii. 19, ' I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for

many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.' And partly

as sensuality doth strengthen our enemy. The greatest enemy we have

is the flesh, and the more we please it, the more we set back our

salvation. Now when men nourish their heart, and strengthen their

corruptions, how can they be overcome by the power of the Lord's

grace? James v. 5, 'Ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of

VeR. 23.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 33

slaughter.' They add fuel to their lusts, and make corrupt nature

more active and stirring than otherwise it would be. Now rich men

are very sensual and apt to please the flesh; yea, they can hardly avoid

it in the plenty of accommodations they enjoy, as scrij^ture and experi-

ence witnesseth. Sodom was a pleasant and fruitful place, and was as

the garden of God. What were the sins of that place ? ' Pride, ful-

ness of bread, and abundance of idleness,' Ezek. xvi. 49 ; and that

fulness did dispumare in libidinem, as Tertullian saith, issue out into

monstrous lusts. Alas ! where there is such a glut of worldly things,

what hope is there to prevail, and bring men under the power of strict

religion and that holiness Christ calls for. Men grow excessive in

their pleasure, and they refresh not their labours with some kind of

pleasure (for that God hath allowed), but they refresh one pleasure

with another, and so set up the flesh in God's stead : ' Their god is

their belly,' Phil. iii. 19, and they are 'Lovers of pleasure more than

lovers of God,' 1 Tim. iii. 4. Men think sensuality no sin in those that

are rich. Indeed greedy getting or griping to raise an estate the world

will condemn. Oh ! but when a man lives plentifully, and is at heart's

ease, without considering whether he nourish a temptation or no, the

world takes no notice of that : Ps. xlix. 18, ' While he lived, he blessed

his soul ; and men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself ; '

that is, when thou spendest freely upon carnal satisfactions, that is

accounted more honourable. Nay, and they themselves do applaud

themselves in this course, and think because their estates will bear it,

therefore they may indulge their carnal desires. Oh! do not think so.

You are to consider things with respect to eternity and the world to

come. Plenty will be no excpse. You would be angiy with your

cook if he should make your meat too salt because he had store of salt

by him ; so may God be angry with you, if you have plenty, such as

would refresh the hungry, and supply the needy, and you altogether

lay it out upon pomp and pleasure, above what your estates and what

your bodies will bear, but chiefly what your souls will bear ; for you

should keep up the welfare of your souls, and be ready and free towards

Ood. Do you think you were made only for idleness and pleasure, and

others must glorify God only by labour and service ? The rich glutton

was cast into hell ; here was no oppression, but ' he fared deliciously

every day,' and sucked out the sweetness of his wealth, and the indict-

ment- that is brought against him is this: Luke xvi. 25, ' Sou, remem-

ber that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things.' A slavery to

pleasures will make the hardship and duties of religion intolerable.

You are brought into bondage and under the power of these things,

and then you cannot leave them that you may attend upon the good of

your souls and upon the things that relate to eternity : 1 Cor. vi. 12,

' All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the

power of any.'

7. The more rich, the more wedded we are to the world; for cres-

centem sequitur cura 2^ecuniam ; usually the more we have, our desires

are increased to get more : Eccles. v. 10, ' He that loveth silver shall not

be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase.'

Men when they are low are modest ; food and raiment is enough, and

they receive it with great thankfulness ; but if they had a little more

VOL, XVII. c

34 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeK. X.

in the world, then they should serve God without distraction, and if

they had such a proportion they would care for no more ; but if those

desires be ^a-anted, they find themselves entangled, and their hearts

deceived, and still they must have more and more, until they settle

into a worldly course. As a river, the greater it grows by receiving of

little brooks, the wider and deeper still it wears the channel, so out-

ward things, the more they increase, the more they enlarge desires.

Men would be a little higher in the world, a little better accommodated ;

and when they have that, they would have a little more, and still a

little more, and so keep 'joining house to house, and field to field, till

there be no place that they may be placed alone in the midst of the

earth,' Isa. v. 8. They would seize upon all things within their grasp

and reach. As fire increaseth with new fuel, so this burning desire

doth increase on their hands ; whereas we should still take thankfully

what God vouchsafeth to us, without those vast cravings and desires,

and look after no more than will serve us in our passage to heaven.

Mariners freighted for a near haven will not victual for a long voyage.

Magno viatico hreve iter non instruitui- — ' Time is short,' 1 Cor. vii. 29.

Thus there is very great difficulty with respect to the sins that are

incident to a plentiful estate, and grow upon us insensibly.

Use 1. This doctrine showeth us how contented we should be with

a mean condition, if God reduce us thereunto. We can hardly be

poorer than Christ and his apostles, and shall we murmur ? Many

have more than they had, take them altogether, and yet think their

condition hard and strait : 1 Tim. vi. 8, ' And having food and raiment,

let us be therewith content.' God hath freed thee from those snares

and occasions of sin which others are ^subject unto, and so thy way to

heaven is made more easy. Certainly they that do indeed intend the

kingdom of heaven would not desire a more difficult passage ; therefore

be content with a mean estate, though you have no more than neces-

saries. Contract your desires, and your trouble will be lessened. The

Israelites said to the king of Edom, ' Let us go through your land in

peace ; ' but the cravings of carnal men are endless, \* They enlarge

their desire as hell,' Hab. ii. 5. Not to be content with our lot and

portion, especially when it is competent, is a great sin. When you

hunt after more, what do you but increase your temptations, and

multiply your snares? 'You load yourselves with clay,' Hab. ii. 6;

base riches which pollute you, thorns which make your condition more

uneasy. And when will there be an end of these desires ? Lust will

grow with the possession ; the more wood you put on, the more the fire

increaseth. Therefore, rather bring your minds to your estates than

your estates to your minds ; if you be not content with what you have

now, you will never be contented hereafter; a greater estate will not do

it, if grace do not do it ; as in some diseases, non opus habent imple-

iione, seel jjurgatione, there is more need of purging than filling; a

man is still hungry though he hath eaten enough, and still thirsty

though he hath drunk enough. The way is, not to increase our sub-

stance, but to moderate our desires.

Use 2. It teacheth us patience and comfort under loss of goods. We

should possess the things of this world as if we possessed them not, and

therefore when God taketh away our plenty, we should mourn as if we

VeK. 23.] SEKMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 35

mourned not. You may find gain in this loss, and profit in this trial.

The Lord seeth fit many times to take away the fuel of our pride and

other lusts, to draw us to seek better treasure in heaven, the purchase

whereof is certain, the possession firm, and the price incomprehensible.

The Lord will keep you aloof from temptations ; he knows that if you

were rich, you would grow sensual, insolent, and negligent of spiritual

things. God knoweth what condition is best for you ; you should have

a greater account to make ; he expecteth from others charity, from you

patience. Besides, says Job, chap i. 21, ' The Lord gave, and the Lord

hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.' Some think it is

the greatest misery to have been sometimes happy, but that is through

corruption, when former enjoyments make men more nice, delicate, and

tender, and so less able to bear the present cross. But if we consider

rightly, the less we have been afflicted, the less are our afflictions on

tiiat behalf". Is it nothing that God hath given us to pass over some of

our days with peace and comfort ? should we be so unthankful as to

account that no benefit because it is past ? Job ii. 10, ' What ! sliall

we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil ? '

is not what you have received a pledge of what he can do for the

future ?

Use 3. To the rich, to show them what need they have of special

grace to manage that condition aright. It would seem a hard censure

upon this sort and order of men, yet it is a truth, and spoken by him

who is truth itself. It concerneth you to look after special grace more

than others ; your danger is great, and your difficulties in order to

eternal life not a few. You need peculiar grace —

1. To prevent the evils and to heal those diseases that are incident

to riches ; as contempt of God. We are apt to neglect and despise

him when our necessities do not drive us to him, such is the pravity

of our natures : Hosea v. 15, \* In their affliction they will seek me

early.' Make God your refuge and he will be your habitation : Ps. xci.

9, \* Because thou hast made the Lord thy refuge, even the Most High

thy habitation.' Neglect of Christ and salvation by him ; they that

have an happiness in their hands already see no want in their condi-

tion : ' The whole need not a physician.' Take heed of being heart-

whole, then you will have no relish for the gospel. It disposeth to

apostasy ; you have something of value which you must esteem as

nothing for Christ. It maketh us neglect heaven : Ps. iv, 6, 7, ' There

be many that say, Who will show us any good ? Lord, lift thou up

the light of thy countenance upon us : thou hast put gladness in my

heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.\*

An estate without God is not good. Lord, let me not have my all

here, for these things must be left. It maketh you proud and scornful ;

remember there are the true riches, without which a person is but vile.

He is most honourable before God that hath most grace. The value

of men is otherwise in the world to come than in the present world.

Your humility is your crown. It makes you to be more sensual.

Wealth is the pander of pleasure, the purveyor for the flesh, but it

should not be thus. There is more cause of fear than rejoicing : Gal.

vi. 8, ' He that soweth to the flesh shall of tlie flesh reap corruption.'

It makes us worldly, as chains to detain us under the power of Satan,

36 SERji'ONS UPON MARK X. 17-27, [SeR. XI.

and enslave us to the world. It dotli but betray you into mischief.

Do you desire your way to heaven should be made more hard, that is

liard enough already?

2. That you might devote your riches to the Lord, and be holy and

heavenly in the midst of so great temptations ; that you may not by

momentary and temporal things forfeit eternal, but rather further

them: Luke xii. 21, ' So is he that layeth up treasures for himself, and

is not rich towards God;' 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19, 'That they be rich in

good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in

store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that

they may lay hold of eternal life.' Wealth rightly employed makes

us capable of a greater reward hereafter, as it makes us more useful

here.

SEKMON XL

And the disciples ivere astonished at his words. But Jesiis answered

again, and said unto them, Children, how hard is it for tJiem that

trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God f — LIark x. 24.

In these words you have two things —

1. The entertainment which the disciples gave to his former speech,

' They were astonished at his words.'

2. Christ's further explication of himself, 'But Jesus answered again,

and said unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in

riches to enter into the kingdom of God ! ' Wherein observe —

[1.] The manner of our Saviour's speaking, in that kind compella-

tion, ' Children.'

[2,] The matter of the explication, ' How hard is it for them that

trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God ! '

1. For the entertainment which the discijjles gave to his former

speech, ' They were astonished at his words.' This astonishment was

caused either by the legal dispensation under which obedience was

rewarded with visible and temporal blessings, and therefore they mar-

velled that rich men should find such difficulty of entering into heaven;

or else it was occasioned by the Jewish expectation of a pompous

Messiah, wherewith the disciples themselves were leavened, expecting

to share of the honours and riches of that kingdom which Christ

would set up. Now Christ's answer was quite blank contrary to these

carnal hopes, therefore they marvelled. Or it may be upon the com-

mon reason that the gates of heaven should be shut to them to whom

the gates of the world do always lie open. Thus hardly are good men

brought to disesteem worldly things, and rightly to ponder and weigh

the doctrine of the cross, which Christ had so frequently taught them.

2. For Christ's explication ; and there —

[1.] The compellation, TeKva, 'Children ;' so he bespeaks them who

VeK. 24.] SERMONS UPON JIARK X. 17-27. 37

were sincere for the main, thon2;h a little leavened with carnal conceits,

and to sweeten the doctrine wliich seemed so contrary to their humom- :

1 Thes. ii. 11, ' As you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and

charged every one of you, as a father doth his children.' Novices and

weak ones are to he used with all indulgence, for they had not received

the Spirit in that plentiful measui'e as afterward.

[2.] The matter of his explication, ' How hard is it for them that

trust in riches,' &c. He had said before, ' How hardly do they that

have riches ; ' now he explains himself, they ' that trust in riches.' He

instanceth in this —

(1.) As one common disease of rich men, as soon as they have any-

thing in the world, they are apt to trust in it. Some abuse riches one

way, some another ; some to increase their worldly cares and desire of

having, others to feed their pride and sensuality ; this way, or that

way, according to their different temper and constitution of body and

soul, but they all agree in this, both the muckworm and the epicure,

that they trust in riches.

(2.) He instanceth in this trust rather than love of riches, not how

hard is it for them that love riches, but how hard is it for them that

trust in riches, because this is more, and doth more express the disposi-

tion of worldly men. We love many things in which we do not put

our trust, but we put our trust in nothing but what we love. A

glutton loves his belly-cheer, but he doth not trust in it, as thinking to

be protected by it, as the covetous doth by his estate ; and therefore

though he make his belly his god, or his chief good, and last end, yet

he doth not make it the first cause and fountain of his happiness. But

now this gives all the titles and privileges of God to wealth. Trust

makes wealth to be the first cause, the chief good, and the last end.

Well, then, for these two reasons doth Christ instance in this one sin,

as being a common disease and cause of all the rest, or implying

them at least. This young man, who went away sorrowful from Christ,

thought he should be despised, and grow necessitous if he should for-

sake all upon the command of Christ ; he made his riches to be the

fountain of his hope and confidence; and therefore dot\ Christ say,

' How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom

of God ! '

Doct. That rich men are very prone and apt to put their confidence

in riches, and so thereby render themselves incapable of the kingdom

of God.

In the handling this point I shall — (1.) Show there is such a sin as

trusting in riches ; (2.) The heinousness and evil of it ; (3.) The signs

and discoveries of it ; (4.) The remedies.

I. That there is such a sin, and that a very common sin. The

scripture shows it plentifully. Job, when he protested his innocency,

among other sins he reckoned up, he disclaims this, chap. xxxi. 24, 25,

\* If I have made gold my hope, or said to the fine gold. Thou art my

confidence ; if I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because

my hand had gotten much.' Job to vindicate himself from hypocrisy

reckons up the usual sins of hypocrites, and among the rest this for

one, making riches our hope and confidence. He had immediately

before waved the crime of extortion and oppression, but he thinks not

38 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XI.

that sufficient to clear himself, and therefore he further denieth also the

crime of carnal confidence. It is not enough that our wealth be not

gotten by fraud, cosenage and extortion, but we must not trust to it.

Symmachus renders it a(f)o(3Lav, my safety and security, the cause why

I am not afraid. The world looketh upon wealth as that which will

help us to all we want, defend us from all we fear, and procure to us

all we do desire ; as if by that we were out of the reach of all danger,

and in a capacity to live longer and happier under the patronage and

provisions which our money shall procure to us. Another place is

Prov. xviii. 10, 11, ' The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the right-

eous runneth into it and is safe : the rich man's wealth is his strong

city^ and an high wall in his own conceit.' Mark, what the name of

the Lord is to the believer, that is wealth to the carnal rich man in his

own conceit. A godly man never thinks himself safe till he can get

into the name of the Lord, and be within the compass and verge of the

covenant ; but a carnal rich man, if he be walled and entrenched within

his wealth, thinks himself secure against all changes and chances, and

so God is laid aside and little cared for. That there is such a sin you

see, but I shall prove that it is a common sin, very incident to all men,

and that it is a very secret sin, but yet of a pestilential influence.

1. It is very natural to all men, yea, impossible almost to be free

from it. Consider man as degenerate, and in that corrupted estate in

which he is, as fallen from God as his chief good and last end, and so

he is an idolater, and makes the creature his god, or sticketh too much

to it, more especially to wealth. Wealth is the great instrument of

commerce ; it cannot be denied to have a power and influence upon

human affairs : Eccles. x. 19, ' Money answereth all things.' It can do

much in this lower world, and saveth us out of many dangers : Prov.

xiii. 8, ' The ransom of a man's life are his riches.' It hath its use in

this world as a means in God's hands to sustain and preserve life. But

what more common than for a man to look to the subordinate means, and

neglect altogether the first cause. As children will thank the tailor,

and think they owe their new clothes to his provision rather than to

their parents' bounty, so we look to the next hand, and set up that

instead of God. Eich and poor cannot be exempted from this sin.

(1.) The poor, and those that have not wealth ; they idolise it in

fancy and conceit, that if they had estates this would make them happy

and glorious ; and because they have not, they trust in those which have,

which is idolatry upon idolatry. See Ps. Ixii. 9, ' Surely men of low

degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie.' To appearance

men of low degree are nothing and can do nothing towards our relief,

and so are vanity ; but men of high degree, they are a lie, because they

disappoint those that trust in them, to the wrong of God. Alas ! they

have neither power to help nor hurt, if the Lord will not : 2 Kings vi. 27,

' If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee ? ' And there-

fore we need not fear the hazard of their frowns nor of their displeasure ;

we need not with such restlessness court their favour and trust in them

that have wealth. (2.) But chiefly this is incident to worldly great men,

to trust in what they have ; their minds are secretl}^ enchanted by their

estates when they are increased to them. Still the distemper grows with

the increase of worldly accommodations : Ps. Ixii. 10, ' Trust not in

VeR. 24.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 39

oppression, and become not vain in robbery : if riclies increase, set not

your heart npon them.' As soon as we begin to have anything about

us, from thence forward we date our happiness and security. Many

that in want despise wealth, and live in an actual dependence upon

God's providence, as soon as they have somewhat in the creature, they

begin to value themselves at a higher rate, as if they could live alone

without God, and their hearts are altogether for increasing their store,

or keeping and retaining what they have already gotten.

2. It is a very secret sin, and found in those that are least sensible

of it. We seldom or never mistrust ourselves of this confidence, which

is so natural and so common ; and why ? Because we have too gross a

notion of this sin of trusting in riches. A man doth not think he

makes money his idol if he do not pray to it, or otfer sacrifice to it,

or adore it with outward ceremonies, as the heathens did their idols of

gold and silver ; whereas this sin is to be determined no)i exhihitione.

ceremoniarum, sed ohlatione concupiscentiarum, not by the formal

rights of worship, but by the secret workings of the heart towards it.

Though we do not actually say to the fine gold, Thou art my confi-

dence, or use such gross language to riches as, Ye shall deliver me, or

I will put my trust in you, yet secretly we idolise it, and set it up in

the place of God. It would have been a sorry vindication of Job's

innocency to deny that ; few hypocrites say so in open language, but

our hearts say so though we perceive it not. There is nothing so close

and secret in the bosom of man as his trust. But the heart hath a

tongue as well as the mouth, and thoughts are called the sayings of

the heart. Yea, divines usually observe that there are two sorts of

thoughts, implicit as well as explicit. The scripture calls them

inward thoughts : Ps. xlix. 11, ' Their inward thouirht is that their

house shall continue for ever.' This is the interpretation of our actions

when we do not make God our portion^ but trust in the abundance

of our riches; this is our inward thought, the saying of our heart,

Ye are my God ; we do in effect say. Thou art my confidence, my

hope, and my joy, and will stand by me when all things cease and

tali, and wilt not suffer me to want or to be wronged as long as

thou lastest ; these are the secret speeches of our hearts. Christians,

many may, orator-like, declaim against the vanity of the creature, and

speak as basely of money as others do, and say, We know it is but a

little refined earth, but their hearts close with it, they are loath to part

with it for God's sake or upon God's declared will. As he that speaketh

good words of God is not said to trust in God, so speaking bad words

of worldly riches doth not exempt us from trusting in them. There is a

difference between declaiming as an orator, and acting like a christian ;

well, then, it is a common but secret sin.

II. My next work is to show the evil of this sin, and how great it

is, both in regard of its heinous nature and in regard of its mischievous

effects.

1. In regard of its heinous nature. It is a renouncing of God, and

setting up another in his stead.

[1.] It is a renouncing of God, and taking away his honour. The

heart of man is so conscious to itself of its own weakness, that it will

not be long without a prop , it must have something to rest upon.

40 SEIi:\IO.\S UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XI.

Now, naturally, we have no respect to invisible things, so as to choose

them and to rest upon them, but easily take up with what comes next

to hand. By a vile ingratitude we pervert God's bounty to a defection

from him. As harlots love the gifts rather than the man, so we take

the gifts of God, and rest upon them, and set them up in God's stead.

No man can trust God and riches too, therefore if we trust in riclies,

the heart is diverted and carried away from God : Jonah ii. 8, ' They

that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.' They turn their

back upon God, and take up with these vain comforts here in the world.

The same temple will not serve God and Dagou ; tlie Philistines could

not bring it to pass, do what they could ; nor the same heart God and

the world : 1 Tim. 6, 17, ' Charge them that are rich in this world,

that they trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God.' If we

trust in tlie one we disclaim the other. Now consider what a dishonour

is tliis to leave God for the creature ! the fountain of living waters for

broken cisterns : Jcr. ii. 13, ' My people have committed two evils,

they have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns,

broken cisterns, that can hold no water.' They leave the husband for a

slave, treasure for coals, things precious for dung.

[2.] As there is a leaving of God, so there is the setting up another

god in his stead ; therefore covetousness is called ' idolatry,' Col. iii. 5,

and a covetous man an ' idolater,' Eph. v. 5. Mammon is the idol, and

the worldling the priest. Our tnist is not only diverted, but placed

elsewhere, while we expect that from wealth which is to be expected

from God alone. Trust in God is a confidence that no evil shall befall

us, and nothing truly good shall be wanting to us while we keep in

with him ; such a kind of confidence we place in riches, therefore this

must needs be a heinous sin. So that besides apostasy and forsaking

the true God, there is idolatry ; Ave set up another god. Trust is a

prime affection, which keeps up all commerce between us and God.

Our allegiance and respect to the crown of heaven is mainly preserved

by dependence, and the heart is never kept in a right frame but when

we look for all from God. Let a man but think himself sufficient to

his own happiness, and God will soon be laid aside. As soon as we can

live without God, we presently omit all kind of worship and respect to

him. Our first ])arents greedily catched at the bait : ' Ye shall be as

gods,' Gen. iii. 5. How as gods? Not in a blessed conformity, but

in a cursed self-sufficiency. Thus we all affect to be sufficient to our-

selves, to be able to live without God. The prodigal son, when he had

his portion in his own hands, soon left his father. If we can live with-

out God, we will never care for him. You dethrone God, and put

money in his place, and set up something as God.

2. The mischievous effects and fruits of carnal confidence. You

may consider these effects meritorie and effective.

[1.] Consider it meritorie, the merit of it ; it maketh us incapable

of eternal life. God is disparaged from being our paymaster and giv-

ing us our reward when we trust in money. Look, as God sent the

Israelites to their idols, to see whether they could deliver them : Judges

X. 14, ' Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen ; let them

deliver you in the time of your tribulation ; ' so he will send us to the

things we trust to. A man seeks his heaven and happiness here, while

VeR. 24.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 41

he is content to enjoy -wealth without God, and so dischargeth God

from providing a reward for him • Luke vi. 24, \* Woe unto you that

are rich, for ye have received your consolation ; ' you have the happi-

ness you pitch upon. God once said, Woe to you that are rich, but

never said. Woe to you that are poor. They that have their heaven,

their happiness here without God, can expect no more from him.

Therefore meritoriously this is the fruit of it, it will make us incapable

of eternal life.

[2.] Consider carnal confidence effective, in the influence of it ; the

effects of it are very mischievous.

(1.) It is the ground of all miscarriage in practice. When men

think they cannot be happy without wealth, or so much coming in by

the year, then they will soon come to this, they dare not obey God for

fear they shall lose their worldly comforts, wherein their happiness lies.

It is notable, when the Holy Ghost speaks of keeping the command-

ment, and that the commandments of God are not grievous to his

people, presently he speaks of victory over the world : 1 John v. 3, 4,

' For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his

commandments are not grievous ; for whatsoever is born of God over-

cometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world,

even our faith.' Why ? What is the reason of this connection ? The

world is a great hindrance and let in keeping the commandment.

Unless a man overcome his worldly appetites and worldly desires, he

cannot keep the law of God to any purpose ; and therefore David saith,

Ps. cxix. 36, ' Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covet-

eousness ; ' implying that while our hearts are carried out so strongly

after worldly things we can never be thorough and upright with God

in the way of his testimonies.

(2.) It hinders us from looking after heavenly things. It is impos-

sible a man should in good earnest seek things above whilst he trusts

in the world, and promiseth himself a long and hajipy life here. Trust

is acquiescentia cordis, the rest and complacency of the soul ; it seeks

no further when it hath something to rest in ; therefore when we rest

here, all other happiness is neglected ; there is no want in their condi-

tion : Luke xii. 19, ' Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many

years ; take thine ease.' They cannot endure to think of a change, of

leaving this, and going to a world to come, of shooting the gulf, and

launching out into another world, and therefore make no provision for

eternity. Well, then, trusting in riches is bad, as it takes off the heart

from depending upon God's providence for the present, for so far a

creature exempts itself from the jurisdiction and dominion of God ; but

much more bad as it takes us off from depending on God's promises

for the future, as it flatters us witli hopes of long and happy days, and

causeth us to put off" all thoughts, and all care about eternity and blessed-

ness to come. He that trusts in riches judgeth all his happiness to be

in this life ; let him enjoy the world to the full, and he hath enough ;

here is his happiness, and his heaven too : he saith as that cardinal, He

would not give his portion in Paris for his portion in paradise. Tell a

worldly man of laying up treasures in heaven, and of the riches of the

heavenly inheritance, he smiles at it, and will not give a foot of land

here for an acre in heaven. Tell them of growing rich towards God,

42 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XI.

and it is but a fancy : Luke xii. 21 , 'So is lie that layeth up treasure

for himself, and is not rich towards God.' So they may enjoy present

satisfactions, they will give God a discharge for other things. As the

Beuhenites and Gadites would stay on this side Jordan, and consented to

abate their portion in the land of Canaan, because they were already in

a rich country, so they can be content to abate heavenly happiness, for

if it be well with them here, they are satisfied, for other things they

need not trouble themselves : 1 Cor. xv. 32, ' Let us eat and drink,

for to-morrow we shall die ; ' and there is an end of the world with us,

(3.) It is the ground of all the disquiet and discontent of mind that

we meet with. If a man would live a happy life, let him but seek a

sure object for his trust, and he shall be safe : Ps. cxii. 7, ' He shall

not be afraid of evil tidings ; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.'

A man that puts his confidence in God, if he hears bad news of mis-

chief coming towards him, as suppose a bad debt, a loss at sea, accidents

by fire, tempests, or earthquakes, as Job had his messengers of evil tid-

ings, which came thick and threefold upon him, yet he is not afraid,

for his heart is fixed on God, he hath laid up his confidence in God,

therefore his heart is kept in an equal poise ; he can say, as Job, ' The

Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name

of the Lord,' Job i. 21. His comforts did not ebb and flow with the

creature, but his heart was fixed trusting in the Lord. But now when

a man puts his joy and his contentment under the creature's power, he

is always liable to great dejections and anxious disquiets : Jer. xlix.

23, ' They have heard evil tidings, they are faint-hearted.' His life

and happiness consists in the presence of creatures, and in the affluence

of the world which, being mutable, so must his comfort needs be ; so

that he that trusts in riches, to be sure doth but make way for sore and

sad troubles of spirit. Good David, when he had abused his prosperity

to a carnal trust and security, he felt the more trouble afterwards, and

so gives us the instance of himself in this kind : Ps. xxx. 6, 7, 'I said

in my prosperity, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou

hast made thy mountain to stand strong, thou hidest thy face, and I

was troubled.' He shall never want troubles that placeth his trust in

anything on this side God, but is up and down as his worldly comforts

ebb and flow ; whereas a christian, who makes God his trust, and the

favour of God his greatest interest, is like the nave or centre of the

wheel, which still remains in its own place and posture in all the cir-

cumgyrations and turnings about of the wheel. So in all the turnings

of providence, when the spokes are sometimes up and sometimes down,

sometimes in the dirt and sometimes out of the dirt, the nave and

centre is still where it was. Well, then, if you would be acquainted

with true peace, let not your hearts be set upon great estates, which

are liable to so many changes, but trust in the Lord, and your heart

shall be established.

III. I come to give some signs and discoveries of this secret evil,

confidence and trust in riches.

1. When men oppress, and do that which is evil, and think to bear

it out with their wealth, power, and greatness, as if there were no God

above to call them to an account, or as if there had not been, or could

not be such a turn of human affairs as God can lay them low enough,

YeR. 24.J SEKMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 43

and their honour be hiid in the dust, and the poor and afflicted shall

be exalted. God hurls the world up and down, that misery may not

want a comfort, nor power a bridle. Sometimes God puts up this,

sometimes the other sort of men, that still l)y all these changes he may

keep the world in order, that think they may do anything because it is

in the power of their hands : Micali ii. 1, ' Woe unto them that devise

iniquity, and work evil upon their beds ; when the morning is light

they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand.' Usually the

world is governed by interest rather than conscience ; they count ever}-

thing right which they are able to effect, and justice is measured by

present safety, not by principles of conscience ; it is in the power of

their hands, and therefore they will do it. The Lord gives caution

against this : Ps. Ixii. 10, ' Trust not in oppression, become not vain

in robbery ; if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.' When

a man thinks he is able to carry it against others, and to do his

adversary two wrongs for one, then he makes no conscience, but does all

that he can, not all that he ought. Alas ! this poor creature rests upon

his vain support, and that which seems to be his present advantage will

in time prove his loss and ruin, when the course of providence is

altered. How soon can God turn poor worms into dust ! bring them

down from their altitudes, and make them become the scorn and

shame of those afflicted poor that wait upon the Lord ! Ps. lii. 6, 7,

' The righteous shall see and fear, and shall laugh at him. Lo, this is

the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance

of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.' This is thg,t

brave, that gallant man in the world, that never thought of securing his

greatness by God's protection, nor applied himself to piety and justice,

nor imagined that such things would be useful to his present security,

but resolved by w^ealth and wicked enterprises to establish and per-

petuate his greatness ; but how hath God confuted all his vain and

false hopes, and brought utter destruction upon him ! Thus it hath been,

and thus it will be again, till the world learn to grow wiser by all the

changes that God hath wrought before their eyes. And therefore, this

is a sign of trusting in wealth, when men grow proud, insolent, and

overbearing, and speak roughly : Prov. xviii. 23, ' The rich answereth

roughly,' and are high-minded : 1 Tim. vi. 17, ' Charge them that are

rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain

riches, but in the living God.'

2. An inordinate care and solicitousness to get wealth. Multiplying

of worldly practices cometh from unbelief in God and confidence in

the means : Prov. xxiii. 4, ' Labour not to be rich ; cease from thine

own wisdom.' This toiling and labour to get the world into our hands

argues we esteem of it beyond what it deserves. Indeed there is a

lawful labour ; wealth may be sought for the necessities of life and

exercise of good works ; but when men make it their main care, they

place their happiness in it. Now, because it is hard to distinguish

honest labour from worldly care, the best way will be for you to con-

sider the disproportion of your endeavours to earthly and spiritual and

heavenly things ; for our Saviour, when he describes the carnal fool, that

Trusted in the abundance of his riches, he tells us, Luke xii. 21, 'So is

he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.'

44 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XL

When men seek the world in good earnest, and make slender provision

for heaven and the happiness of their precious and immortal souls,

when they never look after the assuring of their interestin things to come,

when the lean kine devour the fat, when that which should be sought

first, either is sought last or not at all, then men trust in these outward

things. Surely you fancy a greater happiness in the enjoyment of

worldly things than you should. The scripture notes as a sign of this

inordinate respects a making haste to be rich: Prov. xx. 21, 'An

inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning, but the end thereof

shall not be blessed ; ' and chap, xxviii. 20, ' He that maketh haste to

be rich shall not be innocent ; ' and ver. 22, ' He that hasteth to be

rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come

upon him.\* When men are so earnest to commence into an estate,

taking all opportunities, seeking to get it by indirect means, and think

thereby to make them and theirs happy, this inordinacy will prove their

bane and ruin. In bestowing it as God directs, none so slow ; in getting

it, none so earnest : certainly he that believe th will not make haste,

3. When men think themselves better provided by a wealthy apostasy

than by a close adhering to God all-sufficient. Sometimes the keeping

of wealth and religion come in competition. Now, when a man debates

with conscience, Here is your duty, and there is your loss, can you

trust in wealth rather than in the promises of God ? If the Lord for

our duty should reduce us to never so great straits, he is able to make

it all up to us again, this should suffice us : ' The Lord is able to give

thee much more than this,' 2 Chron. xxv. 9. But if in the debates of

conscience gain bears sway, it is a sign we trust in wealth rather than

in the promises of God.

4. When men slacken or omit prayer, because they are well at ease

and have worldly abundance. This is a certain truth, that trust in

God, or prayer, or an acknowledgment of God, always go together : Ps.

Ixii. 8, ' Trust in him at all times, ye people ; pour out your hearts

before him.' If the heart be taken off from the creature, it will be

much with God ; but when men are full, and think they need him not,

and therefore grow cold and careless in their addresses to him, it may

be in their affliction God shall hear from them, but at other times the

throne of grace lies neglected, they have other trusts, and depend on

something on this side God, or God would be oftener acknowledged.

5. When men think wealth shall sufficiently secure them against all

changes, and that when they have it they shall see nothing but happy

days, and therefore give uj) themselves securely to enjoy the pleasui-es

of this life : Luke xii. 19, ' Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years ;

take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.' Sensuality, security, and

pride are the fruits of carnal confidence : ' They trust in their wealth,

and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches,' Ps. xlix. 6. As

if their felicity and chief est stay lay in them, not only against the

chances of this life, but against God's threats and vengeance and judg-

ment ; thence men fetch their support and comfort, and hope for them

and theirs : Prov. x. 15, ' The rich man's Avealth is his strong city.' A

penny in their purse is better than the God of heaven. Here is their

great assurance, the sure pledge of their happiness, as if God could not

bring them down wonderfully.

VeR. 24.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 45

6. When men are so loath to forego riches when God calls them

thereunto, it is a sign they trust in them, not in God. The soul of man

should be justly poised, and at a point of indifFerency to worldly

things, to get or keep, to want or have, as God will. Until our

resolutions be as easily cast the one way as the other, we shall never

be said to be wholly free from this sin of trusting in riches ; but

certainly we are deeply tainted with it when we are so over dejected

with worldly losses : 1 Cor. vii. 31, ' They that mourn as if they

mourned not ; ' and 2 Peter i. 5, ' Add to temperance, patience.' If

there were a moderation in the use of worldly things, it would make

way for patience. Gregory saith, Job lost his estate without grief,

because he possessed it without love ; but it is a sign we love them too

much when we murmur against God, and the heart is so depressed

when they are taken away by God's providence, as if all our happi-

ness were gone. Certainly riches are too highly prized, and the world

too impatiently desired, when they are so deeply lamented ; if when

they take wings, and are gone, tlley bewail it as if their god were

gone : Judges xviii. 24, ' Ye have taken away my gods which I made,

and the priest, and are gone away, and what have I more ? and what

is this that ye say unto me. What aileth thee ? ' Thence ariseth their

trouble, grief, and sorrow of heart.

IV, For the remedies against this secret and great mischief of

putting our confidence in earthly things.

. 1. By way of consideration.

[1.] Consider the uncertainty of riches should check our trust in

tliem : 1 Tim. vi. 17, ' That they trust not in uncertain riches.' AVhat

depends upon more uncertainty than our outward estates ; and will you

trust in them ? Who would trust another that is sure to fail him at

his greatest need ? Prov. xxiii. 5, \* Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that

which is not ? for riches certainly make themselves wings, and fly away,

as an eagle towards heaven.' A man is not better and more sufficiently

provided for his dinner because there is a flock of wildfowl now pitched

upon his fields , they may soon fly away. Eiches are like winged

creatures, compared to eagles which fly away towards heaven. How are

they gone ! how many ways may the Lord take them away from us !

There is the fire, the thief, fraudulent bargains, vexatious lawsuits,

public judgments, the displeasure of the times. Many are the wings

that riches have, and therefore unless a man hath a mind to be deceived,

why should he trust in them ? This should be deeply thought of in

our greatest prosperity, especially when we have many instances before

our eyes. Alas ! how many are there that have laid out all their wit,

and labour, nay, and venture conscience, to get an estate, and all is

gone in an instant, and they have heirs that they never thought of !

And yet the world is as greedy upon these things as ever.

[2.] Consider, none ever trusted to the world but they have cause to

complain in the issue. We think wealth can do great things for us,

and stand us in stead beyond any other thing to make us happy, but we

shall find it otherwise. God is jealous of our trust, and the creature

that is of itself vain is made more vain by our dependence upon it.

God will set himself to disappoint a carnal trust : Prov. xi. 28, ' He that

trusteth in his riches shall fall.'

46 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XL

[3.] Consider, the more wealth, many times the more danger, there-

fore shall we trust in this ? In a net, when great fishes are taken, the-

lesser make their escape. A great tree by the largeness and thickness

of its boughs provoketh others to lop it, or it falleth by its own weight.

Nebuchadnezzar led the princes and nobles captive wlien the poor were

left in the land. As many times thieves and robbers cut off the finger

for the ring's sake when they cannot otherwise pluck it off, so is a man

destroyed and made a prey for his wealth's sake.

[4.] Consider the unprofitableness of wealth without God ; it cannot

make you contented, and safe, and happy, and comfortable : Luke xii.

15, 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which

he possesseth.' A man doth not live upon his wealth : ' Not by bread

alone,' Mat. iv. 4, but by the providence of God. I do not only say

they cannot make you happy and wise ; certainly they cannot do that ;

but they cannot make you more healthful, cheerful, and comfortable ;

so that whether you will or no, at length you are brought to depend

upon God. But especially is their unprofitableness seen in the day of

death and in the day of wrath. In the day of death, when a man must

shoot the gulf of eternity, and launch out into the deep ocean of the

other world : Job xxvii. 8, ' What is the hope of the hypocrite, though

he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?' When you must

die, and nothing shall remain with you but the bitter remembrance of

an estate, either ill-got or ill-spent (for it is all one), oh ! how bitter

and grievous will this be to you to call to mind the iniquity of traffic,

to remember the cries of the oppressed widow or orphans, or neglected

poor, or your pride and luxury, and sowing to the flesh, when God

comes to take away the soul ! Or else in the day of wrath : Prov. xi.

4, ' Riches profit not in the day of wrath." Of internal wrath, when a

spark of God's anger lights upon the conscience, and our thoughts are

awakened against us, and fall as a heavy burden upon us, oh ! what

will all riches do ! To allude to that Prov. vi. 35, ' He will not regard

any ransom, neither will he rest content, though thou givest many

gifts.' Justice will not be bribed, neither will all the money you have

buy you a pardon. And in the day of external wrath : Zeph. i. 18,

' Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the

day of the Lord's wrath.' As Absalom's mule left him hanging by the

hair of the head, so will riches leave and forsake you in all your misery.

[5.] Think seriously of this, that God is the author of all wealth,

and the sovereign disposer of it ; and therefore, whether we have it or

have it not, we must trust in God. If wealth fails, that we have it not,

then it is manifest it is not to be trusted in. If it should increase, yet

it should occasion us to trust in God, who gives us what we have ; by

what means soever it comes to our hands, it is his gift : ' It is the

blessing of the Lord that maketh rich,' Prov. x. 22. If riches come to

you by inheritance from your ancestors, it was by the providence of

God that you were born of rich and noble friends, and not of beggars.

If it come by gift, it is God that made them that gave it you able and

willing. If it comes by industry and skill, it is God that gives the

faculty, the use, and the success ; so that still God is to be trusted in,

not the creature, for he hath a mighty hand in the disposal of things

in the world.

YeR. 24.] SEiiMONS UPON ilAEK X. 17-27. 47

2. By way of practice.

[1.] Pray more to be kept from this sin than from poverty, namely,

to have riches, and not to trust in them. It is an extraordinary gift

of God, and to be sought with greater care, diligence, and frequency of

prayers and tastings, than either health, preferment, life, or any other

thing : ver. 27, ' With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with

God all things are possible.' God only can do it thoroughly. This

should be the constant request of rich men, Lord, let me not trust in

what I have ; this is a greater blessing than the greatest abundance in

the world.

[2.] Be more ready to watch opportunities of charity, to distribute

and dispense your estate than to increase it ; for there is nothing will

free us from this sin so much as the continual exercise of charity, or

the giving of alms. Therefore your great care and delight should be

to hearken after charitable occasions for the relief of the poor and for

the church of God, and be glad when occasions of doing good are

offered. They that hunt after opportunities of gain trust in riches, but

they that seek opportunities of doing good show they are clear from

this sin : Luke xii. 33, ' Sell that you have, and give alms ; provide

yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens, that

faileth not ; ' then you trust in the promises. Tour ofi&ce is not that

of a treasurer, but of a steward, to have them in your hands, not in

your hearts ; otherwise not you but your chest is rich.

[3.] Labour by faith to make God your trust and confidence : 1 Tim.

vi. 17, ' That they trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God.

To rely upon his power, mercy, and goodness for all that you have and

stand in need of : ' Give us this day our daily bread ; ' for protection

and provision. When God giveth you riches, suspect what your heart

may do with them. It is good to fear always, especially when we have

what we wish for or desire. Therefore, still be looking to God, taking

your maintenance out of his hands, and praying to him, and blessing

him daily for your supply, and this will tnake your estate sweet and

comfortable to you, and free from those snares wherewith otherwise

it will be encumbered.

[4.] Be sure you get grace together with an estate, for otherwise

singly it will be a snare to you: Prov. xiv. 24, ' The crown of the wise

is their riches, but the foolishness of fools is foUy.' Paches are as they

are used ; if they fall to the share of a man that is godly and wise,

they are a crown and ornament, otherwise a snare ; for the one

employeth them to the honour of God, and the good of the church and

state, and is more publicly usefuk but the other groweth more haughty

and fierce, and scornful of holy things, and sensual and vain, and eateth

and drinketh, and swaggereth away the good gifts of God, which

might have a more noble use. So Eccles. vii. 11, 'Wisdom is good

with an inheritance ; ' it is good without it, but more conspicuously

good with it. It is not said an inheritance is good without wisdom or

grace. No ; it is reserved to the owners for their hurt. So Prov. xvii.

16, 'Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom,

seeing he hath no heart to it.' Many a man hath a price, but he hath

not a heart ; an estate is but as a sword in the hand of a madman,

when a man wants grace to improve it.

48 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XIL

[5.] Be sure your esteem of riches come below your esteem of

religion and good conscience. As Nazianzen said of his eloquence, he

had something of value to esteem as nothing for Christ. By all my

wealth and glory, this alone I have gained, that I have something to

which I might prefer my Saviour. This is like ' the woman clothed

with the sun, and the moon under her feet,' Kev. xii. 1, contemning all

worldly and sublunary things for Christ.

[6.] Think of changes in the midst of your fulness : ' Surely every

man at his best estate is altogether vanity,' Ps. xxxix. 5 ; not only at

his worst estate, when God rebuketh him for sin. We should make

suppositions, and see how we can bear the loss of all things, when they

are represented but in conceit and imagination: Hab. iii. 17, 18,

'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the

vine, &c., yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my

salvation.' The fool durst not suppose the accidents of that night :

Luke xii. 20, 'Thou fool! tliis night thy soul shall be required of

thee.' Security is a coward ; acquaint the soul with a supposition of

loss and danger.

SEKMON XII.

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a

rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. — Mark x. 25.

I HAVE now read you a sentence, that at first view may seem to cut

off the greatest and most splendid part of the world from all hopes of

salvation. Had it been my saying only, you might take liberty to tax

it as rash and rigorous, but the mouth of truth itself hath spoken it,

even Jesus Christ, whom we own as our Lord and master. He suffi-

ciently knew the worth and way of salvation, and the state and danger

of souls. Now he interposeth his authority : Mat. xix. 24, ' I say unto

you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than

for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.' If we believe him,

then let rich men look to themselves. He had already told them, that

it is hard for them that have riches ; then he shows wherein the diffi-

culty lay, because of their trusting in riches. Now, he represents the

difficulty by a similitude; it is as hard for them to enter into the

kingdom of God, as for a thing of the greatest bulk to pass through

the"straitest place ; for what more strait than a needle's eye, and a

camel is a creature of a great bulk. A camel cannot pass through a

needle's eye without a miracle, nor a rich man enter into the kingdom

of God without the singular power of God's grace. For the expression :

Some say there was a gate at Jerusalem, called the eye of a needle, a

strait gate, by which a camel could not enter. Nisi deposito onero,

et flexis genibus, without laying aside his burden, and bending his

knee. But no approved history mentions this, and the conceit lesseneth

the force of our Saviour's speech. Others say that the word Kdfj.6\o<s

VeE. 25.] SERMONS UPON ^lARK X. 17-27. 49

signifies a cable, by which mariners do fasten the anchor, but that also

is a mistake ; for that word is otherwise spelt, Kd/j.i\o<i and doth also

rarely occur in that sense, and therefore rather the beast is intended

than the cord or cable.

It was an ordinaiy proverb among the Jews, and is so even to this

day, that an elephant cannot pass through the eye of a needle. Our

Saviour indeed a little changeth the proverb, instead of the elephant,

a beast which few had seen, putting a camel, a creature very ordinary

in Syria ; ' It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.' I

will not say that this similitude was chosen because they were wont to

lade their rich wares upon camels, and so the camel, doth most decipher

the rich man. who is the packhorse of his wealth, and hath the burden,

but not the use of it. However, two things I may gather from it, as

Origen hath done before us —

1. That there is something in turning chi\*istian, or entering into

the kingdom of God, that answers the needle's eye, and that is the

strait gate and the narrow way which leads to life, Mat. vii. 14, the

strait gate of repentance, and the narrow way of constant mortification.

2. That there is something on the rich man's part which answers

the camel, namely, that they grow so great and bulky, in regard of

their pride, worldly lusts, joys, and confidences, that they cannot reduce

themselves to those straits that are necessary for entering into the

kingdom of God, as the camel's bulk and hunchback hinders his

entrance into a strait place. This without straining I might observe ;

though I must tell you, I think the main intent of this proverbial

speech is nothing else but this, to express an extraordinary difficulty on

the rich man's part, not to be removed but by the almighty power of

grace. Such similitudes are frequent in scripture : Jer. xiii. 23, ' Can

the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? ' so Mat,

xxiii. 24, ' Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a

camel.'

Well, then, you see it noteth the difficulty, if not utter impossibility,

for men of that rank, without peculiar grace to avoid the snares of

Satan, or to render themselves capable of eternal blessedness. And

since Christ doth again and again press this — we have had it three

times, and now doth amplify it by a comparison — I shall observe —

Doci. That the danger of riches, and the difficulty of rich men's

salvation, is a point ought much to be pressed and seriously thought of.

There are two propositions included in this observation — (1.) That

the salvation of rich men is very difficult ; (2.) That this must be

much pressed and seriously thought of.

I. The difficulty of their salvation. I have formerly proved this

by reason of the sins incident to this state and condition of life, there-

fore now I shall quit that, and prove there is a great deal of difficulty

for rich men to enter into the kingdom of God\_, because of the duties

required of them.

1. There are common duties that concern them and all christians.

2. There is something peculiar and singular expected from the rich,

which makes their entrance into heaven more difficult.

1. There are common duties that concern them and all christians,

that are more difficult for them than for others to perform, and these

VOL. xvn. D

50 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XIL

are set down Mat. xvi. 24, ' If any man will come after me, let him

deny himself, and take np his cross, and follow me.' Christ saith, ' If

any man,' without exception ; small and great, rich and poor, they

must all suhmit to those terms. The duties are three, and they make

way one for another — (1.) He must deny himself, and he must comply

with this ; (2.) That he may take up his cross, and bear it kindly and

willingly ; and that fits for the (3.) Duty, following Christ, or cleaving

close to him. These are the three duties that are required of all that

will come after Christ, and would follow him as their great Lord and

master, and captain of their salvation: He must ' deny himself,' his

own wit, his own will, his own affections and interests, and be wholly

at the disposal of God, pleasing him in all things. Till we come to

this, nothing else in Christianity will down. Well, when this is done,

then he must ' take up the cross ; ' first deny ourselves, that bows the

back of a sinner ; then take up, and bear the cross kindly ; that is to

say, rather suffer the loss of all than wilfully sin against God, and

hazard his favour. And after this he must follow Christ, not forsake

him because of the cross, but stick the closer to him, walking accord-

ing to his doctrine and example. Let us treat of these duties apart,

and withal show how hard it is for the rich man to comply with them.

[1.] He must deny himself, whatever his corrupt heart desires, how

dear and pleasing soever it be ; though his parting with the content-

ments of the flesh should be like ' cutting off the right hand, and pluck-

ing out the right eye,' Mat. v. 29, 30, yet this must be done, and he

must fully resign up himself to please God in all things. Now this is

very hard and difficult for all men, which we may soon be sensible of

if we do but consider how earnestly man affects a dominion and sove-

reignty over himself, to be sui juris, at his own dispose, as those rebels

against God said, Ps. xii. 4, ' Our lips are our own, who is lord over

us ? ' A libertine yokeless spirit possesseth them. We conceit that

our hearts are our own to think what we please, our tongues our own

to speak what we please, our hands our own to do what we please.

Man affects to be a god to himself, and to be solely under the govern-

ment of his own will, and to have all his comforts in his own hand and

at his own dispose, denying himself nothing which his heart affects ;

as Solomon saith he did, Eccles. ii. 10, ' Whatsoever mine eyes desired,

I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy.' Natural

pride and self-love is such that we cannot; endure the yoke of any

restraints, but we let loose the reins to a full fruition of whatever our

hearts affect. Now, as self-denial is difficult to all, because of this

yokeless and libertine spirit, much more to the rich and to the great,

and to those that flow in ease and plenty, and have no bands and

restraints of providence upon them ; they are more licentious, impatient

of contradiction, or of having their wills thwarted, and therefore by a

lawless liberty they wholly seek to please themselves, and to feed their

own lusts, without any care and respect to God : Jer. v. 5, ' I will get me

to the great men, and will speak unto them, but they have altogether

broken the yoke, and burst the bonds ; ' that is, they cast off all the

bonds of loyalty and obedience to God. And why ? Because they

think they can subsist alone and apart from him : Jer. ii. 31, ' Where-

fore do my people say. We are lords, we will come no more unto thee ? '

VeR. 25.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 51

Men think themselves to be lords of their own fortune, and therefore

slight God, break through the restraint of his laws, cannot deny them-

selves anything that their corrupt hearts affect. Those that are in a

low condition, kept bare, and in a daily need of providence, are more

humble and submissive to God ; but when they grow great, they turn

the back upon him, and cannot endure his strict government. So Jer.

xxii. 21, \* I spake to thee in thy prosperity, but thou saidst, I will not

hear.' Those that are rich and well at ease are loath to be controlled

in their will, even by God himself : Exod. v. 2, ' Who is the Lord, that

I should obey his voice to let Israel go ? I know not the Lord, neither

will I let Israel go,' Who so self-willed, proud, and scornful of God

as they ? who so apt to please themselves, and to use their riches to

feed their lusts, and to provide accommodations for their flesh and

corrupt nature ? Self-denial and a flesh-pleasing course are inconsistent ;

and therefore, because of the lawless liberty which they take to please

themselves and to make provision for the flesh, they cannot comply

with this precept of Christ, ' Let him deny himself.'

[2.] To take up the cross, that is another of Christ's precepts, and to

be willing to suffer affliction, either from the hands of God or from the

hands of men for God's sake. This is one thing that we must reckon

upon : if we would be christians and Christ's disciples, first or last we

shall be called to this exercise. Ignatius, when he was led bound

before the tribunal, Now, saith he, I begin to be a disciple of Christ.

Many think it is factious to talk of the cross in days of peace and liberty,

but Christ puts it into our indentures. If we should never suffer for

Christ, yet we must be sure that we have a heart that would suffer if

God calls us to it. It is possible a man may go to heaven without

suffering, but he cannot go to heaven without a resolution to suffer

when God will. Now the cross makes it hard to all: Heb. xii. 11,

' Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous.'

It is not pleasing to the flesh to endure blows, suffer smart, and to

account all that we have as ' dung and dross in comparison of Christ ; '

to be joyful in tribulation, and so wholly swallowed up with the hopes

and interests and concernments of the world to come, and to be dead

to present things. Oh ! how irksome is the remembrance of this to

those that are high in place and office, and sail with a full tide and

current of worldly felicity ! To be averse to suffering is natural to man,

and is in itself no sin, for nature is to seek its own welfare and preser-

vation, but when it goes to excess, it argues a tenderness of the flesh,

and that we have consulted with Satan : Mat. xvi. 22, said Peter, ' Be

it far from thee, Lord ; this shall not be unto thee ; ' but Christ said,

ver. 23, ' Get thee behind me, Satan. ' Now the more men have to

lose, the more tender they are of losing it ; a little is sooner quitted.

This young man went away sad, for he had great possessions. Great

men, when once they come to be noted for the profession of the truth,

they shrink and fall off presently ; they have not learned to leave all

for Christ's sake. Judas, that had the bag, turns aposta'te and traitor

to Christ, John xii, 6 ; when he saw nothing but opposition increasing,

the supposed kingdom not to go forward, and heard Christ speaking of

nothing but the cross and suffering, he thinks of betraying his master ;

heaven is no pennyworth for him if it cost so dear.

52 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27 [SeR. XII.

[3.] Let ' him follow me.' He that will be Christ's disciple must

follow him, his doctrine, and his example.

(1.) His doctrine ; that is, the directions he hath given us in his

word. Now what is the drift of Christ's doctrine ? The doctrine

Christ brought out of the bosom of God is to draw us off from the

world to heaven, from the pleasures of the flesh and the baits of this

life, to seek things to come and things eternal. This is one great

excellency of the christian faith, that it reveals the doctrine of eternal

life and a blessed estate to come, which all other professions in the

world could only guess at. Christ hath made it manifest, and brought

it to light, that there is such a thing : 2 Tim. i. 10, ' He hath brought

life and immortality to light through the gospel.' And the gospel re-

veals the way that leads to it ; it makes a free offer of it upon the con-

dition of faith in Christ: John iii. 16, 17, ' God so loved the woild,

that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in liim

should not perish, but have everlasting life : for God sent not his Son

into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him

might be saved.' And walking in all holiness of life : Heb. xii. 14,

' Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall

see the Lord.' And the gospel lays before us the highest motives to

quicken us to walk therein, and take off our affections from the world :

Col. iii. 1. 2, ' If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which

are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God: set your

affections on things above, not on things of the earth.' This must be

our great scope and business, that we may get home to God with a

neglect of present advantages. The gospel tells us that we should not

be troubled though our outward man decay, whilst ' this light affliction,

that is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and

eternal weight of glory,' 2 Cor. iv, 17. Well, then, seeing this is the

great design of the doctrine of Christ, that here we should ply our work,

tliat hereafter we may receive our wages ; that here we should study

holiness, that hereafter we may be blessed with him. Now what doc-

trine can be more contrary than this to those ' that have their portion

here,' Ps. xvii. 14, ' That have received their consolation here,' Luke

xvi. 32, ' That have received their good things in their lifetime,' Luke

xvi. 25 ? To tell them of a dislodging and removal, and of foregoing

the things they love and see for a God they never saw, oh ! how tedious

is this to a carnal heart ! They are already happy and blessed, and

cannot endure to think of a change, and therefore are incapable of

following this doctrine, that drives us off from carnal vanities to look

after the interests and concernments of the world to come.

(2.) His example. I shall only instance in two things — we are to

follow him in humility of heart and purity of life.

(Isi.) In humility : Mat. xi. 29, ' Learn of me, for I am meek and

lowly of heart.' This is the great thing the Son of God would recom-

mend to us, in which we should take after him, even to be of an humble

and lowly spirit : ' Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ

Jesus,' Phil. ii. 5. Christ was the Son of God. He did not affect to

be a God by robbery, as the angels had rebellious thoughts against the

empire and majesty of God, and they were thrust down from heaven

for their aspiring ; but the Son of God was equal with God the Father:

VeR. 25.] SERMONS UPOX JIAIUv X. 17-27. 53

' He thought it no robbery to be equal with God,' ver. 6 ; aud yet 'he

made himself of no reputation, toolv: upon him the form of a servant

and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a

man, he humbled himself,' ver. 7, 8. Certainly, if any had cause to

stand upon his terms, Jesus Christ had much more. That preface is

notable and very magnificent, John xiii. 3, ' Jesus knowing that the

Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come

from God, and went to God.' And what follows ? ' He washed his

disciples' feet,' ver. -4, 5. Thus the boughs that are most laden hang

their heads, and the sun at the highest casts the least shadow. Jesus

Christ indeed was high, excellent, and glorious, yet he would conde-

scend to set his disciples such a pattern of humility. But now who

more proud and disdainful than the rich ? When men have anything

in the world, they grow high and lofty. Oh ! when we consider the

pride of man to man, we may more stand wondering at the condescen-

sions of God to man. As soon as a man hath any estate in the world,

he is altered presently : 1 Tim. vi. 17, ' Charge them that are rich in

this world, that they be not high-minded.' Many that in their low

estate were humble and meek, in prosperity grow proud and disdain-

ful ; many that were forward and zealous, grow cold and slothful in

spiritual things ; many that, while they were kept dependent upon

(xod, were diligent in hearing, profitable in conference, thought it no

disgrace to instruct their families, were patient of reproof, but when

the world comes in upon them, no such matter. As the moon is never

eclipsed but in the full, so all the grace that they seemed to have it is

under an eclipse when they are in the full of prosperity.

(2d.) In purity and holiness: 'He that saith he abideth in him,

ought himself so to walk even as he walked,' 1 John ii. 6, and 1 John

iii. 3, ' Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as

he is pure ; ' and 1 John iv. 17, ' As he is, so are we in the world.'

Now prosperity and true holiness seldom go together ; they are afflic-

tions that promote holiness : ' They verily for a few days chastened us

after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be par-

takers of his holiness : now no chastening for the present seemeth to be

joyous but grievous, nevertheless it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of

righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby,' Heb. xii. 10, 11.

Then are men most serious when they feel the rod and are pinched

with some necessity ; but when they are full, they wax wanton, kick

with the heel, and throw off all respects to God and godliness.

2. As the difficulty ariseth from the general duties that are common

to them with others, so it ariseth also from this: more is required of them

that are rich and great in this world than of others They should be

eminent and exemplary for holiness. They have larger accounts to

make to God than others, for our account must be according to our

receipts : Luke xii. 48, ' Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall

be much required ; and to whom men have committed much, of him

they will ask the more.' Among men this is a constant rule, and so it

is with God ; the account is according to the thing with which ye are

trusted ; they that have more must account for more. Now certainly

more is required of great and rich men than of others upon four

accounts — they have greater obligations, more opportunities for spirit-

54 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XII.

iial improvement, tliey have larger abilities and advantages of honour-

ing God, and because of the influence of their example.

[1.] They have greater obligations. Certainly they to whom God

hath been more bountiful, are bound to be more dutiful than others.

It is not enough to render to God, but we must render according to

what we have received. It was Hezekiah's fault, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25,

' Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him.'

Tlie rent must be paid according to the value of the farm. God will

not accept that at the hands of a rich man which he would accept from

a poor man, which hath not such great obligations. A man that hath

tasted of the bounty of God's providence, and hath had fulness and

plenty of all things, it is required he should serve God more cheerfully

than others, Deut. xxviii. 47. Their duties are greater, and their sins

are greater ; as you know the prophet aggravates David's sin by the

mercies he had received, in 2 Sam. xii. 7-9, ' I anointed thee king over

Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul ; and I gave thee

thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave

thee the house of Israel and of Judah ; and if that had been too little,

I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things : where-

fore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his

sight?' They have tasted more of the bounty and goodness of his

providence, and have had more than others to revive the sense of God,

and keep up the memorial of God in their hearts.

[2.] They have more opportunities of being free to good duties, as

being not so straitly bound to bodily labour for present maintenance,

nor burdened with so many cares and distractions of this life, and so

have more time and leisure for studying the mind of God in his word

and improving themselves in the knowledge of the truth, and medita-

ting the statutes of God, as David professeth he did all the dny long. And

look, as the apostle speaks of married and single persons, 1 Cor. vii. 32,

33, ' He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the

Lord, how he may please the Lord ; but he that is married careth for

the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife ; ' they

that are in a single estate have more leisure to attend the service of

God, greater opportunities of holy privacy and meditation upon the

promises of God, are less distracted and divided with the cares of the

world, and have nothing else to do but to serve God and study to please

him ; so it is true of poor and rich ; those that live in a plentiful con-

dition, oh ! what a great deal of time and leisure have they for religious

duties, better education, more helps, more advantages, therefore they are

more bound to addict and give up themselves to the study of divine

things. A little knowledge of God he will accept of in a poor trades-

man that is divided and distracted with the cares of the world, and

have not such leisure to attend the service of God, and the opportunities

of holy privacy and meditation, which he will not accept of in the rich,

that have so many opportunities to furnish themselves with knowledge,

and have little else to do but to serve God and labour to please him,

and to study the promises of God, that they may grow in grace ; and

yet, when they abandon themselves to sensuality, and live from ono

week's end to another, and can scarce tell what to do with their time,

and yet cannot afford it to God, how culpable are they !

VeR. 25.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 55

[3.] They have greater advantages of furthering the duties of piety

and mercy, and of honouring God with their substance, Prov. iii. 9, and

of relieving otliers, of ' malcing themselves friends of the mammon of

unrighteousness/ Luke xvi. 9. I say they have greater opportunities of

being ' rich in good works,' 1 Tim. vi. 18. Others that have hearts

have not estates, and cannot be so publicly useful. God expects from

every man according to his ability, and therefore they should abound in

all acts of mercy and piety, for the promoting the honour and service

of God, and relief and comfort of others. But alas ! usually it is here

as in nature, those mountains in the bowels of which there are most

mines of gold and silver are most barren ; so rich men, for the most

part, live most unprofitably as to the fruits of grace, piety, ajid charity.

They that have great estates have least heart to do anything for God,

and men of a middle condition do exceedingly outstrip those that are

vastly and excessively rich, in being liberal and open-handed for hon-

ouring of God and the relief of others.

[4.] More is required of them because of the influence of their ex-

ample. They are as the first-sheets, others are printed off by them.

The more any are exalted and lifted up above others, the more con-

spicuous are their actions. The example of an eminent person is never

single, for when such a one doth evil, he carries others with him as

the stream doth that which floats upon it. If they do good, their

countenance and example doth exceedingly provoke many to follow

after that which is good ; therefore they should specially take care to

fear God, and be diligent in the exercise of godliness, and serious in

the business of eternal life. But alas ! who authorise sin and propagate

it in the poor more than they that have a plentiful fortune and estate

to bear them out in it ? Who are more dissolute and lascivious, and

profaners of God's holy name and day, and deriders of God's word, and

holy services and servants ? and so wherever they go, they leave their

dregs behind them, and leaven others, and draw them into sin, which

makes the difficulty of their salvation so much the greater.

II. The other proposition that is contained in this observation is,

that this ought to be much pressed, seriously thought of, for Christ

inculcates it again and again.

1. To keep up a remembrance of God and heavenly things in the

hearts of rich men. Security and forgetfulness of God is the cause of

all the mischief rich men are liable to. Men that have so much in

the world never think of God and salvation. The heart is so full of

the world, that it leaves no place for the thoughts and remembrance

of God. When God would offer to come in upon them, it doth fare

with him as it did with Christ ; when he was born at Bethlehem, ' there

was no room for him in the inn,' Luke ii. 7. When God would lodge

in the understanding, the upper chamber of the soul, that is full of

worldly or sensual projects. If he would enter into the memory, that

is the world's warehouse, and it is pestered with cares about present

things. If he would enter into their hearts and affections, they are

prepossessed already, that is the world's storehouse, there their treasure

lies ; and so, what with this and that, it comes to pass, that ' God is

not in all their thoughts,' Ps. x. 4. The awful remembrance of God

is a strange uncouth thing to those that are full, and live plentifully

56 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XIL

in the world. This appears by the whole current of scripture ; God

forewarns his people of it : Deut. xi. 12, ' When thou shalt have eaten

and be full, beware lest thou forget the Lord thy God.' When men

are full, and abound with so much accommodation, God is banished

out of their thoughts. He complains of this as the cause of his people's

forgetting him. Hosea xiii. 6, 'According to their pasture, so were

they filled ; they were filled, and their heart was exalted, therefore have

they forgotten me.' God is forgotten in prosperity, when we have not

such a sensible need of him and of his help. Men can live alone and

apart from God, and therefore cast off all thoughts of him : 1 Tim. vi.

17, ' Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-

minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who

giveth us richly all things to enjoy.' Plenty easily breeds forgetful-

ness of God, therefore it needs often to be inculcated and enforced upon,

and thought of by them.

2. This ought to be much pressed and seriously thought of, to awaken

suspicion ; there may be a snare in our estate. To suspect danger is

a good means to prevent it, and therefore, that we may draw men to

self-suspicion, being compassed about by the snares of the devil, we

must again and again tell you how hard it is for rich men to be saved.

Agur was afraid of riches and the evil influence of them, and therefore

prays for a competency : Prov. xxx. 8, 9, ' Give me neither poverty nor

liches ; feed mo with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny

thee, and say, Who is the Lord ? ' Whereas men that never think of

danger are surprised with it before they are aware ; therefore it is good

to be suspicious of a prosperous estate, to be afraid of the world more

when it smiles than when it frowns. Most men are afraid of poverty,

but few are afraid of wealth, and yet there the snares and temptations

lie ; and the reason is, because they prize their temporal interest more

than their eternal salvation. Poverty is against their temporal interests,

but wealth, fulness, and plenty is a hindrance to their eternal salvation,

and men will venture their souls rather than their bodies. It is fat and

rank soil that feedeth weeds ; therefore think of it often ; here lies the

difficulty to have the world at will and not to be ensnared by it ; to

learn to abound is the harder lesson. Paul had learned both, so must

we : Phil, iv. 12, ' I know both how to be abased, and I know how to

abound ; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full

and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.' We say of a

proud man or woman. Such a one would do well to be a lord or lady ;

but it is harder than you imagine. How few are there that have any

lively thoughts of eternity, or make any serious preparation for death

and judgment, when they have health and wealth, and all the accom-

modat ions wliich the carnal nature desires ? And therefore be suspicious

when you find delight, and what is pleasing to the flesh, it is not likely

to be safe for your soul. Oh ! possess your estates with fear. The fear

of a snare may help to avoid it. How easily may such a carnal heart

as yours be enticed from God, and grow cold and remiss about the

great things of your salvation !

3. This ought oft to be pressed and seriously thought of, to stir up

observation how it is with us. There is no man that observes his heart

but will find this eflPect, that riches make the business of salvation more

Vee. 25.] se.::moxs upon mark x. 17-27. 57

difficult. Good David observed that his heart was corrupted by his

condition : Ps. x. 6, ' He hath said in his heart, I shall never be moved ;

for I shall never be in adversity.' And elsewhere we find he was

sensible that worldliness was creeping upon him : Ps. cxix. 36, ' Incline

my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.' A child of

God hath not the bent of his heart so perfectly fixed towards God but

it is ever and anon returning to its old bent and bias again. The best

may find that they cannot keep their affections as loose from the world

when they have houses, and lands, and all things at their will, as they

could when they are kept low and bare. The best may find that their

love to heavenly things is on the wane as worldly things are on the in-

crease. It is reported of Pius Quintus that he should say of himself, that

when he first entered into orders, he had some hopes of his salvation ;

when he came to be a cardinal, he doubted of it ; but since he came

to be pope, he did even almost despair. Many may find a very great

change in themselves, much decay of zeal for God's glory, and love to

and relish of God's word, and mindfulness of heavenly things, as it fares

better with Ihem in the world, i^ow it is good to observe this before

the mischief increaseth. Look, as jealousy and caution is necessary to

prevent the entrance and beginning of this mischief, so observation is

necessary to prevent the increase of it. When the world doth get too

deep an interest in our hearts, when it begins to insinuate and entice

us from God, and weaken our delight in the ways of God and zeal for

his glory, then we need often to tell you how hard it is for a rich man

to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

4. To stir up supplication for special and peculiar grace, that it may

not be so with us, that the Lord would keep us from the snares of our

condition ; for ' with God all things are possible ; ' that we may go to

God, and say, Lord, let not my estate be my bane and poison. On the

one side, it is a great judgment that God brings upon wicked men

when ' their table becomes their snare,' Ps. Ixix. 22, when their comforts

are cursed to them, and Avhen their hearts are drawn from God by

their plentiful condition in the world. On the other side, it is a peculiar

grace and favour from God when we be heavenly-minded in the midst

of plenty, and keep up lively spiritual exercises of godliness notwith-

standing our opulency and plentiful condition in the world. Jehoshaphat

is an instance to encourage you to pray for this : 2 Chron. xvii. 5, 6,

it is said of him, 'He had riches and honour in abundance, and his

lieart was lift up in the ways of the Lord.' Christians, it is hard to

carry a full cup without spilling, to have riches and honour, and all

this with great abundance, and yet to have a lively zeal towards God

and a great delight in his ways. Now this is possible with God, and

this God hath bestowed, and therefore it should be asked. There is

nothing that quickens to prayer so much as a constant sense and appre-

hension of the danger and difficulty which attends such an estate ;

therefore this must ever be laid before you, that your thoughts may be

steeped in this consideration.

Use 1. It serveth to check the desire of greatness and increase of

wealth. If you had more your duty would be more, and your account

greater, and your snares and temptations and stumbling-blocks in the

way to heaven would be much more multiplied ; and therefore you

68 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XII.

should be contented with what j^ou have. If we cannot thrive in the

valleys, and keep up a lively and warm respect to the world to come

in a low condition, how should we expect to grow on the tops of the

mountains, where we are more exposed to tempests, and the soil is more

barren ? therefore you should strive rather to give a good account of a

little than to make it more. The Lord knoweth that if you were a step

higher, you would be apt to be proud, licentious, secure, mindless of

eternal life, further off from God, and then better you had lived in

beggary all your days. The time will soon come about when you will

judge so, and therefore do not enlarge your desires, as if you could

never have enough.

Use 2. It teacheth us patience, not only in the want, but in the loss of

outward riches. It is more irksome to lose than to want, as it was

an unnatural thing for the sun to go back ten degrees in Ahaz's dial.

Yet this is to be borne, for when God taketh away your wealth from

you, he maketh your way to heaven more easy ; if God taketh away

riches, he doth but take a bush of thorns out of the way that would

prick and gore your souls. The world is apt to turn away your heart

from true happiness, and to hinder you in the way that leadeth to it.

Now God's grace is seen not only in fortifying the heart, but in abat-

ing the temptation ; he seeth you are apt to sleep upon a carnal pillow,

and therefore taketh it from under your heads to awaken you. If you

believe the word of God, tliat riches and honours do easily prove a snai-e,

why should you be grieved when the snare is broken ? Do you love

to have your salvation hindered or hazarded ? and therefore why are

you so impatient when God cuts you short in these outward things ?

Use 3. Let rich men think of this, and make application of this

sentence to their own hearts, that they may possess their estates with

fear. To this end, consider —

1. The person speaking is Christ, who had so much wisdom and love

to the comfort and happiness of men, that he would not fright them

with a needless danger. (See before on ver. 23.)

2. Whom it is spoken of; rich men, those that can live of themselves

in the world without the supply of others. The disciples, that had little,

cried out, ' Who then can be saved ? ' We fancy it is spoken only to

the overgrown rich ; but they that have but one talent must improve

it, and it is hard to do so. We must give an account of one talent as

well as ten. The sensualist will turn this upon the covetous, and the

covetous u])on the sensualist, the voluptuous gallant upon the cor-

morants of the city, and they upon the epicures ; but Christ saith in-

definitely, ' the rich.'

3. What is spoken of, entering into the kingdom of God, It is

salvation and eternal life ; not a trifle. Christ doth not say, He shall

do no worthy exploits in the world, or arrive at no great degree of

grace, but. He shall not enter into the kingdom of God.

4. How it is spoken. It is represented by a similitude that im-

plietli impossibility, or at least an extraordinary difficulty without a

miracle of peculiar grace.

Then look about you, sirs. Such speeches of Christ were doubly

entertained — with wonder, as by the disciples in the next verse, ' They

were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then

VeR. 26.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 59

can be saved ? ' or witli scorn : Luke xvi. 14, ' The pharisees also, who

were covetous, heard all these things, and derided him.' For the rever-

ence jou bear to Christ, I hope you will not entertain it with scorn,

but rather with wonder, holy fear, and solicitude.

I expect now you will say, What shall we do to prevent this mis-

chief ?

[1.] Eemember your condition in the world. You are not a free-

holder, but a tenant-at-will : Luke xii. 20, ' Thou fool ! this night

thy soul shall be required of thee, then whose shall all those things be

which thou hast provided ? ' You are not owners, but stewards ; not

lords and masters of what you have, but only must improve it for God ;

and you must give an account : Luke xvi. 2, ' Give an account of thy

stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.' You are not

citizens but strangers: 1 Peter ii, 11, ' Dearly beloved, I beseech you,

as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against

the soul.' The world is our inn, where we abide but for a night ; our

dwelling is there where we live longest.

[2] Judge of your estates to be good or bad to you, not as they do

accommodate the flesh, but as they help or hinder you in your way to

heaven. Make heaven your end, and consider all things else as means

and helps. Ordinances are the next means, riches and estates are

remote helps to heaven. All things are measured by the great and

last end, therefore you are to judge of all things as they help you on in

heaven's way. Better to be preserved in brine and pickle than to rot

in honey.

[3.] Devote your wealth to the Lord : Luke xii. 21, 'So is he that

layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.' Kiches

are snares, and will certainly prove means of our damnation if we do

not so. That is the best condition for us in which we may do most

service to God, and not to the flesh : Gal. vi. 8, ' For he that soweth

to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the

Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.'

SERMON XIII

And they ivere astonished out of measure, saying among themselves,

Who then can he saved ? — Mark x. 26.

In this verse you have the entertainment of Christ's doctrine concerning

the difficulty of rich men's being saved. The effects of it are two

— (1.) A great wonder or deep sense of this difficulty, 'They were

astonished out of measure ; ' (2.) An anxious question, ' And they

said among themselves. Who then can be saved ? '

For the first branch, their great wonder, 7repiaacb<; i^eirKrjacrovro, they

were struck at heart, ' astonished out of measure.' We meet with it be-

fore at the first proposal of this difficulty, ' They were astonished at his

words ; ' but now, when Christ had rendered the reason, and reassumed

60 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XllL

the former difficulty, ' It is easier for a camel,' &c., this doth increase

the astonishment, and it is not barely said, ' they were astonished,' but

'out of measure/ Let us a little inquire into the reason of this won-

der. Why should the disciples be so troubled at this speech ? They

were poor, or, however, had left all and followed Christ, as it is in the

next words.

1, Some say it was for others, to see so great a part of the world

cut off from all hopes of salvation. Though all have not wealth, yet

there are few but do desire it, and that desire may hinder as well as the

enjoyment ; therefore, they being solicitous for the salvation of others,

they were astonished, and said, ' Who then can be saved ? ' Certainly

it is good not only to Avork out our own salvation, but to effect the

salvation of others. We have a saying, Om7ie bomcm est sui diffu-

sivum — All good seeks to propagate itself; as fire turns all things

about it into fire. This is the disposition of God's people ; when they

have found any comfort and benefit by Christ themselves, they desire

others should share with them, and be partakers of the same grace and

heirs of the same promises. David, after many roarings and disquiets,

when he had found that penitent confession of sin was such a notable

way for the easing of his own conscience, and had seen the fruit of

humble dealing with God, he pens the 32(1 psalm, which is ' Ma-

schil, a psalm of instruction/ and so is willing to teach others the

way. So Andrew calls Peter when he had found Christ, John i. 41,

and Philip calls Nathanael, ver. 45. Carnal things are possessed

with envy. They that are rich and great in the world would shine

alone, and when they are gotten to the top themselves, they are loath

to teach others the way to climb up after them. But it is not so with

spiritual things, grace is charitable and communicative. Indeed, where

any take up religion out of faction and carnal aims, they would enclose

the common salvation, and envy the profession and hope of it to others,

that they may be the better esteemed and respected themselves. It is

observed of mules and other creatures that are of mixed and bastard

production, that they never procreate and beget after their kind.

Mongrel christians are envious rather than communicative ; but those

that have really tasted of the sweetness of Christ themselves are glad

of company, and it is a great satisfaction to them to hear that others

are in a towardly or hopeful way of salvation : 1 John i. 3, ' That

which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may

have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father,

and with his Son Jesus Christ.' The apostle had fellowship with

Christ, and therefore was so zealous to bring others to the enjoyment

of that privilege ; therefore, this might be one reason why the disciples,

that were safe as to their own particular, and had left all and followed

Christ, were troubled to hear that it was so hard for rich men to be

saved. Surely this charitable disposition becomes us well, and answers

the great patterns we have in the world. We read of some that were

so zealous for the salvation of others that in some sense they preferred

it before their own : ' Blot me out of thy book that thou hast v/ritten,'

saith Moses, Exod. xxxii. 32 ; and Paul, ' I could wish that myself were

accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the

flesh,' Horn. ix. 3. So much of personal happiness as resulted to him

VeR. 26.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. Gl

from communion with God, he could even lay it down at God's feet

for their sake. These are rare instances I confess, but some portion of

this spirit all should have : ' Charity seeketh not her own/ 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

Chrysostom saith, I cannot believe it is possible for that man to be

saved who doth not labour to procure and further the salvation of

his neighbour ; for whoever would go to heaven would not go to

heaven alone, but laboureth to draw others along with him. Vide

Chrysostom de Sacerdot., lib. vi. It was out of zeal for the salvation of

others.

2. The former reason was good, and argued a gracious disposition

in them, but this that I shall now give is of a worse alloy, and argues

weakness. And yet I cannot but think that this had an influence

upon them, viz., the hopes of an earthly kingdom, and the great

emoluments and preferments they expected thence. Christ's own dis-

ciples were deeply leavened with a conceit of an earthly kingdom

which the Messiah should set up. And though they had left all and

followed him in his poor estate, yet they expected greatness and honour,

and the confluence of all worldly blessings, when the kingdom of the

Messiah should begin ; and therefore, when they heard Christ again and

again expressing himself concerning the difficulty of rich men's enter-

ing into the kingdom of God, ' They were astonished out of measure,'

as finding all their carnal hopes dashed at once. I cannot but think

this was one cause of their astonishment, because in all their converses

with Christ they bewrayed a spice of this humour. Two instances I

«hall give as a pregnant proof of it. One when they were at the

sacrament, a little before the death of Christ : ' There was a strife

amongst them which of them should be accounted the greatest,' Luke

xxii. 24. They understood that the kingdom was consigned to them

in that ordinance, and they were framing of principalities, and striving

.who should have the highest preferment and office in this kingdom.

Nay, you shall see after Christ had suffered such ignominious things

at Jerusalem, this conceit abode with them ; and therefore after his

resurrection they come to him with this question, ' Lord, wilt thou at

this time restore again the kingdom to Israel ? ' Acts i. 6. They

thought the Messiah would set up a temporal kingdom over all nations,

and that they should at least be princes and lords under him, in the

exercise of his dominion and sovereignty. Justin Martyr tells us that

the heathens imagined some insurrection that the christians would be

guilty of against magistracy, because they spoke so much of the king-

dom of heaven ; and well might they be excused of their jealousy and

of this surmise, since Christ's own disciples were so far mistaken in it,

whom he had so often warned of the cross, and to whom he had expressly

said, that ' his kingdom was not of this world.' But we see hence that

the best are too carnal, and too apt to mind earthly things, and to please

themselves with the dreams of a happy estate in tlie world. The

appetite of temporal dominion, and wealth, and honour, and peace is

natural to us, and we think God doth us wrong if he doth not make

us flourish here. All God's children find something of this disposition

in themselves, even whilst they are under the cross ; they do too little

comfort themselves with the meditation of the glory of the world to

come, but are always feeding themselves with desires and hopes of an

62 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XIII.

earthly happiness, and of turning the tide and current of affairs that

seem to be against them, that the world may more smile upon them,

and befriend them more ; and when they are frustrated and disap-

pointed of this hope, their soul faints, and they are astonished out of

measure. Oh ! this is a sign that our conversation is not in heaven,

and that we do not seek the things that are above, and are not perfectly

subdued to the will of God, who many times sees the cross to be

necessary and profitable for us ; and therefore, to please ourselves still

Avith carnal hopes and dreams of a commodious and comfortable con-

dition in the world, is not for a christian.

3. The sense of this difficulty might revive the thoughts of other

difficulties. Other things besides riches might obstruct them, and

hinder their passage to heaven ; and therefore, even those that had left

all and followed Christ were astonished out of measure, when they

understood the way to heaven to be much harder than they formerly

conceited. Certainly it is good to think of the general case when one

instance is given. Is it hard to the rich and not to the poor ? have

they no temptations ? When we hear strict doctrine pressed, we

should not put it off to others, but fear for ourselves. The poor dis-

ciples were astonished out of measure when Christ spake to the rich^

How hard it was for them ' to enter into the kingdom of heaven.'

4. Possibly this astonishment might arise from fear of the success of

the gospel, wherein they were to be employed as instruments, when

they heard that rich men were not likely to prove friends, but rather

enemies to the kingdom of God. Alas ! what should they do that had

parted with all, and were like to be left destitute to the mercy of an

unkind world ! If the great and mighty men of the world, who

should be their props and supports, should so hardly be gained, alas !

then how should they go abroad and preach with any efficacy for the

saving of souls ! Now, whether this or that or all caused the wonder,

I will not now determine ; all these have an influence upon it, and for

these reasons they were astonished out of measure. This is the first

effect, their wonder.

The second effect is a doubt moved among themselves privately,

' Who then can be saved ? ' This question may be looked upon either —

1. As a question of anxious solicitude. Alas ! how is it that any

can be saved ! Or —

2. Of murmuring and secret dislike. Why, if it be so, who is able

to receive this severe doctrine, or to enter upon this strict course?

Now which of these shall we take it to be ? Either for a question of

anxious solicitude, or a question of murmuring and secret repining ?

I answer —

[1.] I suppose this question expresseth their anxious solicitude, and

so for the main it is a good question. When we hear strict doctrine,

it is good to be moved with it, and fall a-questioning. Many hear it

over and over again, yet are slight, no wonder, no astonishment in their

hearts ; therefore it is good when it is weighed and laid to heart.

This question of the apostles brings to mind a saying of one, when he

heard Christ's sermon on the mount read to him, he cried out, Aut hoc

non est evangelium, aut nos non sumus christiani — Either this is not

true gospel, or we are not true christians.

YkR. 26.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 63

[2.] There might be something of weakness, mixtures of infirmity.

I cannot say there was nothing of murmuring and dislike ; the mutter-

ing or saying this among themselves seems to infer it ; they durst

not make Christ conscious to the question, for it is in the text, • They

said among themselves ; ' that is, they muttered privately, and so it

argues there was something of dislike.

[3.] This weakness was not to a prevalent degree, so as to make

them take ofience, and depart from Christ, as we find others did upon

the like occasion, when Christ had preached something strict and con-

trary to their humour : John vi. 60, 61, 'Many of the disciples when

they heard this, said. This is a hard saying, who can hear it ? When

Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto

them, Doth this offend you ? What and if you shall see the Son of

man ascend up where he was before, &c. And from that time many

of his disciples went back, and walked no more with, him,' ver. 66.

Now these, though they were astonished at the strangeness of tbe doc-

trine of Christ, yet they did not reject or refuse the belief of it.

There, was more of anxious solicitude, but somewhat of muttering,

' Who then can be saved.'

Doct When tbe difficulties of salvation are sufficiently understood

and laid fortli, we shall wonder that any are or can be saved ?

I shall prove — (1.) That it is a difficult thing to be saved; (2.)

Wherein the difficulty of salvation doth lie ; (3.) Show how this

ought to be seriously minded and regarded by us, that it is such a

difficult thing to go to heaven.

I. That it is a difficult thing to be saved. Christ showeth that,

Mat. vii. 14, 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth

unto life, and few there be that find it.' The way to heaven is some-

what like that which is described, 1 Sam. xiv. 4, ' And between the

passages by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines'

garrison, there was a sharp rock on the one side and a sharp rock on

the other side.' So is our way to heaven a strait way, between rock

and rock ; here is the rock of vain presumption, and there the rock of

despairing fears. Indeed, the text tells us of two things, the gate strait,

the way narrow. The gate is strait, the entrance into religion hard ;

there must be repentance and bewailing our former sins, the working

up the heart to a fixed resolution against sin, and a serious dedicating

ourselves to God. Oh ! how hard is it to pass through this gate ! And

then there is a narrow way, full of difficulties to corrupt nature ; our

lusts are impatient of any restraint, and we are loath entirely to give

up ourselves to do and sufier God's will. So Mat. xi. 12, ' The king-

dom of heaven sufi'ereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'

It is no wonder that earthly kingdoms are surprised by violence, but it

is strange that the kingdom of heaven should suffer violence ; how

shall we understand this ? Violence doth not signify unlawful attempts,

but earnest diligence. It is not an injurious violence, such as snatches

at earthly crowns, but the industrious violence, a resolution to break

through all impediments, and take no nay ; no discouragements can

much abate our edge, and take us off from our pursuit of the heavenly

kingdom. So 1 Peter iv. 18, a righteous man is ' scarcely saved,' yuoXt?

acodTJaeTuc ; with much ado he gets to shore, he makes a hard shift to

64 SERMONS UPON 1\TAKK X. 17-27. [SeR. XIII.

get to heaven. This is enough to intimate the general truth, that

there is difficulty to get to heaven.

II, Wherein lies the difficulty of salvation ? The I'eason of doubt-

ing is this, because God's terms upon which heaven is offered are

gentle and sweet : Mat. xi. 30, ' My yoke is easy, and my burden is

light.' The law which God hath given us is holy, just, and good,

becoming a God to give and a creature to receive : Rom. vii. 17, ' The

law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good ; ' a

law such as a man would choose if he were at liberty, and at his own

option and choice. Therefore liow is it so difficult, especially since

there is so much strength given. Habitual strength : Eph. ii. 10, ' We

are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' We

are fitted by his grace ; and there is so much actual strength : ' I can

do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me,' Phil. iv. 13.

God is no Pharaoh, to require brick where he gives no straw. And

therefore, since the way is so good, his yoke so easy, and there is so

much strength given, and since the encouragements are so many, both

from the woi'k and from the wages. From the work itself : ' Her ways

are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,' Prov. iii. 7.

There is a great deal of peace, comfort, and sweetness in walking with

God, as those that travelled to Sion, 'Passing through the valley of

Baca, make it a well, the rain also filleth the pools,' Ps.- Ixxxiv. 6 ; so

they meet with many comfortable refreshings in a course of godliness.

And then for the wages, ' God is a rewarder of them that diligently

seek him,' Heb. xi. 6. Well, then, to sum up all, these things concur,

since the way is plain, the helps many, the promises full and sure, why

is it so difficult to go to heaven ? I answer — The fault is not in God,

but in our own selves, in our own hearts, in our addictedness to temporal

satisfactions ; and therefore when God calls us off from the interests

and concernments of the present world, wholly to look after the interests

and concernments of the world to come, the disposition of our flesh or

carnal nature and the cour.?e of God's institutions will not suit. And

this must needs be a very great difficulty, not easily removed, because —

(1.) It is natural to us ; (2.) It is increased by custom ; (3.) It hath a

powerful efficacy upon us to hinder us from walking in the ways of

God, that are so sweet and pleasant.

1. This is natural to us, to be led by sense, or to be addicted to pre-

sent things. There are three sorts of beings in the world — angels, that

are pure spirits without flesh, these were made for heaven, and not

earth ; there are brute creatures, that are flesh without immortal souls,

these were made for earth, and not heaven ; and there is man, a middle

nature between both these, that hath a fleshly substance and an

immortal soul, made partly for heaven and partly for earth, as partak-

ing of both ; he hath a body that was made out of the dust, and so

fitted to live in this world, and he hath a soul that came down from

the superior world, and must return thither again. Now these two

things must be regarded according to the dignity of the parts of which

man consisteth, his earthly part and his heavenly part. The soul being

the better part, the perfection and happiness of it should chiefly be

looked after. The good of the soul is the enjoyment of the ever-blessed

God, this should be our main work and business ; and the good of the

VeR. 26.] SEEMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 65

body sbonid be looked after in an inferior and subordinate manner.

The good of tbe body is meat, drink, wealth, honour ; these things are

to be looked after in our passage to heaven. The good of the soul is

the chief good, and so should be looked after as our great end and

scope, and the good of the body minded only as a means. Man was

made for earth in his passage and way to heaven, but his home and

happiness is in heaven, where he is to enjoy the blessed God among

his holy angels, and those blessed creatures that dwell above in the

region of spirits. This was the end for which man was created, and

while man continued innocent he had a heart inclined and disposed

towards God as his chiefest good ; he sought the good of his soiil, and

was to love him, and fear him, and serve him, and depend upon him as

the fountain of his happiness. But by the fall man was drawn off

from God to the creature to seek his happiness there : ' They have for-

saken the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken

cisterns, that can hold no water,' Jer. ii. 13. Not only Adam in his

own person, but all his posterity are turned from God to the creature.

Now man in his pure naturals is inclined to the creature, which con-

duceth to the satisfaction of the earthly part, and not to God, wherein

the happiness of his soul lies. This will be evident to you if you con-

sider that though the soul be created by God, yet it is created destitute

of grace or original righteousness ; and being destitute of the image of

God or original righteousness, it doth only accommodate itself to the

interests of the body, and seek the happiness of the body ; for where

there is not a principle to carry us higher, it can only close with thins^'s

present and known, such as are the pleasures of the body and the

interests of the bodily life, and so forgets God and what concerns the

enjoyment of him. And so it is said, Eom. viii. 5, ' They that are

after the flesh do mind (or savour) the things of the flesh, and they

that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spii'it.' Therefore take man in

in his pure naturals, as destitute of grace, his soul forgets its divine

original, and so conforms itself to the body, and only seeks its welfare

and happiness ; and thence proceeds all our mindlessuess of God and

averseness to him, our unruly and inordinate appetites of temporal

things, and the confusion, weakness, and disorder that is seen in the

life of man and all his operations and faculties. Hence comes that

clulness and slowness that is in his understanding to conceive of spiritual

things, his acuteness in back and belly concernments : ' He that lacketh

these things is blind, and cannot see afar off,' 2 Peter i. 9. He is sharp-

sighted in all things that concern the present world, but cannot see

things to come ; and until the Lord make a gracious change upon him,

he sees nothing of the worth of salvation, or of a need of Christ, and

making any serious preparation for eternity. Hence comes that averse-

ness of will to what is truly good, that he cannot endure to hear of it :

Eom. viii. 7, ' The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not

subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' And while the soul

is so, it hath such a bent and proneness to that which is evil, or what

concerns our interest in the world. Hence it is that our memories are

so frail and slippery as to that which is good, and so tenacious of that

which is evil. Good things easily slip from us, as clear water through

a grate ; but evil things, as slime and mud, stick with us. Hence

VOL. XVII. E

66 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17- 27. [SeR. XIIL

comes bis afFections to be like tinder, to take fire at the spark of every

temptation ; the affections are awakened and stirred presently ; but in

holy things they are like fire in wet wood, that needs much blowing

and much excitation. Hence it is that in the course of our lives we

take up with the interests of the present world, and make no provision

for a better life ; we are ' lovers of pleasure more than lovers of Grod,'

2 Tim. iii. 4, and forsake God for the present world : 1 Tim. iv. 10,

\* Demas hath forsaken us, having loved the present world.' Well, then,

by a natural constitution we are utterly at a loss, the soul being desti-

tute of a principle that should carry it to look after spiritual things as

its great scope and interest ; it wholly purveys and caters for bodily

pleasures, and the honours and profits of the present life. Here lieth

the great difficulty in the way of salvation.

2. This addictedness to present things is increased by our converse

in the world ; so that besides natural inclination there is inveterate

custom, whereby this inclination to carnal satisfactions, such as riches,

pleasures, ease, safety, and sensual delights, is strengthened and deeply

engraved in us. The first years of a man's life are merely governed by

sense, and the pleasures of the flesh are born and bred up with us, by

which means we come to be stiff, and settled in a carnal frame.

Custom is another nature, and therefore the more we are accustomed

to delight in any course of life, we are weaned from it with the greater

difficulty : Jer. xiii. 23, \* Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the

leopard his spots ? then may ye also do good, who are accustomed to

do evil.' Every act disposeth the soul to the habit, and after the habit

or custom is produced, every new deliberate act adds a stiffness of bent,

or sway unto the faculty, wherein the custom is seated ; so that by

degrees we grow into an obstinacy and strength of will in a carnal course,

which is called ' hardness of heart,' or ' a heart of stone,' in scripture.

A man is ensnared by his customs, whatever they be ; for an addicted-

ness in the general to carnal satisfactions brings a slavery upon us. So

if men be addicted to this or that carnal satisfaction, it brings slavery

upon them ; as a man that is given to wine : Titus ii. 3, ' Not given to

much wine.' The word in the original is SeSov\a)/jievo<i, ensnared by

wine ; or a man that is given to women : 2 Peter ii. 14, ' Having eyes

full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin.' Men by the tyranny of

custom become so impotent to resist their lusts, that the satisfaction

thereof becomes their very element, out of which they cannot live ; it

is their Eden and their heaven, their very paradise, though at length

indeed they find it to be their hell. And of all evil customs, covetous-

ness or worldliness is most dangerous, because it is of more credit and of

less infamy in the world ; and besides, it doth multiply its acts most, and

works incessantly ; and therefore we read of ' hearts exercised with covet-

ous practices,' 2 Peter ii. 14. Their hearts are always running on the

unworthy things of this present world. Now, while worldly men's hearts

are so deeply dyed with such desires as carrieth them out to such things,

they are hardly saved. Well, then, here is another reason of the diffi-

culty that our lusts are born and bred with us from our infancy, and

can plead prescription, and religion cometh afterwards, and findeth us

biassed and prepossessed with other inclinations, which by reason of

long use cannot easily be broken and shaken off.

VeR. 26.] SEEMOXS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 67

3. Let us now consider the great efficacy and power which this incli-

nation to temporal things hath upon us, and then you will see it is very

difficult for us to enter into heaven.

[1.] This inclination and addictedness to present things weakens our

sense of the world to come, and then our reward hath no influence upon

us to move us and encourage us to serve God. "Whilst the world bears

bulk in our eye, heavenly things are of small or of no value with us.

Satan blinds us as ' the god of this world,' 2 Cor. iv. 4 ; that is, by the

love of the world. Christ cured the blind man by anointing his eyes

with clay, but the devil puts out the eyes of our souls with this thick

clay, for gold is so called : Hab. ii. 6, ' That ladeth himself with thick

clay.' He blinds us so as we cannot have a true sight and persuasion

of the truth and worth of things to come. We cannot look afar off into

the other world : 2 Peter i. 9, ' He that lacketh these things is blind,

and cannot see afar off.' Mountains seem molehills only at so great a

distance ; heaven is as a matter of nothing in comparison of present

things ; as in a prospective glass, look at one end of it, it greatens the

object, at the other end it lessens the object. Thus when we look upon

things to come through the glass of our own passions and carnal affec-

tions, they are nothing, they have no force nor power to move us.

Saith Austin, Men do not look after heavenly things ; Quia in terrena

proi'i dorsum eorum semper incurvum est, their backs and necks are

bowed down, that they cannot look upward and have any true sight of

heavenly things ; the world and the profits of it are real and substantial,

but heavenly things are shadows, dreams, matters of conceit and mere

imagination. And therefore, since this addictedness to temporal things

hath such force upon us, to hinder the sight of the world to come, it

must needs be difficult to us to be saved.

[2.] This addictedness to present delights and pleasures makes us

impatient of the restraints of religion. Our natural desires carry us to

those things which religion forbids. We cannot endure to be bridled,

and kept from forbidden fruit, but we have all an appetite after it : Ps.

ii. 3, ' Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from

us ; ' and Jer. v. 5, ' They have altogether broken the yoke and burst

the bonds ;' andKom. viii. 7, ' The carnal mind is enmity against God,

for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' Niti-

mur in vetitum, the prohibition doth but irritate corruption, as a stream

if checked grows more furious. A man wholly given up to present

satisfactions cannot endure the yokes and fetters religion would lay upon

him ; he would be a free creature, and live as he list. Indeed it is to

be a captive creature, but this he accounts his liberty and freedom,

[3.] It maketh those duties seem u-ksome and unnecessary which are

necessary as the way to salvation. Look into the book of God, and

you will find we are called upon to strive to enter into heaven, and

required ' to work out our salvation with fear and trembling,' Phil. ii.

12, with all holy solicitude, with all lively diligence, to be still employed

in this work ; ' To strive to enter in at the strait gate,' Luke xiii. 24 ;

' To walk worthy of God, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory,'

1 Thes. ii. 12. Now they that are addicted to ease, pleasure, and sen-

sual delights cannot endure to be held to this work ; they do either

openly refuse this work, or delay it, which is the more modest denial,

68 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR XIIL

or else are cold in it. Some profane persons cast off all 'care of duty,

as if religion were but a point of policy, heaven but a dream, and hell

but a false fire, the gospel but a fable to busy men's heads with, and so

resolve to please the flesh, and never trouble themselves about uncertain

futurities. Many thus live in delSance of God and Christianity, or else

they delay to a more convenient season, they have no mind to the work :

Acts xxiv. 25, ' Go thy way for this time ; when I have a more con-

venient season, I will send for thee.' Lust must have present satisfac-

tion, but Christ comes always out of season. When Christ makes an

offer of heaven to their souls, hereafter they will be glad to hear of him,

but now he comes before the time. As he said in Seneca, A quinqua-

gessima in otiuni discedam — When I am fifty years old, then I will

retire and study philosophy ; so when their youthful vanities are spent,

then they will look after these things. When the heart cannot keep

out light and conviction of our duty, it seeks to keep off care, and so

by making fair promises for the future we elude the importunity of

present conviction. Or else a heart addicted to present satisfaction is

very cold in religion, for the heart that is diverted by other pursuits

cannot make religion its work, but only minds it by the by. The world,

that is their business, but religion, that is put in the place of a recreation,

and ' they mind earthly things,' Phil. iii. 19. Their heads and hearts

are full of the world, so that they have no room for God. Their time,

thoughts, discourses are wholly swallowed up of present things and

complying with their present lusts.

[4.] This addictedness to present satisfactions will make us shrink at

the trials God exerciseth us with before we go to heaven : Acts xiv. 22,

' Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God.'

All good things are hard to come by, and God will show that heaven

is worth something. When men have cheap thoughts of it, God will

enhance the price of heaven. There must be striving and suffering before

we get thither. The howling wilderness was the ready way to Canaan.

The captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. We

should else neither esteem the cross of Christ nor long for heaven ; but

present ease, present safety, present wealth doth wonderfully enchant

us, to have good da}^ here, and a quiet life without any trouble. If

we could compound with God for this world and heaven too, then we

should like it ; but now, while we are so wholly inclined and addicted

to present things, it must needs be a difficult thing to hear of trials and

crosses that we must endure.

III. This difficulty must be sufficiently understood and seriously

thought of by us. And here —

1. Negatively. We should so reflect upon the difficulty — (1.) Not

to murmur against God because heaven is not to be had upon cheaper

terms, and his ways lie so cross to our desires. Take heed of this ; as

if he were envious, and had not a good respect for the happiness of his

creature. . It is but reasonable that we should labour for heaven, as we

do for all other things that are good and excellent ; that which costs

nothing is worth nothing. Besides, there are so many corruptions to

be mortified, duties to be performed, and trials to be endured, that the

faith of the elect ' may be found to the more praise and honour,' 1 Peter

i. 7, and therefore all the pains, and shame, and loss, and trouble, is but

VeR. 26.] SERMONS UPON 3IARK X. 17-27. 69

necessary. This is au ill use and end to murmnr against God and

repine against bis sovereignty and dominion over the creature ; and yet

this is the use that many make of it : John vi. 60, ' Many of his disciples

when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying, who can hear it ? '

What ! nothing hut mortifying our desires ? nothing but thwarting

our pleasing inclinations ? nothing but performing such works which

we cannot abide. Why hath God planted such desires in us if he

would not have them satisfied ? (2.) Not that we should despair or

wholly despond, as those, Jer. xviii. 12, ' There is no hope, but we will

walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination

of his evil heart ; ' and Jer. ii. 25, ' There is no hope ; no, for I have

loved strangers, and after them will I go.' Well, I see my condition is

lielpless and hopeless, therefore I resolve to make the best of it. When

men hear how hard it is to go to heaven, they throw off all in a de-

spondency, they shall never bring their hearts to this work. But we

should not despair ; and think it altogether impossible Trpoalprja-Lf; ovk

iariv aSiivarcov ; there cannot be a pursuit of that which is impossible.

Past cure, they say, past care. Many, their affections are so strongly

set upon carnal things, and they are so inveigled with the comforts of

the world and the pleasures of the flesh, that they are discouraged, and

so think it impossible to do otherwise than they do. Oh, no ! that is

not the use of it. Do not say. There is no hope of the world to come,

therefore let us make the best of this life. God would have the fallen

creature to despair of himself indeed : ' With man it is impossible, but

with God all things are possible,' as in the next verse.

2. Positive. Why should these difficulties be thought of and laid

to heart ? to what end ?

[1.] To prevent slightness of spirit. There is not a greater bane to re-

ligion, nor a greater judgment lights upon a creature, than a vain, frothy,

slight heart ; and therefore, to prevent this, and that we may in good

earnest mind the things of our eternal peace, it is good to understand

sufficiently the dijBficulty of it. A slight heart thinks it no such great

matter to get to heaven, there is no such danger of missing it as men talk

of ; though they be not so religious as preachers would have them, nor

so strict in conscience as to abstain from every smaller matter, yet through

the grace of God they shall do well enough. Hell is made for the devil

and devilish men and outrageous sinners ; if they live fairly, and do as

their neighbours do, they shall do well enough, though they do not pine

and whine over their sins, or busy their brains about clearing up their

interest in God ; though they be not so nice and scrupulous, and take

God's word too strictly, they shall do well enough for all that. Chris-

tians, these conceits, with which most men are leavened, are the bane,

and eat out the heart of all religion. It is no such easy matter to go to

heaven as the world imagines. A cold faint wish will never bring us

thither, nor a desire to enjoy it when we can live here no longer. No ;

there must be watching, and labouring, and striving; this must be

your great business and employment : Ps. xxvii. 4, ' One thing have I

desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the

house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the

Lord, and to inquire in his temple.' Oh ! whatever is neglected, this

business must be looked after day after day, namely, in what posture

70 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XIII.

we are for the enjoyment of the blessed God : Phil, iii 12, Bico/co),

' I follow after it, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am

apprehended of Christ , ' Acts xxvi. 7, ' Unto which hope the twelve

tribes serv^ed God instantly/ some render it ; but it is ev eKreveia,

with all their strength, ' day and night, hope to come.' Now it is neces-

sary men should be sensible of the difficulty of being saved, to quicken

their endeavours, and to bring them out of this slight frame of heart

which is so natural to us ; they think there needs not so much ado

that we make the way straiter than God hath made it ; they will not

believe it is half so hard as it is. We see how great is our sloth and

negligence. Now, if after he hath told us it is as hard as to go through

the eye of a needle, what would we do if all were easy ? Think of the

difficulty to prevent this slight heart.

[2.] To keep us in a due dependence upon and an admiration of

grace, God would have us sensible of the difficulty. What carnal

hearts have we ! how hard a matter is it to guide and govern them in

the fear of God that we may keep up an admiration of the power of

God that is perfected in our weakness ! 2 Cor. xii. 10, ' When I am

weak, then am I strong.' Alas ! when we look to ourselves, we may

cry out, when we think of these things, ' Who can be saved ? ' This

awakeneth our prayers for special grace from day to day, and maketh

us to look up to God for new supplies, because we find it is not in our-

selves : ' The way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that

walketh to direct his steps,' Jer. x. 23 ; ' We are not sufficient of our-

selves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God,'

2 Cor. iii. 5.

[3.] That we may be forearmed with resolutions. They that take

a walk for recreation do not prepare for all weathers, as they that

resolve upon a journey ; or they that go to sea for pleasure, if they see

a storm coming, easily go to shore again, but they that go for

business resolve upon all hazards to finish their voyage. Now, that we

may resolve to make a thorough work of Christianity, and to hold on our

Avay in Christ's strength notwithstanding all difficulty, our Lord would

have us to sit down and count the charges, Luke xiv. 28, to consider what

it will cost us to go to heaven ; not to discourage us, but to provoke us

to put on the more resolution, lest we tire when we find more difficulty

than we did expect, and that we may resolve to hold on with God,

whatever it cost us.

Use 1. This shows us the reason of that presumption which is so

common. We use to say that despair kills thousands, but presumption

its ten thousands. What is the reason that many presume ? Oh ! the

difficulties of salvation are not well weighed. True hope is a middle

thing between presumption and despair ; the object of hope is honum,

ftduTum, arduum, sed possibile. Hope considers its object as hard, for

that which is easy to come by is as if it were already enjoyed ; a man

cannot be said to hope for that which he may have with the turn of

his hand. Well, then, it considers the good to come as difficult, to

awaken diligence and serious endeavours ; but then it considers it as

possible, for otherwise we are really discouraged from looking after

it; for why should we look after that which is impossible ? Paul's

mariners gave over working when all hope that they should be saved

VeR. 26.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 71

was taken away, Acts xxvii. 20. But now presumption leaves out the

difficulty, and reflects only upon tlie possibility. Some may be saved ;

surely God will not damn all his creatures ; therefore I shall be saved.

But suppose the contrary, few are saved ; then what shall become of me ?

On the other side, despair reflects only upon the difficulty, and leaves

out the possibility. Oh ! it is hard, it is impossible with men, there-

fore they give it over. I shall make no work of it, saith despair.

Now the scripture, that would breed and nourish in us a true hope,

doth all along lay forth the difficulty, to prevent slightness of spirit,

and yet represents the possibility to prevent despair ; the difficulties

to quicken our endeavours, and the possibility to encourage men to

hope for the grace of God.

2. It presseth us to mortify our addictedness to present things.

christians ! if you could overcome the world, you pluck out the root of

all temptations, and then the commandments of God would not be

grievous : 1 John v. 3, 4, ' For this is the victory whereby we overcome

the world, even our faith ; ' the world is the great let which hinders us

from keeping the command, from being so exact, punctual, and sincere

with God. Overcome the world, and the work will be easy. Take

heed of pleasing the flesh, or letting the world have too great an

interest in your hearts ; let it not seem a great thing in your eye.

Until your hearts are drawn off" from present things, and you are

wholly baptized into that spirit that suits with the world to come, to

make that your main care and desire, you will never prosper in heaven's

way, until your thoughts be loosened from the world, and you are

carried out more to heaven and heavenly things. Consider, wliy should

you be addicted to present things ? You that are strangers and not

inhabitants, your happiness lies not here : ' If our hopes were only in

this life, we were of all men most miserable,' 1 Cor. xv. 19. "We are

but probationers for heaven : \* Our conversation should be in heaven,'

Phil. iii. 20.

3. To fortify us against the difficulties in the way of salvation. You

must be at some pains and labour : John vi. 27, ' Labour not for the

meat that perisheth, but for that meat that endureth unto everlasting

life.' Do not slacken your endeavours. To quicken you, consider —

[1.] If you love your salvation, you will be at some cost about it. It

it is a sign you make no reckoning of heaven, and have no great sense

of things to come, when you grudge your pains ; it is a sign you slight

it when you are so slow in the pursuit of it : Phil. iii. 14, ' I press

towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ

Jesus.' Oh ! did you value heaven, or had you any esteem of heavenly

things, you would not think much of a little pains, of striving with

God in prayer, of wrestling, and denying your lusts, to bring your

hearts to a readiness and cheerfulness in the service of the ever-living

God. No trade in the world you can drive on by idleness. Who ever

prospered in any course of living if he followed it with a slack hand ?

We cannot think to have those great invisible things of the Lord's

Idngdom and his glory if you will do nothing for it.

[2.] There is difficulty both in the way to heaven and hell. Lusts

are ravenous things, and cannot be fed or kept without much M'lf-

denial. You must denv yourselves either foi\* God or the devil. You

72 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XIY,

must deny your comforts, and your esLate. Men will venture much

for their lusts and for their sensuality ; there must be a great deal of

charge to feed this humour, to satisfy the pleasures of the flesh ; it

is costly to be an epicure. Worldliness wastes the spirits, racks the

brain. For ambition, how many hazards do men run for their great-

ness in the world ? how many men sacrifice their lives upon the point

of honour, for revenge, and for a little vainglory ! Now, if a man will

take pains to go to hell, shall he not take pains to go to heaven?

When men will be at such costs for lusts as to deny conscience and

slight many of the comforts of the present world for lust's sake, shall

we take no pains and exercise no self-denial for heaven ?

[3.] If we be at a little labour it will not be in vain in the Lord :

1 Cor. XV. 58, ' Be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the

work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in

vain in the Lord.' Whether you consider your vales or wages, your

labour is not in vain. Your vales : Christ's servants have a great deal

of comfort and sweetness : Prov. iii. 17, ' Her ways are ways of

j)leasantness, and all her paths are peace.' And for the world to come

there is a full and sure reward ; therefore do not stick at a little pains ;

though it be difficult, yet remember it is for salvation.

4. Let us look to our own selves ; how is it with us? are we in the

way to hell or heaven ? Let us look to our own standing ; do we

leave the boat to the stream ? do we give up ourselves to the sway of

our corrupt and carnal affections ? or else do we row against the

stream and current of flesh and blood ? It is no easy matter to be

saved. I do not ask now what will become of those that never minded

salvation, that never busied their thoughts about it, but even in effect

say, Let them take heaven that list ; but I ask, what will become of

those slothful perfunctory christians that count a little slight and formal

religion enough, which is without any life, alacrity, and power ? Will

this do the deed ? Such will fall short of heaven.

SERMON XIV.

And Jesus, loolcing upon them, saith, With men it is impossible, hut not

tvith God : for ivith God all things are possible. — Mark x. 27.

We have seen the disciples' wonder returning. Christ, that is never

wanting to his in their trouble and astonishment, graciously looketh

upon them, and in words full of comfort givetli a solution of that which

was such a riddle to them, ' And Jesus, looking upon them, saith,' &c.

Here we have —

1, Christ's gesture, ' Jesus looked upon them.'

2. Christ's answer, by a distinction how it is impossible and how

not. In the first part of the distinction there is a concession, 'That

with men it is impossible.' In the second branch there is a correction,

' But not with God.' This latter branch is confirmed by a general

reason, 'For with God all things are possible.' In this text three

VeR. 27.] SERMONS UPON MAUK X. 17-27. 73

things are asserted — (1.) The impotency of nature ; (2.) The sovereign

efficacy of grace ; (3.) The general truth upon which it is grounded, and

that is the omnipotency of God. Accordingly the points are three —

1. That it is impossible for mere man by his own natural strength to

get to heaven.

2. Men that are discouraged with the sense of their own impotency

should consider the power of God.

3. That this power of God is all-sufficient, and can do all things.

Doct. 1. That it is impossible for mere man by his own natural

strength to get to heaven.

Two things will evidence that —

1 . There is legalis exclusio ; we are all excluded by the sentence of

God's law, and therefore it is impossible for any mere man to get to

heaven. The law knows no way of justifying a sinner, but only of

saving a creature holy and innocent ; and if we be not holy and inno-

cent, there is a sentence in force against us. That scripture expresses

the tenor of tlie law : Gal. iii. 10, ' For as many as are of the works of

the law are under the curse ; for it is written. Cursed is every one that

continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law

to do them.' An innocent nature is presupposed, for the person must

continue, it doth not say now begin. The law doth not treat with man

as lapsed or fallen, or as having already broken with God, but as in a

good and sound estate ; and therefore, since by the fall we are sinners,

we are also under the curse by nature : Eph. ii. 3, ' And were by nature

the children of wrath, even as others ; ' liable to the stroke of God's

vindictive wrath. Well, now, ' with man it is impossible.' God hath

placed a cherub with a flaming sword that keeps the passage into para-

dise. Heaven's gates are shut against us now. No mere man can

appease an angry God, or redeem his soul from the curse that keeps

him out of heaven. We are weak and without strength : Kom. v. 6,

' For when we were yet- without strength, in due time Christ died for

the ungodly.' Weakness or without strength there beareth the same

sense with unworthiness. We are unable to perform the work or duty

through the curse of the first covenant, and when we were altogether

sinful and unworthy, then Christ died for us, and therefore it is impos-

sible in regard of his legal exclusion ; for suppose we could obey per-

fectly for the future, yet the paying of new debts doth not quit old

scores. We are without strength, because we cannot expiate former

transgressions, and so the law is become impossible through the weak-

ness of our flesh : Rom. viii. 3, ' For what the law could not do in that

it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the like-

ness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.'

2. There is evangelica difficultas; "there are difficulties by the gospel

which mere man cannot overcome. Though the gospel giveth hopes

of entrance into heaven, or reversing the strict conditions of the law,

yet upon such terms as we must be beholden to grace for them. Christ,

that requires the conditions of the gospel, must also give them to us :

Acts V. 31, 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince

and a saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.'

He is not only a prince and lawgiver, but also a saviour, or the author

and fountain of grace. He doth not only give the privilege, remission;

74 SEIIMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR XIV.

but he gives the condition, repentance. If you conceive of Christ that

he doth give the privilege, and require the conditions, and no more,

you legalise Christ, as the Samaritans had a temple without an ark

and a mercy-seat ; so to speak of a law without grace, or if you

separate the law of the gospel from the grace of the gospel, it is

impossible.

Why is it thus impossible with man upon gospel terms ? The legal

impossibility all will acknowledge, but whence is this evangelical

difficulty? It ariseth from three things — there is vitiosa cordra-

rietas, a corrupt nature ; there are externa impedimenta, many out-

ward snares ; and there is inimica oppositio, a great deal of enmity

and opposition ; therefore with man it is impossible.

[1.] There is vitiosa contrarieias, a corrupt nature, inclined to evil

and averse to good : Gen. vi. 5, ' God saw that the wickedness of man

was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of

his heart was only evil continually.' IMan hath such a heart that, if

left to itself, will always be minting evil thoughts and evil desires and

carnal and inordinate motions. And as the heart of man is prone to

evil, so it is averse to what is good, and so averse that it cannot do any

of the great duties that God hath required of him. Look upon this

averseness and impoteucy with respect to duties ; he cannot know,

believe, nor obey. He cannot know : 1 Cor. ii. 14, ' The natural man

receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness

unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually dis-

cerned.' And he cannot believe : John vi. 44, 'No man can come to

me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him ; ' it is not said,

he doth not, but he cannot. And he cannot obey : Rom, viii. 7, ' The

carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of

God, neither indeed can be.' And consider this impotency with respect

to our thoughts, words, and deeds. He cannot think a good thought :

2 Cor. iii. 5, ' Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything

as of ourselves.' He cannot speak a good word: Mat. xii. 34, 'How

can ye, being evil, speak good things?' He cannot do any good thing:

John XV. 5, ' Without me ye can do nothing.' He doth not say, nihil

^ magnum, you can do no great thing, you cannot acquit yourselves in

' some eminent temptation with honour, or in some notable duty ; but nihil,

you can do nothing without me. Well, then, when we cannot know,

nor believe, nor obey, nor think, nor speak, not do anything without

grace, surely it is impossible man of himself should perform the

conditions o'f the gospel ; he is wholly impotent, and unable to help

himself.

[2.] There are externa impedimenta, outward impediments. Man

is impotent and corrupt naturally, and his corruption is fed and

strengthened by worldly things, and so his outward condition proves a

snare to him : 1 John ii. 16, ' All that is in the world, the lusts of the

flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but

is of the world.' Lust or distempered appetite finds an answerable

diet. There are sensible objects which to our souls as thus constituted

prove shrewd and dangerous temptations and snares. If we will find

the lust, the world will afford us the object. For 'the lusts of the fle.sh,'

there are pleasures and carnal delights to beset our souls, to inveigle

VeK. 27.] SEKMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 75

and entice lis from the strictness and severity of the christian profes-

.siou. For ' the lusts of the eye' there are riches and all kinds of profits.

For ' pride of life' there are dignities, and superiorities, and popular

acclamations, and all sorts of preferments, or anything men are natu-

rally proud of ; so that a poor creature living in the midst of so many

snares and temptations, may sadly cry out, as Bernard doth, Oh, woe

is me ! here are snares and temptations, and there is a sensual nature

in us that is strongly drawn forth by all that is about us. It is true,

riches, pleasures, and honours were not snares in their original institu-

tion or God's intention, but they prove so through our corrupt affection.

God ordained them as miserimce necessitatis solatia, as Jerome tells us,

to be helps and comforts in our mortal condition ; but through the

strong affection we bear to them they prove snares : 2 Peter i. 4, ' The

corruptions that are in the world through lust.' It is from unmorti-

fied corruption and lustings after them. Here, then, is that which

increaseth the difficulty ; these sensible objects to which we have a great

inclination by nature, and which are continually present with us, do

enchant and divert the heart from God and heavenly things, so that

we either sin in them or for them. In the use of them, or for the

getting and keeping of them, we offend God many times, and cross the

rule that is given unto us ; so that besides the natural impotency that

is in us to all things spiritual, the soul is further depraved and corrupted

by evil habits, or particular inclinations to any of these sensible objects.

This is a superadded impediment to our condition by nature, as a

crooked stick by growing becomes more difficult to be made straight. It

is impossible for any mere man to receive the things of the Spirit, but

much more for one that is wedded to any of these sensible things ; for

here Christ puts the impossibility upon a carnal rich man, because he

hath so much of the world to divert his heart from God and true

happiness. There are degrees of impossibilities ; as some have fewer

lets and impediments, and some have more, so it is more or less impos-

sible, as they need more or less of God's special and extraordinary grace.'

For let us consider any dispositions to these sensible objects. Let us

consider any of the dispositions to these sensible things, be it riches,

\* the lusts of the eye,' so he calls covetousness, or an inclination to

riches, for by the eye the heart is wounded, and so the difficulty of

salvation is increased. When once men set up this as their scope, and

make it their business to be rich and great in the world, ' They that

will be rich fall into temptation and a snare,' 1 Tim. vi. 9. Or be it

an inclination to honour, either to popularity or esteem of the people ;

or to ambition, or an inordinate desire of preferment by the magistrates

and potentates of the world, John v. 44, ' How can ye believe that

receive honour one of another ? ' it makes the impotency the greater.

Or if it be an inclination to pleasures, ' Lovers of pleasures more than

lovers of God,' 2 Tim. iii. 4. But mostly doth our Lord here put the

difficulty upon riches. Why ? Because that is a complicate tempta-

tion, and that is the fuel of pleasure, and the means by which we get

to honours and greatness in the world ; therefore here is the greater

difficulty for a rich man in his corrupt estate to enter into the kingdom

of God.

[3.] There is inimica oppositio if we would go to heaven, there

76 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XIV.

are enemies to oppose. The devil : 1 Peter v. 8, ' Your adversary the

devil as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.'

And wicked men: John xv. 19, 'If ye were of the world, the world

would love its own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have

chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you ; ' and

' Whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,'

2 Tim. iii. 12. But because the great opposition is from Satan, there-

fore I shall insist upon Eph. vi. 12, ' We wrestle not against flesh and

blood, but against principalities, against the rulers of the darkness of

this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places' There is a more

terrible and dangerous party against us than bodily and human power.

Indeed we have bodily enemies, and they are great lets and great dis-

couragements in the way of salvation, when the Lord lets loose their

hands against us. These are but Satan's auxiliary forces whom he stirs

up and employs ; but the principal part of our conflict and wrestling

is against devils and damneCi angels, enemies of great power and

strength and influence upon the rulers of the darkness of this world ;

they have a mighty power upon the ignorant, carnal, and blind part of

the world , and it is with these we contend and wrestle about the things

which concern the honour of God, and the eternal welfare of our souls.

Now this terrible opposition, how soon will it bear down a poor crea-

ture that stands merely by his own strength ! Alas ! set creature

against creature, and Satan is too hard for us ; he exceeds us in the

rank of beings, and so we are no match for the devil. Our adversary

is of a spiritual, immaterial substance, and so invisible both in his

nature and approaches, and doth often reach us a deadly blow before

we know it is he, and in the very simplicity of our hearts we run into

the snare. And again, he is so restless in his assaults, so unwearied

in his motions : 1 Peter v. 8, ' Your adversary the devil as a roaring

lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.' The best christian

will be surprised if there be not a greater than he to stand by him and

for him. He is either weakening our comforts, or enticing us to sin, or

making us weary of the ways of God. If he cannot pervert us, and draw

us by some gross sin to dishonour God, he ceaseth not to vex us, and

make our heavenly course uncomfortable to us. The devil never ceases

to pursue his designs, but observes all our motions, all the postures of

our spirits ; when we are merry and when we are angry, when we are

laughing and when we are mourning. He sees how the tree leans,

and then joins his force to run us down. And he is of great power,

one that can make terrible opposition, of great authority and influence

over the carnal world, of great cunning and dexterity in setting our

sins a- work. Certainly unless we ' be strong in the Lord, and in the

power of his might,' there is no standing, Eph. vi. 10-12, compared.

But why hath God left it impossible to man, when he hath offered

hopes by the new covenant ?

(1.) That all the glory of the good that is in us may redound unto

his grace : Eph. i. 6, ' To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein

he hath made us accepted in the beloved.' That is God's end in the

new covenant, that we might ever admire and highly esteem his glorious

grace. And therefore it is not only grace that opens the door, that re-

moves the flaming sword that is against us, that takes away the curse

VeR. 27.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 77

of God, but in the whole business of salvation all is to be ascribed to

i^race : ' It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of

God that showeth mercy,' Eom. ix. 16. The words ivilleth and 7-unneth

are considerable. The Lord, that brings us into this state, keejjs us in

this state.

(2.) To keep the creature in a constant dependence upon him, and

that he might often hear\* from us. As long as a man is sufficient to

himself, he never comes to God : Jer. ii. 31, ' We are lords, and will no

more come unto thee.' If a man had the dominion over his own spirit,

and were sufficient to himself, God would never hear from him. The

prodigal went away from his father when he had his portion in his own

hands and he never thought of returning till he had spent all and

began to be in want, Luke xv. 14. Thus should we do with God.

Prayer and all trading with heaven would cease if w^e were sufficient

of ourselves as to do anythiag ; and therefore with man it is impossible.

Use 1. Take heed that you do not make a wrong use of this impos-

sibility, namely, so as to be discouraged and throw off all, as if there

were no hope. God hath left it so as that we may despair of our own

strength, but not of his help. We should not be discouraged, since he

worketh in us what he requireth of us.

1. God can overcome all this difficulty. He that made the heart

is above it, and can frame it to himself. EvangeUcal difficulty lies in

three things — the corruption of our nature, outward impediments,

and Satan's opposition. Now the scripture represents God as able to do

all for us. He can change our hearts, sanctify our condition, and help

us to vanquish our temptations.

[1.] He can change our hearts by regeneration. Alas ! we cannot

change our natures or turn om'selves to God, and therefore we are apt

to be cast down when we louk upon God's holy ways and the strength

of our own lusts. But God is able to change those hearts of ours, and

take away their reluctancy ; not by making a violent impression, as we

force a stone upward, but by imprinting in our hearts the habits of

grace, whereby we are carried out willingly in the ways of God, and so

our business becomes easy : Titus iii. 4, ' According to his mercy he

saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy

Ghost ; ' ' No man can come unto me except the Father which hath

sent me draw him,' John vi. 44 ; ' Draw me, and we will run after thee,'

Cant. i. 4. He puts forth his mighty power upon the heart, and

changeth the bent of our souls, and so we come in.

[2.] God can sanctify our condition, that it shall not be a snare.

Christians, whatever you think of it, it is not easy to keep yourselves

unspotted from the world, to live in the midst of so many temptations

and to carry on an equal, holy, heavenly frame of heart, such as the

apostle mentions, 1 Cor. vii. 29-31, 'It remains that they that have

wives be as though they had none, and they that weep, as though they

wept not ; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and they

that buy, as though they possessed not ; and they that use this world,

as not abusing it.' This is om- duty ; but how shall we do to get such-

a weaned heart ? With man it is impossible but not with God. He

can give a rich man such grace as to contemn the world, to lay up

treasures in heaven, and upon religious reasons to leave all for Christ's

78 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XIV.

sake. God taught Paul tliis holy weanedness : Phih iv. 12, ' I know

both how to be abased, and I know how to abound ; eveiywhere and

in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to

abound and to suffer need.' And he can teach it you if you will wait

upon him. Our own natural spirits indeed carrieth us quite another

way : James iv. 5, 6, ' The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy,

but he giveth more grace.' Our natural spirit is all for temporal

things ; it envies the greatness of others, it designs for ourselves ; but

when lusts rage, he can bridle them ; the Lord is able to give us a

holy weanedness and moderation of our desires in the midst of all those

baits and snares that we are compassed about withal.

[3.] To conquer temptations. It is God that rescues the prey, and

plucked us at first by a strong hand out of Satan's power : Luke xi.

21, 22, ' When the strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods

are in peace ; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and

overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour, wherein he trusted,

and divideth his spoils.' God can bind Satan, and dispossess him, and

' recover you out of the snares of the devil, wherein you are taken cap-

tive by him at his will,' 2 Tim. ii. 26. And when we are once in a

state of grace, he can preserve you in despite of men and devils. The

world assaults the children of God with great force and power, and the

devil is in the design ; but, saith the apostle, ' Greater is he that is in

you than he that is in the world,' John iv. 4. God is greater in

counsel, greater in strength, greater in his providence and watchfulness

for the good of his people. Till this divine power interpose it can

never be.

[4.] We have no reason to doubt of his will, for he hath promised to

take away the heart of stone : Ezek. xxxvi. 26, ' A new heart will I

give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away

the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.'

There is nothing within the compass of our christian calling of which

we have not a promise in the covenant. The precept and the promise

go hand-in-hand ; therefore the promise will be made good, and so we

have no reason to despair, but humbly wait upon God in the use of

means till these promises be accomplished.

2. What use shall we make of it then ? Go to God for this power,

and give God all the glory of any saving grace wrought in us by this

power.

[1.] Go to God for this power when you are sensible of your impo-

tency. In vain do we talk of power to men that are not sensible of

weakness, and will not so much as essay whether they have power or

no : 2 Cor. xii. 10, ' When I am weak, then am I strong.' When

creatures are helpless and shiftless, God takes pity upon them ; there-

fore when you have been tugging and wrestling in the business of

salvation, and it doth not come on kindly, but you find your weakness,

then you may come to God for his power. Bewail your impotency, and

say, as Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 12, ' Lord, we have no might, neither

know we what to do, but our eyes are unto thee ; ' or rather as Ephraim,

Jer. xxxi. 18, 'Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a

bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be

turned.' God's chastisement revived the sense of his duty, and think-

VeR. 27.] SERMONS UPON 3IARK X. 17-27. 79

ing of his duty made him feel his impotency, and feeling his impo-

tency that made him groan to God, and wait for his power. Oh ! it is

well when practical experience convinceth us of our weakness and

necessities, and our weakness and necessities lead us to the promises,

and the promises to Christ, in whom they are ' Yea and amen ; ' and

Christ to God as the fountain of grace, and then we rest upon the

power of God. And therefore, since it is impossible with man, go to

God, and say, Lord, I confess the debt, I acknowledge my impotency,

but thou hast forbidden me to despair, therefore I come to thee ; give

what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt.

[2.] If it be impossible with men, let God have all the glory of any

saving grace wrought in thee. Mark this, because there is a deceit.

God must not only have some glory, but all the glory, for in the new

covenant there is no glorying but in the Lord. All will acknowledge

and count it a piece of religious manners to speak of some help of grace,

but they do not give it its due praise. The pharisee could say, ' God,

I thank thee I am not as other men,' Luke xviii. 11. As, for instance,

if a man should say. It is all from God indeed, but only in a Pelagian

sense, as he is author naturce, the author of nature, as he created us

at first with a rational soul, and gave us an understanding and will,

whereby he enableth us freely to choose that which is good ; here is

God's power acknowledged, but at too remote a distance. The very hea-

thens would acknowledge grace, as sacrilegious as they were in robbing

God of his due. Quod vivamus, that we live, and that we had rea-

sonable natures, that was the gift of tlie gods ; but q7wd bene vivamus,

that we live well, that is of ourselves. This confounds nature and

grace ; we sacrifice the wax to God, and keep the honey to ourselves.

Again, we should acknowledge God not only in the grace of external

revelation, revealing the object, that God hath given us an excellent

religion, there is his grace, but in working upon the faculty. Here

God is acknowledged, but at too low a rate, for we need not only the

sunhght, but eyes : Eph. i. 18, ' The eyes of your understanding being

opened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what

the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' Or if we will

go further, and acknowledge internal grace is necessary, but not absol-

utely necessary, but only for facilitation, to do it the more easily, for

the work is very difficult if mere man were left to himself ; here God's

power is acknowledged, but not enough ; grace is absolutely necessary,

not as a horse to a journey, but as legs and feet. Again, if we should

acknowledge it as absolutely necessary for God to excite and move us,

but give the main stroke to our own will, this is not praise high enough ;

it is God inclines the heart, it is God that gives us the will, the begin-

ing and ending of all is from him ; with man it is impossible, therefore

God must have all the glory.

Doct. 2. Those that have a deep sense of their sinful impotency and

carnal distempers should seriously consider and encourage themselves

by the sovereign power of God's grace.

Of the power of God as generally considered I shall speak by and by.

Now I shall speak of it as it worketh in a way of grace, to bring us

into a state of grace, and to preserve us therein.

1. The scripture speaks of this power that bringeth us into a state

80 SERMONS UPON MARK X, 17-27. [SeR. XI Y.

of grace ^ Eph. i. 19, ' And what is the exceeding greatness of his power

to US-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.'

Mark, there is a mighty glorious power that is seen in converting a

sinner, and turning him from sin to holiness, even greater than the

power by which God made the world. When God made the world,

as there was nothing to help, so there was nothing to hinder ; but such

is the perverseness of man's nature within, such is the opposition from

without, and so great an enemy is Satan, that nothing less than God's

powerful grace can begin such a saving work in them : 2 Peter i. 3,

' According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that per-

tain unto life and godliness.' There is a divine power that gives us

life, or a gracious spirit within, and a divine power that helps us to

walk in a course of godliness without. So Kom. xi. 23, ' God is able to

graff them in again.' The Jews are of all people most obstinate and

averse from God ; they have no natural goodness of disposition in them ;

they ' please not God, and are contrary to all men ; ' and shall the Jews

be converted ? Yes ; ' for God is able to graff them in again,' and bring

them into a state of grace.

2. This power of grace is seen in preserving us in a state of grace,

and carrying on this work in despite of men and devils, till grace be

crowned in glory. Alas ! if God did never so much for us at first, yet

if he did not keep us, we should be made a prey, and be shipwrecked

in the haven's mouth ; therefore from first to last the power of God is

seen —

[1.] In defending the habit of grace that is begun in the soul.

When the apostle had told us that God ' of his abundant mercy had

begotten us again unto a lively hope,' 1 Peter i. 3, presently he saith,

ver. 5, ' Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salva-

tion.' First we are begotten, then kept, heaven is kept for us, and we

are kept for it ; first the power of grace is a quickening power, and then

a preserving power, defending the work God hath begun in us.

[2.] God actuates and quickens our graces in us : ' It is God which

worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure,' Phil. ii. 13,

inspiring and breathing holy motions into us : ' Awake, north wind ;

come, south wind ; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof

may flow forth,' Cant. iv. 16. And then strengthening those graces,

and defending them in all assaults and temptations, and causing us to

grow: Col. i. 11, 'According to his glorious power, unto all patience

and long-suffering, with joyfulness ; ' and Eph. iii. 16, ' That he would

grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with

might by his Spirit in the inner man.' And thus he continueth to do

till they be perfected and completely glorified. Thus the Lord puts

forth his power in defending, quickening, and increasing the grace

that he hath wrought in us. We have seen there is a power put forth

in a way of grace.

Now this should be considered by them that have a deep sense of

their im potency and carnal distempers, for these reasons —

(1.) Because it is a great relief and prop to the soul. Oh ! what

cannot the working of this mighty power do for us ! It exceedeth all

the contrary power, whether in sin, the world, or the devil, and so

answers our doubts and fears. But you will say, How is the power of

VeK. 27.] SERMONS UPO>I MARK X. 17-27. 81

God such a relief to the soul? We can easily grant that God is able,

but how shall we know that he will put forth this mighty power for

us ? 1 answer — (1.) In agonies of conscience ; it is not the fear of hell

only that troubles us, but our rooted distempers. Indeed, fears of hell

awaken us, but when we come to see our inveterate and rooted carnal

distempers, this troubles us. A poor soul that is anything far gone in

this preparative work cries out, It is impossible this blind heart of mine

should ever be enlightened, this vain mind be made serious, this hard

heart be softened, these bewitching lusts renounced. It is the difficulty

of parting with sin troubleth the conscience ; therefore it is a relief to

represent God as able. So in the midst of assaults and temptations,

when we are dangerously beset, and fear we shall never be able to hold

out, think of the power of God : 2 Tim. i. 12, ' I know whom I have

believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have

committed unto him against that day ; ' Jude 24, ' Unto him that is

able to keep you from falling.' Our great trouble is for want of power.

(2.) Again, it must needs be a relief to the soul, because if we be per-

suaded of his power it gives us some hope of his will also ; so that we

may go to God, and say as the leper. Mat. viii. 2, ' Lord, if thou wilt,

thou canst make me clean.' Look, as beggars, if they see an ordinary

man pass by, they do not use much clamour and importunity with him,

but if they see a man well habited and well attended, they will follow

after him, and plead hard for relief, and say, Sir, it is in the power of

your hands to help us ; so it doth encourage us to consider God is thus

able, and can easily help, and do this for us. Nay (3.) God's power is

engaged by promise, and therefore in many cases we may reason he

is able to keep us, and therefore he will : Eom. xiv. 4, ' He shall be

holden up, for God is able to make him stand ; ' and Kom. xi. 23, ' They

shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.' The

two pillars of the temple were called Jachin and Boaz, strength and

stability ; he hath strength, and therefore he will establish, for he hath

power enough to make good his word.

(2.) Difficulties are left for this very end, to drive us to the throne

of grace, that we may set the power of God a-work, that where man

leaves off, there God may begin, and when the creature hath spent its

allowance, the Creator may show forth his strength,. Look, as in the

outward case, God promiseth to deliver his people, ' when he seeth

that their power is gone,' Deut xxxii. 26, so in the inward case, ' He

giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he in-

creaseth strength/ Isa. xl. 29.

Use 1. Let this support us in all the difficulties that we meet with

in our way to heaven. When we are at a loss, God is not at a loss :

Zech. viii. 6, ' If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this

people in these days, should it also be marvellous in my eyos, saith

the Lord.' God's power is not to be measured by our thoughts and

by our scantling. Things may seem strange to us, but God can easily

effect them. He that bringeth forth in the spring such beautiful

flowers out of the earth, which looked with such a horrid and dismal

face in the Avinter, what cannot he work in our souls? This is a great

support to a fainting soul ; it is easy with God to do what we count

impossible. A stranger cannot charm a mastiff dog, when the master

VOL. XVII. t"

82 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XV.

of the lioiipe can witli a word. The shepherd can call off the dog

from the flock ; so the Lord can easily rebuke Satan, when he finda

him most violent, and he can subdue and quell the strongest lust.

2. Wiien we are sensible of our weakness, let us observe the laws

God hath set to the creatures. God will be attended upon, and waited

for in the use of means. We must come to the throne of grace, and

therefore our Lord, Avhen he teacheth us to pray, he saith, ' Thine is

the kingdom, the power, and the glory.' We must come to God, if

we would have his power exerted ; and God will be believed in, and

have his power rested upon and applied : Mark xv. 28, ' woman !

great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt;' John xi. 40,

' If thou wilt believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God ; ' that is,

his power. If in desperate exigences we would have the power of

God put forth, God must be sought to, and rested upon ; and you

must abstain from all sin. Sampson received strength no longer from

God than he kept the law of his profession. When we entangle our-

selves, and wilfully run into sin, and turn away from God, we discharge

God from looking after us.

3. Observe what experience you have of the power of his grace ;

have you found it working in you? Mere reading and hearing will

not evidence this truth so much as experience, that there is power put

forth in a gracious way. Alas! otherwise we shall but speak of it as

strangers to it, with cold notions ; therefore can you say, ' I can do all

things through Christ strengthening me?' • Phil. iv. 13. And are

you ' strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might ? ' Eph, vi. 10.

Have you learned this holy art of conquering your distempers and

temptations by the power of God ?

SERMON XV.

With God all things are possible. — Mark x. 27.

DocT. 3. I come to the general truth upon which this is grounded,

that God is omnipotent, and can do all things. This I shall prove,

explain, apply.

First, I shall prove by scripture and by reason.

1. By scripture, because it is an article of faith, and the scrip-

tures that concern this point may be ranked thus: You will find

the question propounded, Gen. xviii. 14, 'Is anything too hard for

the Lord ? ' and this answered, Jer. xxxii. 17, ' There is nothing too

hard for God.' The- affirmative is in the text; and Mat. xix. 26,

' With God all things are possible ; ' and the negative, which binds it

the more strongl}-, is in Luke i. 37, ' With God nothing shall be

impossible.' The general is in the text, 'All things are possible with

God ; ' and the particular is in Job xlii. 2, ' I know that thou canst do

everything.' So ihat the power of God is not only propounded in the

lump, but particularly parcelled out. Certainly God is almighty,

2. I shall prove it by reason.

[1.] The creation of the world shows it. The apostle tells us, Rom.

YeR, 27.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 83

i, 20, ' That the invisible things of him from the creation of the world

are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his

eternal power and godhead.' If you will know what God is, look

upon his creatures. Every creature that hath passed his hand hath

some prints and some stamp upon it, that may discover God, his god-

head, and his power ; that is the most visible thing seen in the creation.

His wisdom and goodness is seen in the creation, but his power lies

upward ; and the most natural notion that we have of God is God

Almighty. God made all the things that are seen, and more than are

seen. He that made all things is omnipotent, and can do whatever is

possible to be done. Creatures only can do what is possible to be

done in their own kind. A man is one kind of creature, an angel is

another , both have their essence limited. Man can do things belong-

ing to a man, an angel can do all things belonging to an angel ; but

God made all things, and therefore he can do all things. In short,

' He that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain,' Isa. xl. 22, he that

handles the great ocean as a child newly come out of the womb, he

that ' appointed the clouds a garment thereof, and thick darkness a

swaddling band for it,' Job xxxviii. 8, 9, ' He that hangs the earth upon

nothing,' Job xxvi. 7, What cannot he do? The earth, that vast and

ponderous body, has nothing to support it but the fluid air, that will

not so much as support a pin or feather. It hangs like a ball in the

midst of the heavens ; where are the pillars and props that sustain

this mighty mass? It is upheld by nothing but the power of God.

And for the manner of making, how did he make all things ? By his

word. This great builder needed no instruments and tools : Heb.

xi. 10, ' Whose builder and maker is God ; ' he commanded, and they

were created,' Ps. xlviii. 5. What more easy than a word ? One asks

what is become of the tools and engines wherewith God made the

world ? Tully brings in a philosopher di.sputing against the creation

of the world : With what spade did God dig the sea ? where was

the trowel wherewith he arched the heavens ? and the line and plum-

met by which he laid forth the foundations of the earth ? There was

nothing but his word that brought all things out of the womb of

nothing. This is the omnipotent, the glorious God, that can do all

things. And then, ex 'parte termini, he brought all things out of

nothing, which philosophers could not so much as conceive how it should

be done. What a large stride and gap is there between being and not

being ! He that out of mere nothing brought forth all this world,

certainly nothing can be too hard for him. A man cannot work

without materials and preparations to his work, but God works when

he hath nothing to work upon. As long as the creatures endure, as

long as heaven and earth stands, which is a monument of God's power,

we need not doubt of his all-snfiBciency ; and therefore in difficult and

hazardous cases the scripture refers us to God as a creator : 1 Peter

iv. 19, ' Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God

commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faith-

ful creator.' Why as unto a creator ? At that time they carried their

lives in their hands ; they had nothing to subsist upon, no visible in-

terests to defend them. Well, go on cheerfully in well-doing, and

commit yourselves to him that can work all thino:g out of nothinj; :

84 SERMONS UPOX MARK X. 17-27. [SeU. XV.

your souls, tiiat is your lives ; put your lives into the Creator's hands.

There may be something of love in the expression, He that created

you will take care of you, and there is also somethino; of power implied ;

they had but only from day to day, and then he bids them trust in

God as a creator. So Ps. cxxiv. 8, \* Our help is in the name of the

Lord, who made heaven and earth.' Whilst you see heaven and earth,

doubt not of God. He hath not lost nor spent his power. He that

made heaven and earth is as ready and as able to work as he did at

first. Though a potter (it is Basil's similitude) make a thousand

vessels, his art is not lessened by the making, but increased rather ;

so whatever God doth, he doth not spend l)y giving ; his power is the

same, and his word is as mighty as ever : ' He spoke, and it was done,

he commanded, and it stood fast ;' Ps. xxxiii. 9, and that when there

was nothing to work on. The will and the word of God, what mighty

things can they do ! He can do the greatest things without any visible

means ; things are done in the world, and nobody can tell how or by

what. So the apostle tells us that he still acts according to his mighty

power, which he wrought in the creation : 1 Cor. i. 28, ' God hath

chosen ra fMT] ovra, things that are not, to bring to nought things that

are.' God will ever triumph over human improbabilities, and will have

no flesh to despair because of the smallness of the means, or to glory

in his sight because of the greatness of them ; for he doth all things,

and that by his mighty power : Rom. iv. 17, his creating power is there

again alluded to, • He calleth those things that are not as though they

were.' As when God created the world, he spoke light out of dark-

ness ; and so still when he finds nothing to work upon he ' calls things

that are not as though they were;' speaking of fulfilling his promises

to Abraham. So he works grace in the hearts of his people according

to his creating power : 2 Cor. iv. 6, ' For God, who commanded the

light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give us the

knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' So that

nature well considered is a great help to grace ; when we consider the

creation, and busy our thoughts therein, it helps us more to enlarge

the power of God in our apprehensions.

[2.] As creation, so providence shows it. Take it either for God's

external or internal providence.

(1.) His external providence, preserving all things in their proper

])lace, and for their proper use : Heb. i. 3, 'He upholdeth all things by

the word of his power.' All things that are in the world are held up

by God's hand ; they do not subsist by their own nature so much as by

divine manuteneiicy : ' He upholds all things.' It is an allusion to a

weighty body that is held up by the hand of man, which if loosened, it

falls to the ground ; so the creature would fall to nothing if not kept

up by God. Now what an almighty grasp hath he that holds up all

things ! He that feedeth so many mouths with the opening the hand

of his bounty : Ps. cxlv. 15, 16, ' The eyes of all wait upon thee, and

thou givest them their meat in due season : thou openest thy hands,

and satisfiest the desire of every living thing ; ' he that sustains and

guides so many creatures, that preserves the confederacies of nature,

that sets bounds to the sea, and makes decrees for the waves to obey,

beyond which they shall not pass : Jer. v. 22, ' Which have placed

VeR. 27.] SERMONS UPON 3IARK X. 17-27. 85

tlie sand for the bounds of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it can-

not pass it ; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they

.not prevail ; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it ; ' he that

holds the winds in his fist, is not he mifrhty and strong ? And there-

fore, if God should but loosen his hand, the world would soon fall into

confusion and nothing. Thus his sustaining and preserving all things

speaks him an all-powerful God.

(2.) His internal providence. The providence of God is chiefly seen

in his power over the spirits of men that are voluntary agents. He

hath such a power over them that they are not masters of their own

affections and dispositions, but act contrary many times to their

intended purposes : Prov. xxi. 1, 'The king's heart is in the hand of

the Lord as the rivers of waters; he turneth it whither soever he will.'

Look, as a man by cutting a channel draws the water this way or that

way, hither and thither, so doth God move the hearts of all men in the

world, nay, even of kings and princes : Prov. xvi. 7, ' When a man's

ways please the Lord, he maketh evea his enemies to be at peace with

him.' Strange thing that God can put a bridle upon the spirits of

men, and they shall be at peace with him whom they hated; their

liearts are turned many times to what formerly they resolved against.

Esau is an instance ; he had vowed Jacob's death, and meets him with

purpose to destroy him, but when God brings them together, Esau falls

embracing of Jacob : Gen. xxxiii. 4, ' And Esau ran to meet him, and

embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.' Egypt dismissed

Israel with jewels. Balaam comes to curse, and he falls a blessing

Israel. This bridling, turning, changing the hearts of men, it is a

notable discovery of God's omnipotency. Look, as there is more power

seen in governing a skittish horse than in rolling a stone, so in ruling

those beings which have a principle of resistance doth the Lord show

forth his power. Angels, men, and devils can do nothing but as God

will, and as God gives them leave. The devils are fain to ask Christ's

leave to enter into the herd of swine, Mat. viii. 31 ; and therefore how

may the flock of Christ's sheep rest secure under the power of his

providence, when those damned spirits are held in by the irresi-stible

providence of God that they can do nothing b^it what God will ! As

Tertullian said. If the bristles of swine be numbered, much more are

the hairs of the saints. God hath such a mighty power, that not a

creature can be troubled without his leave, even by tho.^e spirits that

are most opposite to him ; so that his power over the afiections and

hearts of men shows he is a great and mighty God.

[3] That God is almighty appears by the strength that is in crea-

tures, which is an effect and shadow of the power of God. All the

power that is in creatures is from God, and he wastes not by giving as

we do. That expression suits to this case ; God took from the spirit

of Moses, and put it upon the elders, and yet Moses had not the less

because of their participation. We cannot communicate to others but

we lessen ourselves, but God remaineth in an infinite fulness ; and

therefore, if he hath given power to creatures, he hath more power

himself. Now there is great power in creatures : Job xli. 8, Job

tells us of great whales that have bones as brass, and strong as pieces

of iron ; and David tells us of ' angels that excel in strength,' Ps.

86 SEIIBIONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XV.

cxxxiii. 20, so that one of them slew a hundred fourscore and five

thousand in one ni'ojht in Sennacherih's host. And if tliere be such

strength in creatures, what is there in God from whom tliey have it ?

for nothing is in the effect but wliat was first in the cause.

Secondly, Let me come to explain this power of God by three dis-

tinctions —

1. God's power is twofold — either absolute or actual. (1.) His ab-

solute power is that by which lie can do that which he never will do.

This is spoken of Mat. xxvi. 53, ' Thinkest thou not that I cannot now

pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve

legions of angels ?' Mat. lii. 9, ' God is able of these stones to raise up

children to Abraham ; ' he can do more than ever he did or will do

He can do not only what men and angels conceive can be done, but

Avliat he himself conceiveth can be done (2.) His actual power is that

by which he doth whatever he will : Ps. cxv. 3, ' Our God is in the

heavens ; he hath done whatsoever he pleaseth ; ' and Ps. cxxxv- 6,

' Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, in

the seas, and all deep places.' Never shall anything be done but what

God wills, and what God wills shall surely come to pass ; which is a

notable support in all accidents.

2. God's power is ordinary and extraordinary. (1.) Ordinary is

that which is according to the course of second causes and law of

nature, when he preserves the creatures, and works by them according

to the order which he himself hath established: Ps. cxix. 91, 'They

continue this day according to thine ordinance, for all are thy servants.'

All the creatines, sun, moon, and stars, do keep the track and path

which God hath set unto them, and God preserves the beings of all

things, and keeps the ' covenant of night and day,' as it is called in

the prophet. (2.) There is God's extraordinary power, by which he

can suspend the whole course of nature, as he hath done sometimes

upon eminent occasions ; as when the sun stood still in the valley of

Ajalom, Josh. x. 12, 13, or when the sun went back ten degrees on the

dial of Ahaz, 2 Kings xx. 11 ; his interdicting the Eed Sea that it

should not flow, Exod. xiv. 21, 22 ; his causing iron, which is a heavy

body, to swim upon the top of the water at the prayer of Elisha, 2

Kings vi, 6 ; his suspending the burning of the fire when the three

children were in the furnace, Dan. iii. 27, his shutting the mouths of

the hungry lions when Daniel was in the den with them, Dan, vi. 22 ;

his making the ravens, which are by nature birds of prey, to be cat-

erers to Elijah, 1 Kings xvii. 6.

3. Distinction. There are impossihilia naturce, and impossihilia

natura, things impossible to nature, and things impossible by nature.

Things impossible to nature God can do, but not things impossible by

nature ; he will do things above nature, and besides it, but nothing

against it. Things impossible by nature are such as either respect

the agent or the object. (1.) With respect to the agent, that which

is repugnant to his own essential perfection. Thus God cannot lie .

Titus i. 2, ' Which God, that cannot lie, hath promised ;' Heb. vi. 18,

' That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to

lie, we may have strong consolation.' God cannot deny himself:

2 Tim. ii. 13, \*If we believe not, yet he abidetli faithful; he cannot

S.7

VeR. 27.] SERMONS UPON MAKK X. 17-27. S7

deny himself;' for these things imply weakness, and not power. God

cannot die, God cannot sleep. It is no discredit to a wise man that he

cannot play the fool, or to a valiant man that he cannot he a coward.

God can do all things, so as that he is still God ; those things that are

repugnant to the perfection of his nature he cannot do. (2.) With

respect to the ohject, such things as imply a contradiction ; as that a

thing should be, and not be, to make a creature finite and infinite,

dependent and independent at the same time and in the same respect ;

limited to a place and yet in every place ; to make the sun shine and

not to shine at the same time ; these are against the nature of the

things themselves. These distinctions have their use in many con-

troversies that are about religion.

Use. For exhortation. To press you to believe that God is almighty,

and to improve it.

1. Believe it. Need we press men to that ? It is a piece of natural

divinity, a truth held forth tc us, not only in the book of scripture, but

of nature. That light which finds out a deity will discover him to be

almighty ; and therefore need we any great ado to persuade men to

believe it ? Yes, certainly ; for this is the great thing that we question

in cases of difficulty ; we doubt more of the power of God than of his

will. Our seeming doubts of his will are but pretences to cover our

shameful and atheistical doubts of his power ; that which works subtly

iind underground in us, and weakens our confidence in God, and hin-

ders the rejoicing of our faith, is a doubt of his power. Surely God

knows us better than we do ourselves ; and the scripture shows all

along that our doubts are about God's power. When there was a

promise brought from God that Sarah should conceive with child, she

did not believe the promise: Gen. xviii. 1.3^ 14, 'And the Lord said

imto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety

bear a child, which am old ? Is anything too hard for the Lord ? '

There was her doubt and difficulty. So Moses, the man of God, the

Lord had told him face to face that he would feed his people, and give

them flesh to eat, and he doubted of Gods power : Num. xi. 21, 23,

' The people among whom I am are six hundred thousand footmen,

and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole

month. Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them to suffice them ?

or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to suffice

them? And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed

short?' So whto the prophet foretold there should be such plenty in

Samaria, where there was great scarcity, saith the nobleman, 2 Kings

vii. 2, 'Behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might

this thing be ? ' There was his doubt. So the Virgin Mary, when

the angel comes with the mes.sage of the great mystery of the incarna-

tion of the Son of God, that he should be born of her, Luke i. 34, 'Then

said Mary unto the angeh How can this be, seeing I know not a man?'

At this rate still doth unbelief speak in the wilderness ; as the chilJreu

of Israel : Ps. Ixxviii. 19, 20, ' Can God furnish a table in the wilder-

ness ? Behold he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the

streams overflowed ; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for

his people ? ' Certainly the scripture knows what is the special lan-

5jrua";e of our hearts better than we ourselves. Now unbelief is still

88 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XV.

represented as doubting of God's power. Besides, doubts haunt us only

in times of difficulty, and when mercies expected are hard to come by.

If we did doubt of God's will because of our unworthiness, why do we

not doubt at other times, when things are eas}'? But these doubts

surprise us only when the things we expect from God according to his

I)romises are difficult and hard to come by. And the reason why we

are so apt to doubt of God's power is the imperfection of our thoughts

about God's being. We are inured to principles of sense, and con-

verse with limited beings, and therefore confine God to a circle of our

own making : Ps. Ixxviii. 41, ' They turned back and tempted God,

and limited the Holy One of Israel.' We confine God to the course of

second causes, with which we wholly converse, and when there is diffi-

culty, there our hearts fail ; therefore there is need to press you to

believe God's power.

2. Improve it to strengthen our faith and encourage our obedience.

[1.] To strengthen our faith, either in prayer or in waiting. In

prayer: Oh! when you come to God, remember 'he is able to do

abundantly above all that we ask or think,' Eph. iii. 20. How hard

and difficult soever the thing be that we ask of God, he is able to do it.

When our Lord taught us to pray, what are the encouragements he

gives us ? see the conclusion of the Lord's prayer, Mat. vi, 13, ' Thine

is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.' As God hath a kingdom

and authority to dispose of all things for his glory and our good, so he

hath a power to back it ; it is not an empty title. Pray for help with

such cheerfulness and confidence as if it were the easiest thing in the

world to be done. All those things that are so difficult to be obtained,

either the sanctification of our souls, or the promotion of Christ's

kingdom, or any of those things, 'Thine is the power;' there is that

which holds up our hands in prayer, and gives us confidence towards

God. So to strengthen our faith in waiting, touching the performance

of all God's promises for ourselves and others. Abraham believed

above hope and against hope. Why? 'Being fully persuaded that

what he had promised he was able also to perform,' Kom. iv. 21. This

is the great security of the soul, that confirms us in waiting upon God,

when the accomplishment of his promises is unlikely to reason, ' God is

able.' If you expect of God preservation in the midst of difficulties,

such a fickle and such a changeable creature as man is, how can that

be ? 1 Peter i. 5, ' Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto

salvation.' The power of God is engaged for our defence. So for tem-

poral difficulties, when we see no means, no likelihood to escape, yet

we are not thoughtful of this matter, for 'our God whom we serve is

able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver

us out of thy hand, king,' Dan. iii. 17. In death, when we go to

the grave, to moulder into dust and rottenness, then to look upon the

morsels of worms as parcels of the resurrection, what shall uphold and

support our hearts in waiting upon God for this? Phil. iii. 21, 'Who

shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his

glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue-

all things unto himself.' The scrijjture still refers us to the mighty

power of God, whereby he can subdue and cause all to fall under him.

The destruction of antichrist and enemies of the church, who are sup-

VeE. 27.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 89

ported liy great and strongly combined interests, liow can that ever be

hoped for ? Rev. xviii. 8, ' Her plagues shall come in one day, death

and mourning, and famine, and she shall be utterly burnt with fire, for

strong is the Lord God who judgeth her ; ' and that is the greatest

cordial of the soul. The life of faith lies in the belief of God's power

and all-sufficiency. He can raise up the church from her low con-

dition, and all without any means ; when all is dry bones, then God

can put life into his people.

[2.] To encourage us in obedience ; it is good to believe and improve

the power of God.

(1.) That we may carry it more humbly and more dutifully : 1 Peter

V. 6, ' Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.' This is that

which begets a deep awe and reverence of his majesty. Shall we not

submit to that God that is able to crush us ? Oh ! therefore let us

study to please him in all things. When you sin, you bid defiance to

the Almighty, and enter into the lists with God, and provoke him to

jealousy : 1 Cor. x, 22, ' Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy ? are we

stronger than he ? ' Do you know what it is to dash against God and

contest with God ? He that is almighty is the most desirable friend

or the most dreadful adversary, and therefore humble yourselves, and

carry it dutifully towards him. Every one would be in with the

Almighty. Be sure to keep in with the Lord : Deut. x. 17, ' For the

Lordour God is a God of gods and Lord of lords, a great God, a

mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward/

Will you provoke him and dare him to his face?

(2.) To keep us upright in obedience, without warping and using

any carnal shifts: Gen. xvii. 1, 'I am the Almighty God; walk before

me, and be thou perfect.' God alone is enough to you. The reason

why we so often step out of the way is, because we do not believe God

to be almighty, that he is more able to defend than man to hurt.

Even God's own children may warp for want of a sound belief of this.

Abraham saved himself by a lie, because he would not trust God with

his preservation. Gen. xx. 11. Moses was backward to do the Lord's

message, Exod. iv. 13, as if God could not bear him out before Pharaoh,

and before the Egyptians. There was a promise Jacob should have the

blessing, but Eebecca puts him upon using indirect means to obtain it,

because she could not trust God's all-sufficiency to bring it about. He

that will not trust God and rest upon his power cannot be long faithful

to him ; because they think there is not enough in God, they will seek

elsewhere. All sincerity ariseth from these two things (and until you

get your hearts into this frame you never will be sincere), submitting

all things to God's will, and resting upon God's power. How desperate

soever the case be, this will relieve you, and keep you sincere and com-

fortable., the Lord is a powerful God, and knows how to provide for his

glory, and for your sustentation.

Now to quicken you thus to believe and improve the power of God,

I will offer these considerations —

(1 ) Consider the amplitude of God's power, which is not to be

measured by our scantling and model. We can do something, but God

can do all things ; we must have matter prepared, but God works out

of nothing; we do things difficultly, and must have time, but God can

50 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XV.

do all tilings in a moment ; lie needs no instruments or tools, no pattern

or copy, but worketh all things according to the counsel of his will.

We rust with age, and our strength is dried up, but ' the Lord's hand

is not shortened that it cannot save,' Isa. lix. 1. His strength is never

wasted or dried up. When anything is to be done or expected from

God, is it greater than making the world ? and God is wliere he was

at first. Our knowledge of things is by effects, but God never had an

effect adequate to his power ; he hath done great things, but he hatli

power to do greater : Mai. ii. 15, ' And did not he make one ? yet

had he the residue of the Spirit.' When he created the world, he had

the residue of the Spirit, he could have made more worlds. All created

effects are finite, and therefore not fully answerable to the force of the

cause. Let us be still enlarging in our thoughts of God's power. This

is a power that needeth not the concurrence of visible means, but can

work without them ; yea, opposite power is no hindrance to God.

Eubs are plain ground to him : Isa. xxvii. 4, ' Who would set the briers

and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would

burn them together.' What can briers and thorns do against a devour-

ing flame ? they are fit fuel to increase the fire, but cannot hinder the

burning. God works through all opposition: Isa. xliii. 13, 'I will

work, and who shall let it.'

(2.) Consider this power is ready to be employed for our use, so far

as it shall make for God's glory and our good. God is ours if we be

in covenant with him ; and if so, all that is in God is ours also, quantus,

quantus est. As great as he is, God makes over himself in covenant.

I am yours, therefore al mightiness is yours, to be set a- work for you.

And, as Aristotle said, rwv (fjiXcov iravra kolvu, all things are common

between friends and confederates : 1 Kings xxii. 4, \* Jehoshaphat said

unto the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my

horses as thy horses.' Surely, being in covenant with God, it is a

relation of friendship, and whatever is God's is ours ; and that is the

reason of this expression, Eph. vi. 10, \* Be strong in the Lord, and in

the power of his might.' In all our faintings and fears we should look

upon God's almighty power as a guardian for our good. All that God

hath is forthcoming for our use ; as all other things, so his almighty

power and strength.

(3.) Whatever his will is, or whatever God hath determined to do

concerning us, yet he would have us magnify his power, and with com-

fort cast ourselves upon it : Isa. viii. 12, 13, ' Fear not their fear, nor

be afraid ; sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear,

and let him be your dread.' You should set power against power, that

you may not be disma5'ed, Isa. 1. 10. It is not meant spiritually onl}'-,

but also in temporal cases : ' Let him trust in the name of the Lord,

and stay upon his God.' You should comfort yourselves in the power

and all-sufficiency of God.

(4.) Consider how angry God hath been with his children for not

resting upon his power. Nothing hath hindered the discovery of God's

power and the manifestation of his love to them so much as distrust

of his power : Mark vi. 5, ' He could there do no mighty work.' It is

not said, he would not, but he could not do any miglity works there,

because of their unbelief. Unbelief dolh put a bar and rub in the way

VeR. 27.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. 91

of God's omnipoteucj ; and John xi. 40, 'If thou wonldst believe, thou

shouldst see the glory of God.' God doth not put forth hiniselt' because

we do no more rest upon him and his all-sufficiency to help us. See

how angry God hath been on this account with his own chiklren and

people ; with Moses and Aaron : Mat. xx. 12, ' Because ye believed me

not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye

shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.'

The believing of God's power is not determining the success, but when

we encourage ourselves to pray and wait, and to be sincere and faithful

upon the account of God's power, that God is able. Many troubles

and perplexities have befallen God's children for not believing his power.

Zacharias, John's father, was struck dumb for not believing : Luke i.

20, ' Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak until the day

that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my

words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.' And God let the noble-

man live to see himself confuted, and then he was crushed to death:

2 Kings vii. 2, ' Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered

the man of God, and said, Beliold, if the Lord should make windows

in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt sec

it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat thereof,'

(5.) Consider it is a notable argument in prayer to conjure the

Lord by his power. As the leper comes to Christ, Mat. viii. 2, ' Lord,

if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean ; ' do what thou wilt, but this I

know, that thou canst, thou hast power enough. See how Moses insin-

uates : Num. xiv. 15, 16, 'Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one

man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak,

saying. Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the

land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the

w^ilderness ; ' as if he should say. Lord, thou wouldst have the glory of

thy power seen in the eyes of the nations, that they may know thee as

a mighty powerful God ; now they will say, The Lord was not able to

bring them into Canaan.

(6.) All our courage, and all the strength of our comfort and

obedience, and all the blessings of obedience^ depends upon the be-

lief and the improvement of God's power. Look into the book of

God, and you shall see all the generous acts that worthy men have

performed came from hence. Abraham, the father of the faithful,

oftered up his son, his only son, the son of the promise, and

that freely ; and why ? ' Accounting that God was able to raise

him up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a

figure,' Heb. xi. 19. In such a trial, what would support and bear us

out ? So when the fiery furnace was heated seven times hotter than

ordinary, burning and flaming exceedingly, the three children ventured

into it upon this principle, ' Our God whom we serve is able to deliver

us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy

hand, king,' Dan. iii. 17. What is the reason we are so cowardly

and dastardly ? We look to things sensible and visible, and cannot set

the power of God against it or above them, and consider how he can

bring good out of evil, and so carnal fears and hopes draw us aside.

"Why are we discouraged, and turn from God in difficult cases rather

than in easy cases, but that we do not believe that he can do all things ?

92 SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. [SeR. XV.

Paul believed, therefore in the face of opposition he goes on in his work

imweariedly : 1 Tim. iv. 10, ' Therefore we both labour and suffer

reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all

men, especially of them that believe/ This made him in the midst of

reproaches and all manner of difficulties to go on with courage.

(7) When we run to carnal shifts because we cannot trust this

power of God, then we engage his strength, that should be for us,

against us, and it is just with God to blast us. Jonah runs from his

work, and God sends a storm after him. Jonah was afraid of the

Ninevites, but mischief will sooner or latter overtake them that run

from their duty, and they have worse inconveniences by their own

shifts. Jacob would get the blessing by a wile, but that cost him

dear ; he was banished from his father's house upon it, lest Esau

should kill him. Indirect courses will certainly prove a loss ; though

you may obtain your purpose, yet you plunge yourselves into greater

difficulties afterward, and obtain your desires with more trouble than

if you had waited upon God.

(8.) If the thing be not done for us which we need and desire when

we trust upon the power of God, it is because it is not best for us.

He that trusts upon the power of God cannot miscarry. A cross is

best, and a low estate is best, and troubles are best. It is not for

want of power and love that we are afflicted of God ; he will deliver

us and support us, and turn it to the best : Ps. Ixxxiv. 11, \* For the

Lord God is a sun and a shield, he will give grace and glory, and no

good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,' Ps.

xxxiv. 9, ' The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that

seek the Lord shall not want any good thing,' If we want anything

we would have, certainly it is not good for us.

(9.) The less power we have in ourselves, the more experience we

have of God's power : Isa, xl. 29, ' He giveth power to the faint,

and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.' So Deut.

xxxii. 36, ' The Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for

his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none

shut up or left.' When human help begins to fail and is spent, then

God's power is seen. The lean cheeks, and the faint voice, and the

pale colour of a hunger-starved beggar moves more than all the cant-

ing entreaties of a sturdy one. V/hen we are sufficiently humbled in

the sense of our own unworthiness, and can entirely cast ourselves

upon God, out of a confidence of his power, help will not be far off,

for he really pities those that are indeed miserable, and have a sense of

it, and sets his power on work for their relief.

(10.) We can never expect to be free from biting cares and per-

plexities about the various occurrences of this life until we can entirely

cast ourselves upon God's all-sufficiency and power. Oh ! but when

you are once got upon the rock, then you will not be tossed with the

uncertain waves : Isa. xxvi. 3, 4, ' Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace

whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee : trust ye in

the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.'

In tlie ebbings and flowings of the creature a man is safe and fixed,

for he hath that which answers all things. A man that hath no lands,

yet if he hath money, the wise man tells us, that answereth all things,

VeR. 27.] SERMONS UPON MARK X. 17-27. • 93

and he may do well enough ; so if a man hath nothinor in the creature,

yet if he hath the power of God, that answereth all things; he can

rejoice in God when creatures fail, Heb. iii. 17, 18 : 'As having nothing,

yet possessing all things,' 2 Cor. vi. 10. The Almighty God carrieth

the purse ; we have all things in God, and he will supply us as he

seeth it to be best with respect to his own glory and their eternal

condition ; and therefore, if you would be freed from all these floating

uncertainties, and those tempestuous agitations of spirit by wliich you

are tossed to and fro, you will never come to this till you encourage ^

yourselves in the sense of God's power and all-sufficiency.

SEEMONS UPON 2 THESSALOMANS I. 3,

SERMON I.

We are hound to thanh God alioays for you, hretJiren, as it is meet,

because that your faith groioeih exceedingly, and the charity of

every one of you all toiuards each other ahoundeth. — 2 Thes. i. 3.

The first part of this epistle is gratulatory, for the Thessalonians'

perseverance ami increase in grace ; in which — (1.) The apostle giveth

thanks to God ; (2.) He telleth of the fame thereof in the churches,

ver. 4, that he might the better encourage and exhort them to con-

tinue. By both he intimateth his love and spiritual affection to them.

In his thanksgiving to God we may take notice of —

1. The affectionate manner.

2. The matter of this thanksgiving, the increase of their faith and

charily.

For the manner, it is done emphatically, \* We are bound to thank

God always for yon, as it is meet.' There are three emphatical words :

'Always;' this work of God among them was much upon his heart,

and still give him new matter of praising God in their behalf. Then

there is the obligation from justice and equity, signified in those words,

6(f)eiXofi€v, ' We are bound,' and Ka6(o<i d^iov iarcv, 'As it is meet ;'

there the expression is stronger. He doth not only tell them that he

did it, but that he ought to do it, ' We are bound, and it is meet.'

The first expression respects the mercy of God, so there was a debt of

duty lying upon him ; there was justice in the case. The second

respects their estate, ' It was meet ; ' becoming the condition into

which grace had brought them, and so there was equity in the case.

Some refer this last clause to the performance of the duty, that ho

gave thanks as was meet ; that is, in that manner which so great a

benefit deserveth, not slightly and perfunctorily, but with great rejoic-

ing. But rather it refers to the apostle's judgment of their estate :

'As it is meet,' hearing what I do, for me to judge of you ; for a

paiallel expression doth thus explain it, Phil. i. 7, ' Even as it is meet

for me to think thus of )'0u all.' He conceived himself bound to

judge :&f them all to be such as had owned the Lord with a sincere

faith, aiid his people with a sincere love, and were likely to continue

96 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

therein. Not bis affection, but bis judgment inclined bim to tbink

so ; tbe cburcb of tbe Tbessalonians and every member tbereof bad

given sucb real and evident signs of tbe grace of God in them, tbat

be was bound to give God special tbanks for tbis grace. Tbe gospel

batb and may be blessed in some places, so fju- tbat all tbe members

of particular cburcbes bave given positive evidences of true grace in

them, and tbat to the most discerning christians, and tbose v\'bo were

best able to judge. It is yet possible, and therefore why should we not

endeavour after it? It is meet for me to judge so; I hope you are

so ; therefore I count myself bound to give tbanks to God.

From this preface four points are observable —

1. Tbat it is a debt we owe to God to give thanks for his benefits.

2. Tbat in thanksgiving to God we should specially own his spiritual

benefits.

3. Tbat not only the spiritual benefits vouchsafed to ourselves, but

to others also, must be acknowledged with thankfulness.

4. Tbat in thanksgiving for spiritual benefits, whether to ourselves

or others, the increase of grace must be acknowledged, as well as the

beginnings of it.

In the former epistle he gave tbanks to God for their faith and love,

here for the increase and growth of both, ' Your faith groweth exceed-

ingl}^, and your love aboundetb.'

Doct. 1. That it is a debt we owe to God to give thanks for his

benefits.

Paul saith here not only, ' We do,' but, \* We are bound.'

1, Justice requireth it, for the benefits were given upon this condi-

tion, that we should praise God for them : Ps. 1. 15, ' Call upon me in

tbe day of trouble ; I will deliver thee, and thou sbalt glorify me.'

Tbis is God's pact and agreement with us, that we shall bave the bene-

fit, and be will have the glory. As the king of Sodom said to Abraham,

Give me the persons, and take tbe goods to thyself again. Gen. xiv. 21 ;

so in effect God saith to us. You shall have the comfort, but let me

have the honour. We ourselves consent to tbis covenant ; we seldom

make prayers in our distress but we promise thankfulness : Hosea xiv. 2,

' Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously, so will we render

the calves of our lips.' We engage to offer praise when our requests

are beard. Now, when God bearetb and granteth our requests, there is

an obligation upon us to glorify God for the mercies received. But

now, though God be sougbt to in our necessities, tbere is no more

mention of bim when our turns are served. We are forward in suppli-

cations, but backward in gratulations. All tbe lepers could beg bealtb,

yet ' But one returned to give God the glory,' Luke xvii. 18. Surely

we should be as much affected, orratber more, in receiving the mercies

tban we were in asking them ; for before we only knew tbem by guess

and imagination, but then by actual feeling or experience of the com-

fort of them. But chiefly the argument is, that justice requireth it.

It is a kind of theft, and unjust detention of what is another's, if in

our necessities we crave help, and afterward tbere is no more mention

of God than as if we bad these blessings from ourselves.

2. God by his precept commanding it and we in our distress pro-

mising it, he expecteth that there should be thankful returns of tbe

SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3. 97

mercies afforded to us. That is the second argument, God's expectatioa ;

which must he interpreted OeoTrpeTrco^, hecomiug the excellency of his

being. One may be said to expect a thing dejure, rightfully, or de facto,

really and actually. God knowetli that he hath to do with unthankful

creatures, and that the stupid world will not take notice of his kind-

ness ; therefore de facto, actually, he expectetli no more than is given

him. having a full and clear prospect of all future events ; hut dejure,

of right, he might expect. So these expressions are to be interpreted :

Luke xiii. 7, ' These three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree,

and find none.' So Isa. v. 4, ' When I looked it should bring forth

grapes, brought it forth wild grapes.' So we may fail his expectation,

but still to our loss : 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, ' Hezekiah rendered not again

according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was lifted up ;

therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judali and Jerusalem.'

All our receipts call for a return, and a return suitable, which if we

})erform not, God's wi-ath is kindled against us, and therefore a good

man should make conscience of his returns : Ps. cxvi. 12, ' What shall

I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me ? '

3. It keepeth up the intercourse between us and God, which would be

interrupted and broken off if we should discontinue our addresses to

him as soon as we have what we would have, and when our wants are

supplied God should hear no more from us. By the laws of Ezekiel's

temple, the worshippers were so required to go in at one door and out

at another, that none of them might at any time turn their backs upon

the mercy-seat, Ezek. xlvi. 9, but which way soever they entered they

were to go away rigbt against it. God cannot endure men should turn

their backs upon him when their turn is served. Prayer and praise

still keep up communion and familiarity witb God, that still there may

be a commerce between us and him, by asking all things, and taking

all things out of his hands. Prayer and praise are our continual work :

Heb. xiii. 15, ' By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise con-

tinually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks unto his name.'

The supreme benefactor and fountain of all goodness must still be

owned ; there must be a constant course in it. Some mercies are so

general and beneficial that they should be remembered before God every

day ; and God is still blessing his people, and by new mercies giving

new matter of praise and thanksgiving.

4. It continueth a succession of mercies, for the more thankful we are

for them the more they are increased upon us, as an husbandman trusts

more of his precious seed in fruitful soils. The ascent of vapours

maketh way for the descent of showers. The sea poureth out of her

fulness into the rivers, and they all return again into tbe sea : Ps. Ixvii.

5, 6, ' Let tbe people praise thee, God, let all the people praise thee,

then shall tbe earth yield her increase, and God, even our God, shall

bless us.' Or when the springs lie low, we pour in a little water into

the pump, not to enrich the fountain, but to bring up more for our-

selves. I do tbe rather observe it, becaus"e it is not only true of

outward increase, but spiritual also : Col. ii. 7, ' Booted and built up

in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding

therein with thanksgiving.' If we give thanks for so much grace as

we have already received, it is the way to increase our store. The

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98 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

reason why we do no more tlnive in grace or advafice in the spiritual

life is becanse we do no roore give thanks.

5. In tlianksgiving all spiritual graces are acted and promoted.

(1.) Faith is acted in thanksgiving when we see and own the invi-

sible hand that reacheth out our supplies to us : 'All things come of

thee, and of thine own have we given thee,' 1 Chron. xxix. 14. Stupid

and carnal creatures look to the next hand, as if he that bringeth the

present were more to be thanked than he that sendeth it : Hosea ii. 8,

' She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oik' We are

unthankful to God and man, but more to God, because blessings that

come from an invisible hand we look upon as things of course, and do

not praise the giver. Beasts own the next hand: Isa. i. 3, ' The ox

knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not

know, my people doth not consider.' (2.) Love : It is love that doth

open our mouths, that we may praise God with joyful lips : Ps. cxvi. 1,

' I will love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplica-

tions ; ' and then, ver. 2, ' I will praise him as long as I live.' The

proper intent of mercies is to draw us to God. When the heart is full

of the sense of the goodness of the Lord, the tongue cannot hold its

peace. Self-love doth more put us on prayers, but the love of God on

praises, therefore to seek and not to praise, it is to be lovers of ourselves

rather than of God. (3.) Hope is acted. While we give thanks, for

the very grant, for the promise, for the preparations, with greater

assurance we expect what is behind ; as Abraham built an altar in the

land of Canaan, and offered thanksgivings to God, when he had not a

foot in the country. Gen. xiii. 18. (4.) Our humility : The humble

soul is most delighted in the praise of God, but the proud soul in its

own praises : ' They sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their

drag,' Hab. i. 16. Whilst others sacrifice to God, they deprive God

of his honour, and exalt anything rather than the author of felicity ;

they ascribe all to themselves, whilst the others profess their unworthi-

ness of the least mercies from God : Gen. xxxii= 10, ' I am not worthy

of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast

showed unto thy servant ; ' and 2 Sam. vii. 18, ' Who am I, Lord

God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto ? '

God is never exalted till the creature be abased.

6. It preventeth many sins ; as — (1.) Hardness of heart, and secu-

rity in enjoying the blessings of God's common providence. These

common mercies point to the author, and discover their end to the

thankful soul, but to the unthankful they prove occasions to the flesh ;

so ' their table is made a snare to them, and their welfare a trap,' Ps.

lxix= 22. . But when we sip and look upward, and acknowledge God

on all occasions, the creature is sanctified to us : 1 Tim. iv. 4, ' Every

creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received

with thanksgiving.' Wliere there is a due acknowledgment of the

donor, we have it with a blessing. So (2.) It suppresseth murmuring,

or that quarrelling, fretting, impatient humour which venteth itself

against God, even in our prayers and complaints, and soureth all our

comforts. Murmuring is an anti-providence, the scum of discontent,

by which we entertain crosses with anger, and blessings with disdain.

Man is a touchy creature, always querulous, especially when God

SEEMONS UPON 2 THBSSALONIANS I. 3. 99

retrencheth him in some worldly conveniences which he fancieth.

Now a thankful spirit counterbalanceth crosses with comforts : Job

ii. 10, ' What ! shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and

shall we not receive evil ? ' It taketh notice how gracious Grod hath

been notwithstanding his seeming severity, therefore it can bless God

in every condition: Job i. 21/ ' The Lord gave, and the Lord hath

taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord/ This fretting humour

is cured ; as long as we see occasion of giving thanks, it causeth us to

submit to his disposing will. (3.) It prevents distrust and carking

cares. This remedy is prescribed by the apostle : Phil, iv, 6, ' Be

careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication,

with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' When

we acknowledge what God hath done for us, it prevents distrust :

Ps. Ixxvii. 10, 11, ' I said, This is my infirmity, but I will remember

the years of the right hand of the Most High : I will remember the

works of the Lord ; surely I will remember thy wonders of old.' There

are great convulsions in an earthquake, but when it findeth a vent all

is quiet. When we can bless God for favours already received, we

will not doubt of his goodness for the future, but quietly compose our-

selves to wait for the good end of the Lord. (4.) It cureth spiritual

pride to consider who must be praised and owned for all the good

which is in us : 1 Cor. iv. 7, ' Who maketh thee to differ from another ?

and what hast thou that thou didst not receive ? Now if thou didst re-

ceive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it ? ' The

more we have, we are more indebted to grace. We have all from God

and for God, not for ourselves, our own glory and ostentation. God

will be angry if we rob him of it, as Herod was smitten ' because he

gave not God the glory,' Acts xii. 23. The receiver is as bad as the

stealer ; we consent to this robbery and usurpation.

Use. Oh ! then, let us be more abundant in thanksgiving and praise.

It is God's will concerning us in Christ : 1 Thes. v. 18, ' In every-

thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concern-

ing you.' But there are other reasons to persuade us ; as — (1.) Our

profit both spiritual and temporal. It argueth a good spirit, great

faith and love, when we look to God in everything, and a submissive

spirit when we take anything kindly at his hands, the nations had

never fallen to idolatry if they had kept up thankfulness, and con-

sidered God in all their mercies : Acts xiv. 16, 17, ' Who in times past

suffered all nations to walk in their own ways ; nevertheless he left

not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from

heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.'

Setting up the idol chance was the great cause of perverting mankind.

Besides, this is noble and delightful work, the work of angels, our work

in heaven. Well, then, observe what matter of praise God vouchsafeth

to you continually. If you did want many of the comforts you now

enjoy, how miserable would your lives be ! A thing too near the ball

of the eye is not seen well ; our comforts must be set at a distance to

make us value them. (2.) Our continual dependence. It is with us

as, it was with the raven and the dove which Noah sent forth out of

the ark, Cen. viii. 7, 8 : the raven, feeding on the floating carrion,

returned no more : but the dove, finding not whereon to rest the sole

100 SKKMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

of her foot, returned with an olive branch. Carnal men, if they can

get anything- from God to support them, and they have their stock in

their own hands, they care no more for him, but live apart from God :

Jer. ii. 31, ' Wherefore say my people, We are lords, we will come no

more unto thee ? ' (3.) Consider how thankful others are for less than

what we enjoy. There are many that would be glad of our leavings,

but usually those that enjoy the greatest possessions pay the least rent,

and God receiveth more praise from a poor cottage than from a rich

palace. But I proceed to the second point.

Doct. 2. That in thanksgiving to God we should especially own his

spiritual benefits.

These are usually overlooked, but yet these deserve the chiefest

acknowledgments.

1. Because these are discriminating, and come from God's special

love, which floweth forth to his own people. Corn, and wine, and oil

are bestowed upon the world, but faith and love upon his saints.

David prayeth, Ps. cvi. 4, ' Kemember me, Lord, with the favour

which ihou bearest unto thy })eople.' To have the favourite's mei-cy

is more than to have a common mercy. Protection is the benefit of

every common subject, but intimate love and near admission are the

privileges of special favourites. Now by the common effects of his

providence, love or hatred cannot be known : Eccles. ix. 1, 2, ' No man

knowetli either love or hatred by all that is before them ; all things

come alike to all,' &c. The things w'ithout us, and the things before

us, and the things promiscuously dispersed, will not discover his special

love to us. Christ gave his purse to Judas, the worst of the disciples,

but his Spirit to the rest as the choicest gift.

2. Because these concern the better part, the inward man : 2 Cor.

iv. 16, \* For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man

perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' He doth us more

favour that healeth a wound in the body than he that seweth up a rent

in the garment. Is not the body more than raiment ? So is not the

soul more than the body ? Yea, further, and the soul furnished with

grace, than the soul furnished only with natural gifts and endowments ?

1 Cor. xiii. 1-3, ' Though I speak with the tongues of men and of

angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a

tinkling cymbal : and though I have the gift of prophecy, and under-

stand all mysteries and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith, so

that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing :

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I gi\e

my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.'

I am nothing without saving grace ; therefore these are the mercies

for which God will be praised.

3. These are brought about with more ado than temporal favours.

God as a creator and upholder of all his creatures doth bestow tem-

poral blessings upon the ungodly world, even upon the heathens that

know him not, that never heard of Christ ; yet saving grace he be-

stoweth only as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who

was to purchase these blessings by his death and bloody sufferings

before we could obtain them : Eph. i. 3, ' Blessed be the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual

SEKMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3. 101

blessings in heavenly places in Christ.' Other blessin\_o:s rim in the chan-

nel of common providence, these in the channel of Christ's mediation,

4. Because these are pledges of eternal blessings, and the beginnings

of our eternal well-being. The life tliat is begnn in us by the Spirit

is perfected in heaven : John v. 24, ' He that heareth my words, and

believeth on him that hath sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall

not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life.' It is a

spark that shall not be quenched, and the food that feedeth it is the

meat that ' perisheth not, but endureth to everlasting life,' John vi. 27.

Tliose graces and eternal blessedness are to be linked together, that

they cannot be separated : Eom. viii. 30, ' Whom he did predestinate,

them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and

whom he justified, them he also glorified.' Sanctification is included

in the last word ; here in the beginnings by sanctification, and hereafter

in the full possession of eternal glory. So 2 Cor. iii. 18, ' We all with

open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed

into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the

Lord.' It loseth itself in the ocean of eternal glory and happiness.

5. These incline and fit the heart for praise and thankfulness to

God. There is an occasion to praise God, and a disposition and a

heart to praise God. Outward benefits give us the occasion to praise

God, but these not only the occasion, but the disposition ; other bene-

fits are the motives, but these the preparations, as they do fit and

incline the heart. The work of faith and love do set the lips wide open

to magnify and praise the Lord. Grace is the matter of God's praises,

and gives also a ready will to praise him, yea, the very deed of praising

him : Ps. Ixiii. 5, ' My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,

and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.' When they feel the

love of God shed abroad in their hearts, thev are inclined to praise

God.

G. Temporal favours may be given in anger, but the graces of the

S]iirit are never given in anger. God may give us worldly honour and

riches in judgment, and indulge large pastures to beasts fatted for

destruction ; but he giveth not faith and love in anger, or a renewed

heart in anger, but as a token of his special love : ' To you it is given

to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,' Mat. xiii. 11 ; 'To

you it is given to believe,' Phil. i. 19. So that for these principally we

should praise the Lord. We have a quick sense in bodily mercies,

but in soul concernments we are not alike affected. We think God

dealeth well with them to whom he giveth greatness and honour ; but

doth he not deal well with you to whom he hath given his Spirit ?

7. These render us acceptable unto God. A man is not accepted

with God for his worldly blessings ; he is indeed the more accountable

unto God, but not of greater account with him : Luke xii. 48, ' For

unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall the more be required.'

The more helps and the more encouragements, the more work and

service God expecteth, but they are not more precious in his sight for

temporal things' sake. Under the law the rich and poor paid the

same ransom ; the rich is not accepted for his riches, nor the poor man

despised for his poverty ; but now the saving graces of his Spirit are

acceptable with God. It is said, 1 Peter iii. 4, ' A meek and quiet

102 SERMONS UPON 2 THES3AL0NIANS I. 3.

spirit is in the sight of God of great price.' God esteemeth this more,

and therefore it should heighten the esteem of grace in our hearts, and

quicken us more to get and increase it.

8. Tliese benefits should be acknowledged, that God may have the

sole glory of them, for he is ' the Father of lights, from whom cometh

every good and perfect gift,' James i. 17. It was the opinion of the

stoics, Quod vivamus deorum munus est, quod hene vivamus nostrum

— Our natural being we ascribe to God, but our moral perfections we

are apt to usurp the glory of them to ourselves. Judicium hoc est

omnium mortalium, saith Tully. All men think that prosperity and

success is to be asked of the gods, but prudence and good management

belongeth to us. But these opinions are sacrilegious, and rob God of

his chiefest honour ; therefore, to prevent spiritual pride, we must be

sure to bless God for spiritual blessings ; our crowns must be ' cast at

the feet of the Lamb,' Eev. iv, 10, 11, for he only is worthy to receive

honour, and blessing, and glory, and power. Whatever we do, it is

from him who worketh all our works in us : Isa. xxvi. 12, ' Thou wilt

ordain peace for us, for thou also hast wrought all our works in us ; '

and 1 Chron. xxix. 14, ' All things come of thee, and of thy own have

we given thee.' By his grace we are what we are : 1 Cor. xv. 10, ' By

the grace of God I am what I am ; ' and Luke xix. 16, \* Thy pound

hath gained ten pounds.'

Use. Is to exhort us to two things — (1.) To be in a capacity to bless

God for spiritual blessings ; (2.) To be most affected with these mercies.

1. See that you be in a capacity to bless God for spiritual blessings.

First see that you have these mercies, and then bless God for them. It

would trouble a man even to trembling to hear slight and vain persons

take up a form of thanksgiving which no way is proper to them, as to

bless God for their election before time, their sanctification in time,

and their hopes of glory after all time. As if a leper should give

thanks for perfect health, or a madman that he is made wiser than his

neighbours, or a man that is ready to die to thank God that he is

pretty well and recovering, so they give thanks for grace which they

never knew nor felt. Tliis is to mock God while we pretend to adore

him. It is true there are spiritual mercies for which all are bound to

give thanks, such as the mystery of redemption, the new covenant, the

offers and invitations of grace, means, and time to repent ; these you

should value more, and bless God for them. But for men that know

not their own great necessities and benefits, but slight their chiefest

mercies, and account them burdens, they can more feelingly thank God

for a gluttonous meal, or unjust gain, or some vain pleasure, but for

the means of grace they bless him not. But now, the flower of thanks-

giving is when we can bless God for Christ, for his Spirit, for heaven,

for faith and love ; and therefore we should labour to get these things,

and to make our sincerity more unquestionable ; for these are the

chiefest matters for which God expecteth praise from us. The apos-

tolical forms insist upon these things : 1 Peter i. 3, ' Blessed be the

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his

abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the

resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'

2. To be most affected with these mercies. Other mercies may be

SEEMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3. 103

•overvalued, especially if we look upon them under the notion of provi-

sion for the flesh ; so our very thankfulness may be a snare. Lust

engrosseth our hearts, but religion tippeth our tongues. Men will

thank God for their preferment more than for the offer of Christ, and

pardon and life by him. Our esteem is known by this, what it is that

moveth us to thankfulness ; if it be for the world, as used for the

pleasure of the flesh rather than for the service of God, it is but lust

disguised in a religious form. Therefore, what are you most affec-

tionately thankful for, worldly or spiritual good things ? God is to be

thanked for all, for temporal encrease, but chiefly for spiritual mercies.

Now what endeareth God to your hearts, that he is so good in Christ, or

that he blesseth your outward estate ? You should not lessen that favour,

but look for a better and more distinguishing expression of his love.

Doct. 3. That not only the spiritual blessings vouchsafed to ourselves,

but to others also, must be acknowledged with thankfulness.

1. It suiteth with our relation of members in the same mystical body

of Christ, and so is a part of the communion of saints : 1 Cor. xii. 26,

' And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or

one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.' The

members care for one another, and are affected with each other's woe or

weal. If the toe be trod upon, the tongue will cry out. You have hurt

me ; therefore, they that have lost sympathy and feeling seem to have

cast themselves out of the body, as if they were no way concerned in

their fellow-members in Christ. If we be in the body, we must be

affected with others' concernments as with our own : Phil. i. 7, ' I have

you in my heart.' Where sincere love is among christians, there will

be a communion of prayers and praises, therefore they bless God for

others' mercies as their own. See Eom. xii. 15, \* Rejoice with them

that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.' Spiritual love is but

acted and personated if we only drop some words of prayer and praise,

and do not look upon ourselves as under a debt, and that it is meet so

to do, and do it upon inclination, and not merely upon the invitation of

others. We should give thanks for all their mercies, especially for

such spiritual mercies as constitute the union, such as faith and love.

By faith we are united to the head, by love to the fellow-members : Col.

i. 3, 4, ' We give thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ

Jesus, and of the love which you have to all the saints.' These graces

qualify for this spiritual communion.

2. The glory of God is concerned in it. Wheresoever his goodness

shineth forth, especially with any eminency, it must be acknowledged :

Horn. i. 8, ' I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your

faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.' When Christ's kingdom

doth thrive extensively or intensively, by the addition of more peace or

the increase of grace ; if we love our Master, we must be glad when he

getteth more servants, and our joy must be expressed in praises. When

Paul was converted, he saith, Gal. i, 24, the saints ' glorified God in

me ; ' that is, praised God in his behalf, and gave him the honour of

that great work, that so useful an instrument was gained to the faith.

3. The spiritual blessings vouchsafed to others conduce to a common

good, therefore our profit and interest inviteth us to this duty. The

ffood of some is the ffain of the whole ; we have benefit bv their

104 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

example, and are confirmed by having companions in the faith and

patience of the gospel, and the common profession groweth by their

accession to the faith : 1 Thes. i, 7, 8, ' Ye were examples to all that

believe in Macedonia, and Achaia ; for from you sounded out the word

of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place

your faith to God- ward is spread abroad.' Eminent christians promote

the interest of the gospel, and their gifts malre them serviceable : 1 Cor.

i. 4,5, 'I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace that is

given you by Jesus Christ, that in everything ye are enriched by him,

in all utterance, and in all knowledge ; ' and Rom. i. 12, ' That I may

be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and

me.' It is a comfort to meet with our Father's children everywhere,

and that we have hopes of having more companions in heaven.

4. If we have no profit by them, yet the thing itself is a benefit to

us, for if we have anything of the bowels of Christ or love to souls,

surely we are gratified when any are converted to God. If the salva-

tion of our brethren be dear to us, whatever is given in order thereto

we must reckon among our benefits, and we should rejoice in one

another's gifts and graces as our own. True goodness is communi-

cative, and diffusive of itself, as fire turneth all about it into fire.

Hypocritical profession is accompanied with an envy ; they would

shine alone; and mules and creatures of a bastard production do not

propagate.

5. We increase their faith and comfort when we give thanks to God

for them. To that end doth the apostle mention his thanksgiving,

that they might be encouraged to go on : Phil. i. 3-6, ' I thank my

God upon every remembrance of you, being confident of this very thing,

that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the

day of Jesus Christ.'

Use 1. They are monsters of men that repine at the riches poured

down by their own or other men's ministry upon others ; yet such a

base spirit reigneth in many ; they cannot endure any should be godly

and serious.

Use 2. Let us bless God for others. The angels rejoice at the con-

version of a sinner, Luke xv. 10. Now this should never be omitted

— (1.) When there is some eminent work accomplished, either for the

multitude of objects or degree of grace. As when Cornelius was gained

to the faith as the first-iruits of the Gentiles, Acts xi. 18, 'When they

heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying,.

Then hath God also unto the Gentiles granted repentance unto life ; '

and ver. 21, ' The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number

believed, and turned unto the Lord ; ' and ver. 23, ' Barnabas was glad

when he had seen the grace of God, and exhorted them all, that, with

purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord.' (2.) When there

are special circumstances, as if we have been instrumental to do them

good, and God hath blessed our word, or converse, or example : 1 Thes.

ii. 19, 20, 'For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are

not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming ?

fur ye are our glory and joy.' Or if we have prayed for anything for

others, whatever we have prayed for must be thankfully acknowledged

when brought to pass : 2 Cor. i. 11, \* You also helping together by

prayer for us, that for the gifts bestowed upon us by the means of

ser:iioxs upon 2 thessaloniaxs i. 3. 105

many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf ; ' and

3 John 4, ' I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk

in the truth.'

Doct. 4. That in thanksgiving for spiritual benefits, whether to our-

selves or others, the increase of grace must be acknowledged as well

as the beginnings of it.

The degree is from God. He that beginneth perfecteth : Phil. i. 6,

' He that hath begun a good work will perfect it to the day of Christ.'

The whole progress of the work, from the first step to the last, is all

from God, not from the power of our own free-will, or the strength of

our resolutions, or the stability of our gracious habits. For the first,

that it is not from the power of our own free-will, is plain from John

vi. 44, ' No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me

draw him.' And then for the second, that it is not from the strength

of our resolutions : Ps. Ixxiii. 2, ' As for me, my feet were almost gone,

my steps had well-nigh slipped.' And for the third, that it is not from

the stability of gracious habits, see Ptev. iii. 2, 'Be watchful, and

strengthen the things which remain, and are ready to die, for I have

not found thy works perfect before God ; ' and 1 Peter v. 10, ' The God

of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ,

after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish,

strengthen, settle you.' He that beginneth the work of grace in us

doth still carry it on to perfection ; he doth establish what is attained,

and increase our spiritual strength for all difficulties and duties ; so

Luke xvii. 5, ' The apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.'

Use. Take notice of God's favour in the addition of every new degree

of grace, because the change is more remarkable. We may ascribe our

first conversion to God, but we must also our after-growth. We are

still under the love and care of Christ ; though we are passed from

death, to life, yet not from earth to heaven. You are in continual need

of Christ for direction, intercession, pardon, further sanctification, sup-

port, comfort, and peace ; therefore take notice of every degree. If

there be greater fervour, if more delightful exercise, if more ability and

strength to overcome opposition, let God have the glory of all. He

many times chastiseth our pride and unthankfulness with lapses or

decays if we do not acknowledge him ; as Peter and David, what

grievous lapses had they !

SEEMON II.

We are hound to thank God aliuays for you, hrethren, as it is meet,

because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of

every one of you all ioicards each other aboundeth — 2 Thes. i. 3.

In these words we have observed — (1.) An affectionate form of thanks-

giving ; (2.) The matter of it.

For the first, it is a blessed thing when complaints are turned into

thanksgivings, both for ourselves and others. For ourselves we should

106 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

not be always craving and always complaining. Gratulation should

find a place in our addresses to God, as well as acknowledgments of

sin and supplications for grace : Col. iv. 2, ' Continue in prayer, and

watch in the same with thanksgiving.' So for others, we should rather

take notice of their excellences than of their blemishes. We give

occasion to others to suspect us to have a rough imperious spirit, to be

always finding fault, never acknowledging the grace they have received

or the good they have done. This was far from Paul's temper, who

was ever ready to acknowledge anything of Christ wherever he found

it, especially where grace was discovered with eminency, as in these

Thessalonians ; therefore he saith, ' We are bound to thank God always

for you, brethren, as it is meet ; ' whence we observed four doctrines.

I am now to speak of the matter of this thanksgiving, ' Because that

your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all

towards each other aboundeth ; ' where observe these six things —

1. That it is a comfort that our inward man is in a good state, how-

ever it be with us as to our outward condition before the world. These

Thessalonians were poor and afflicted. We read in the first epistle;

\* They received the gospel in much affliction,' 1 Thes. i. 6 ; and in the

verse next the text he speaketh of their ' patience and faith in all

their persecutions and tribulations ; ' and the following words tend

wholly to comfort them under their sore troubles. Yet their condition

before God was thriving and prosperous, and matter of thanksgiving

rather than lamentation. So 2 Cor. iv. 16, ' For this cause we faint

not,' saith the apostle, ' but though our outward man perish, yet the

inward man is renewed day by day.' We should count this world's

goods well exchanged if the want or loss of them be recompensed to us

by the increase of spiritual graces, and be glad if it go well with our

souls, though our bodily interests be infringed. If God by an aching

head will give us a better heart, by a sickly body an healthy soul, as he

did to Gains, 3 John 2, by lessening us in the world, or reducing us to

straits, make us ' rich in faith,' James ii. 5 ; by troubles and oppositions

excite us to a more lively exercise of grace. We should not barely

submit to such a dispensation, but give thanks. The children of God

are always set forth to be of this temper : Ps. cxix. 71, 'It is good for

me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes ; ' 2 Cor.

xii. 9, 10, ' I will rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of

Christ may rest upon me ; therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in

reproaches, in necessities, in persecution, in distresses for Christ's sake ;

for when I am weak, then am I strong ; ' if the afflictions and troubles

of the world may do us good, and our knowledge and holiness be

increased as our estates are diminished. So Heb. xii. 11, ' No chasten-

ing for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless

afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them

which are exercised thereby.' All the honours and riches of the world

are not worth the least degree or drachm of grace.

2. Their condition was not only good, but growing better every day.

It is not enough barely to be good, but we must gi'ow from good to

better, and be best at last. God's children wait on the Lord, and he is

not wont to be sparing and straitened to those that attend upon him :

Isa. xl. 31, ' They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.'

SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3. 107

They are planted in his courts, and that is a fertile soil : Ps. xcii. 13,

14, ' Those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in

the courts of our God ; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they

shall be fat and flourishing.' There are ordinances by which they re-

ceive a supply of the Spirit ; their hearts are upon the ways that lead

home to God : Ps, Ixxxiv. 7, ' They shall go on from strength to

strength.' When our hearts are set upon a thing, we will neither go

off nor go back, but still gain ground. They find new encouragement

in God's ways : Pro v. x. 29, ' The way of the Lord is strength to the

upright ; ' the more they walk in it, the more encouragement they find

to do so, all Avhich doth condemn our laziness, that we make no more

progress. Surely our reward should encourage us : Phil. iii. 14, ' I

press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in

Jesus Christ.' In a race where there is so great a prize, we should not

stand at a stay, but still be running, and getting nearer the goal ; the

way is so pleasant that we have no occasion to tire in it : 2 Peter iii.

18, ' But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour

Jesus Christ.' We have so many benefits by Christ, that surely we are

encouraged to seek for more. Besides, consider God's expectation.

God expecteth more from some than others, according to their years

and standing : Heb. v. 12, ' For when for the time ye ought to be

teachers ' (having had so much means and advantages), ' ye have need

that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of

God.' So Luke xii. 48, ' Unto whomsoever much is given, of him

shall be much required ; and to whom men have committed much, of him

they will ask the more,' We expect he should come sooner that rideth

on horseback than he that goeth afoot. Now, that we may grow, car-

nal affections must be weakened : John xv. 2, ' Every branch that bear-

etli fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit.' This

purging is by mortification ; faith, the mother grace, must be increased :

Eom, i. 17, ' Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith

to faith ; as it is written, The just shall live by faith.' We must still

continue to live by faith. The means of grace must still be attended

upon : 1 Peter ii. 2, ' As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the

word, that ye may grow thereby.'

3. Their growth was considerable ; they arrived to a great degree of

eminency, virepav^dvet rj ttIcttl'; vfxwv, kol TrXeovd^et i) cfydirrj. Here is

high faith and great love. Certainly they did not overgrow their duty,

but it was a wonderful growth, considering the diff"erence between them

and themselves, what they were before the gospel came to them, and

what now ; considering also the difterence between them and others, how

they had outgrown their equals, yea, those who had received the gospel

before them. Surely we should not only grow in grace, but seek to

excel in grace ; God will have more glory, and we more comfort. Now

those that would excel — (1.) Should be more humble ; for, James iv.

€, ' God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.' The

Lord increaseth his grace where all is ascribed to God and nothing to

ourselves, but he is an enemy to those that lift up themselves, and puff up

themselves and set the crown upon their own heads. (2.) They should

be diligent in the use of their gifts, for ' to him that hath shall be given,'

Luke viii. 18 ; that is, that useth what he hath, that carrieth himself

108 SEIiMONS UrON 2 THESSALONIANS 1. 3.

according to the helps vouchsafed, and employeth and improveth what

he hath, he shall have more. They shall have more faith, more love

from the same Spirit who gave them the first grace. If in the effect

you show what you have, and declare what you have, you shall have

more ; the original stock shall be increased. (3.) There should be

thankfulness. They own God in all : Col. ii. 7, ' Eooted and built up

in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding

therein with thanksgiving.' The creature then robbeth not God of the

glory of his gifts, and therefore shall have more. (4.) There must be

obedience to the word of God as our rule, the sanctifying motions of

the Spirit as our principle, and the author of that grace which we have.

Now the more ready we show ourselves to comply with the directions (>f ,

his word and the motions of his Spirit, the more is grace strengthened

in us ; for disobedience to the word is a provocation to God, which

hindereth the due impression of it on our souls : Jer. viii. 9, ' They

have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them? '

And disobedience to the Spirit is a grief to him : Eph. iv. 30, ' Grieve

not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of

redemption.' So that sin hindereth our growth, and letteth out our

strength. But what shall we say of them that beat down the price of

Christianity as low as they can, and content themselves with what is

barely necessary to salvation, as it the safest way were to go as nenr

the brink of destruction as possible ? Tiiese men care not though they

dishonour God, so they may be saved, but they will in time see that

the greatest grace is no more than needeth.

4. They grow in both graces, both in faith and love. These two graces

are inseparable companions : Col. i. 4, ' Since we heard of your faith

in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints.' So

1 Tim. i. 13, 'Hold fast the form of sound words whicli thou hast

heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Jesus Christ.' The one con-

cerneth our personal benefit and safety, the other the good of the body,

that we may have a tender care of the unity, honour, and prosperity of

Christ's church. We are to build up ourselves in our most holy faith,

and we are also to edify others, which is done by love principally.

Besides, this connection is necessar}^, because all religion is exercised by

these two graces. The mysteries of religion are received and im-

proved by faith, and the precepts and duties of it are acted by love:

1 Cor. xvi. 13, 14, ' Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit yourselves

like men, be strong; let all things be done with charity.' And there-

fore that qualification which entitleth us to the privileges of the new

covenant is made to be ' faith working by love,' Gal. v. 6. The one

grace without the other is not saving and sincere. Faith without love

is dead, James ii. 17, and love without fiiith is but a little good-nature,

or facile inclination to others, not derived from the Spirit of God, nor

built on our belief of his grace in Christ ; they depend upon one

another, as the effect upon the cause. Faith produceth love, as it

showeth the true grounds of union, and from a sense and apprehension

of God's love to us causeth us to love otliers. In short, both graces

aie recommended by the same authority ; 1 John iii. 23, 'And this is

his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus

Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.' He that

SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3. 109

niaketli conscience of the one will make conscience of the other also.

Again, the one referreth to God, the other to men ; faith for God,

charity for our brethren. The one keepeth us from defection from

God, the other preventeth a schism and a breach with our fellow chris-

tians. AVell, then, here was the commendation of those Thessalonians,

their adherence to the faith was very constant, and they lived in unity

and amity with one another. There is no surer argument of sincerity

juid proficiency in Christianity than this growth of faith and love. They

are the fountain of all other duties; and if you would be accounted

thorough and growing christians, you must excel in both these graces ,

for true solid godliness is rooted in fiiith, and acted by love towards

God and men, which is the all of Christianity.

5. This growth and proficiency was found in all ; not only some among

them were eminent for faith and love, but all. If the apostle had only

said, The charity of you all abouudeth, it might seem to refer to the

church, that there was no schism there ; but he saith, ' Of every one of

you all towards each other.' In other epistles, the believers, to whom

the apostle wrote, have all the style of ' churches,' or 'men sanctified,'

&c. ; but afterwards notorious and particular miscarriages are reproved,

which showeth thatthe denomination wa&a potior i parte, from the better

l)art ; but here he mentions all and every one ; they were a choice sort

of christians. Where shall we find their fellows ? It is our duty to

be such, and it should be our care ; for here we see what the grace of

G od can do if we be serious, and what an advantage it is to be in good

company, and to have good examples about us, and how much living

coals do enkindle one another when they lie together.

G. He saith, faith groweth, but love aboundeth. Love must not only

increase, but abound to each other. A thing may be increased inten-

sive or extensive ; intensively, when it is more rooted, when there is a

greater fervour and vigour of faith and love ; extensively, either as to

effects or objects ; as to efiects, in doing more good, as when we abound

in works of mercy ; or as to objects, by doing good to more persons, not

confining our love to one only, or a few, but extending it to all. This

was the case of those Thessalonians ; their love was not a lank or lean

love, but an abounding love, full of all good fruits ; and this not to some,

but to all, even the meanest christians among them. If we would

give others occasion to bless God for us, let us imitate their example.

Occasions are many, objects are many, to whom we may be beneficial,

therefore our charity must not be straitened, but abounding.

[1,] The internal affection uuist increase : Phil. i. 9, ' This I pray,

that your love may abound yet more and more ; ' that is, both their

love to God and their neighbours, especially to those who are God's.

There are so many things to extinguish it, or make it grow cold, that

we should always seek to increase this grace, that it may be more fer-

vent and strong, and not grow cold and dead.

[2.] The external expressions should abound both as to acts and

objects.

(1.) As to acts. In duties of charity we should not be weary. Now

we may be weary upon a double occasion, either because we meet not

presently with our reward; to that the apostle speaketh, Gal. vi. 9,

' Be not weary of well-doing, for in due time we shall reap, if we faint

110 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

not ; ' duties of charity have their promises annexed, which are not

presently accomplished, but in their season ; they will be either in this

life, or in the next ; or because of continual occasions, when there is no

end : Heb. vi. 10, 11, 'For God is not unrighteous to forget your work

and labour of love, which you have showed towards his name, in that

ye have ministered to the saints and do minister ; and we desire that

every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of

hope unto the end.' Meaning that formerly they had a courage to owji

Christ and his despised ways, and to be charitable to poor christians ;

now he desireth them to be so still ; as long as the occasion continueth,

so long should the charity continue, that at length they might reap the

reward, ' Ye have ministered, and do minister.' This is tedious to

nature and to a niggardly and base heart, but love will be working

and labouring still, and ever bringing forth more fruit. Where this

heavenly fire is kindled in the soul, it will warm all those that are

about them. But love is cold in most ; it will neither take pains, nor

be at charge to do anything for the brethren ; but christian love is an

immortal fire, it will still burn and never die ; therefore we should

continue the same diligence, zeal, and affection that formerly we had.

(2.) As to objects. Christ telleth us, 'The poor ye have always

with you,' Mat. xxvi. 11. As long as God findeth objects, we should

find charit}^ ; and the apostle saith, Gal. vi. 10, ' As we have oppor-

tunity, let us do good to all men.' Expensive duties are distasteful to

a carnal heart. It may be they would part with something which the

flesh can spare, and will snatch at anything to excuse their neglect ;

they have done it to these and these ; but as long as God bringeth.

objects to our view and notice, and our ability and affection doth con-

tinue, we must give still. If our ability continueth not, providence

puts a bar, and excuseth ; but if our affection doth not continue, the

fault is our own.

Now I come more particularly to speak of the growth of faith, ' Your

faith groweth exceedingly.'

Doct. That it is well with christians when their faith groweth and

doth considerably increase.

The scripture speaketh of a weak faith and a strong faith, therefore

it concerneth us to consider whether our faith be weak or strong, in

the wane or in the increase. Now we shall best judge of the growth

offaith— (1.) By the nature of it ; (2.) The properties of it ; (3.) The

examples of scripture.

First, Let us see the nature of it, and thereby we shall best judge

of the growth of it. Faith is a grace whereby we believe God's word

in general, and especially the doctrine of salvation by Christ, and da

receive him and rest upon him for grace here and glory hereafter.

First, The general object of faith is the whole word of God : Acts

xxiv. 14, ' Believing all things which are written in the law and the

prophets.' Certainly the general faith goeth before the particular, for

there is no building without a foundation ; so that the general faith is

a firm and hearty assent to such things as are revealed by God, because

revealed by him. In which description we may consider — (1.) The

object of this grace, things revealed by God, as revealed by him ; (2.)

The act, it is an assent ; (3.) The adjuncts or qualifications of this act,

it is a firm, cordial, or hearty assent.

SEKMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3. Ill

1. The objects of faith, considered materially, are such things as are

contained in the divine revelation. Formally these things by faith are

apprehended under that consideration as revealed by God, by %drtue of

the truth and authority of his testimony. The objects of faith mate-

rially considered are all such things as are contained in the word of God

or revealed by him, which are of a different nature, precepts, promises,

threatenings, histories of facts done, mysteries of godliness : all these

are apprehended, and improved by faith, to the use of holy living or

entertaining communion with God through Christ ; only among these

objects some are more noble and excellent, others of lesser weight and

moment The chief objects of faith are those things which are abso-

lutely necessary to salvation, and without which we can neither be holy

here nor happy hereafter. Such are those things which we specially

call articles of faith, as briefly comprehending all the mysteries of

salvation, the decalogue, &c. But many other things are contained in

the word of God, and conduce to the confirmation and fuller under-

standing of these things, though not of like weight and importance

with them ; as, for instance, divers histories and miracles which are

spoken of in scripture, as also some lesser doctrines, which only belong

to the greater fulness and perfection of knowledge. The first sort of

things must be explicitly and distinctly known and believed ; an

implicit faith may suffice for the rest. Now an implicit faith we call

that faith by which we believe things not distinctly and apart, but as

they are contained in their common principle ; as, for instance, he that

believeth the book of Judges to be a book divinely inspired, and yet

hath never read it or heard it read by others, he doth indeed believe

the histories contained therein to be true, but not by an explicit faith, for

he knoweth them not but by an implicit and general faith, as he is per-

suaded the book was indited by the Sj)irit of God ; but he who hath read

the book, and knoweth particularly what is said of Sampson, Gideon,

Barak, and others of the Lord's worthies, and believeth it, he hath a

distinct and explicit faith of these things. The believers of the Old

Testament knew the Messiah and Eedeemer of the world implicitly,

and not with that particularity which is required of believers in the

New. And so do many weak christians assent to all things contained

in the word of God by an implicit faith, though they do only expressly

and explicitly believe things necessary to salvation ; which is not said

to justify laziness in any, or an overly carelessness in any matters of

religion, as if we should acquiesce in the knowledge of a few necessary

things, and seek no further. No ; \* The word of God must dwell in us

richly, in all wisdom,' Col. iii. 16 ; for though things absolutely necessary

are but few, yet other points have their use, and conduce both to the

confirmation and improvement of the rest. But hitherto we have only

spoken of the object of faith materially considered; we must speak also of

the formal consideration. Things revealed by God, as revealed by him;

for every assent, even that which is given to things contained in th&

word of God, cannot be called faith. For instance, if a man should

certainly hold and maintain any point of religion, as the creation of the

world out of nothing, but not upon the account of God's revealing any

such truth, but for some other reason which seemeth necessary and

cogent to him, he cannot be said to believe this article, or to understand

it by faith ; as it is said, Heb. xi. 3, 'Through faith we understand

112 SERMONS UPON 2 TUliSSALONlAXS I. 3.

that the worlds were framed by the word of God ; ' for faith is an

assent to a divine testimony ; but when we know things by other ways

and means of assurance, it is not faith, whatever it be. So if a man

shoukl believe the passages of God's providence towards the Israelites,

upon the relation of Josephus the historian, and not upon the authority

of the sacred writers who have delivered it to us, he cannot be said to

have faith ; which also may be said of them who adhere to the true

religion only out of custom, and the happy chance of their birth and

education, or because they received it by tradition from their ancestors,

or the bare warrant of their present teachers, or evidence of reason.

2. The next thing which the description offereth to us is the act of

faith about this object, which is an assent. The formal object of faith

is some divine truth, as we have seen. ISTow the understanding hath a

double act about truth — apprehension and dijudication, or exercising

a judgment about it. So in these divine truths first we apprehend the

nature or tenor of them, or consider what is propounded to us in the

word of God, which is knowledge or apprehension ; bat then secondly

we judge or determine concerning the truth of these things, which is

acknowledgment or assent, and this is the act proper to faith.

3. The adjuncts or qualifications of this assent come now to be con-

sidered. They are two — (1.) It is a firm assent ; (2.) It is a cordial

and hearty assent

[1.] As it is a firm assent, so faith is distinguished from many

things that look like it, or pass for it in the world; as (1.) Non-contra-

diction, or not questioning the truths of religion, which is all the faith

that most have, and cometli from their inadvertency and carelessness

about divine matters. They do not object against the truth of what

the gospel propouudeth, because they do not regard it and weigh it in

their serious thoughts. This differeth little from children's learning

questions of catechism, or saying things by rote ; they can say over the

articles of their belief, and never doubted of them ; you may teach

them to think and say anything, what you please, for they say it, and

never consider of it. So most men in the christian world talk at the same

rate that others do, but consider not what they say, nor whereof they

affirm, only ignorantly and inconsiderately swallow down the current

opinions, without ' knowing the certainty of those things wherein they

have been instructed,' Luke i. 4. And so though they never doubted

of the truth of their religion, it is because they were never assaulted

with temptations to the contrary, and all the strength of their faith

lieth in their inconsideration or non-attention. If they have any

ground and bottom, it is only men's saying so, and therefore their belief

(if they have any) should rather be called human credulity than

christian faith. In short, they that believe everything believe nothing,

which soon appeareth when a temptation cometh. (2.) It distin-

guisheth it from conjecture, which is a lighter inclination of mind to

a thing, as possibly or probably true, whereby men get no higher than,

It may be so, and yet there are shrewd suspicions to the contrary. A

guess is not an assent, much less a firm and strong assent, as faith is.

(3.) It distinguisheth it from opinion, which is a trembling, fearful,

uncertain assent. Opinion is be3'ond conjecture, but short of faith.

Conjecture only supposes it may be so, but opinion asserts that it is so,

SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALOXIANS I. 3. 113

though not without some fear of the contrary ; but above all, this faith

is an undoubted persuasion of the truth of things revealed by God. By

opinion one may be so convinced of the truth of divine things as not to

be able reasonably to contradict them ; but by faith a man is so con-

vinced of the truth of the gospel that he seeth all the reason in the

world to embrace and follow it : Col. ii. 2, ' That their hearts might

be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the

full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery

of God, and of the Father, and of Christ : ' and 1 Thes. i. 5, ' For our

gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the

Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, as ye know what manner of men

we were among you for your sake ; ' and Heb. x. 22, ' Let us draw

near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts

sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure

water.'

[2.] The next qualification of this assent is that it is a cordial or

hearty assent : I mean, such as doth engage the will and affections to

pursue the happiness which God hath revealed, in the way and by the

means which God hath prescribed. We read in scripture of ' believing

with the heart,' Eom. x. 9, 10, 'and with all the heaft,' Acts viii. 37.

The object of faith is not only true, but good, and therefore produceth

a cordial adherence to the truths of which it is persuaded. There is

not only a conviction of the mind, but a bent and inclination of the

will, which followeth the persuasion of faith if it be firm and strong ;

for it considereth not only the evidence of the things propounded, but

the worth, weight, and greatness of them : 1 Tim. i. 15, \* This is a

faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation ; ' otherwise it will not

serve the end and purpose of the gospel, which requireth us to crucify

our lusts, and sacrifice our interests, and perform duties displeasing to

corrupt nature, and all this upon the hopes only which it offereth to

us, and to wait upon God for his salvation in the midst of all pressures

and afllictions. Therefore certainly believing is an heart-business, not

a simple, naked, and speculative assent. This latter qualification doth

exclude two things from true, lively, and saving faith — (1.) That

which divines call historical ; (2.) That which they call temporary

faith.

(1.) Historical faith, which is a simple and naked assent to such

things as are propounded in the word of God, and maketli men more

knowing but not better, not more holy and heavenly ; they are not

excited thereby to pursue that happiness which the gospel offereth in

the way of holy living or patient continuance in well-doing. So Simon

Magus believed the preaching of Philip, Acts viii. 13, yet hjs heart

was not right with God, but he still remained in the gall of bitterness

and bond of iniquity. And so many believed in the name of Christ,

to whom Christ 'committed not himself, because he knew all men,'

John ii. 23, 24 ; and this faith even the devils may have : James ii. 19,

' Thou believest that there is a God, thou doest well ; the devils also

believe, and tremble ; ' and that not only in truths evident by natural

light, such as that is there mentioned, that there is a God, but in

gospel truths, as that Jesus is the Son of God : Mark i. 24, ' The devil

cried out, saying, Let us alone ; what have we to do with thee, thou

VOL. svu. H

114 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIAXS I. 3.

Jesus of Nazareth ? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.'

Now this kind of faith is called historical faith, not from the object of

it, as if it did only believe the histories of scripture. No ; they that

have it roay believe the promises, the doctrines, the precepts as well as

the histories ; but from the manner in Avhich it is conversant about its

object, namely, thus : as we read histories in which we are no way

concerned ; we nakedly read them for knowledge' sake, not to make a

party in their broils and interests, but only to loiow what was done ;

f^o they that have only this kind of faith, read the scriptures as persons

unconcerned, and rest in idle speculation, without referring those

notable truths to choice and practice. I cannot say that this cannot be

called faith, because they that have it do believe those things which

are true, and do truly believe them ; but yet lively saving faith it is

not, for he who hath that, findeth his heart engaged to Christ, and

doth so believe the })romises of the gospel concerning pardon of sins

and life eternal that he seeketh after them as his happiness, and doth

so believe the mysteries of our redemption by Christ as that all his

hope and peace and confidence is drawn from thence, and doth so

believe the commandments of God and ChrLst as that he determineth

to frame his heai't and life to the observance of them, and doth so

believe the threatenings, whether of temporal plagues or eternal damna-

tion, as that, in comparison of them, all the frightful things of the world

are as nothing : Luke xii. 24, ' Be not afraid of them that can kill the

body, and after that have no more that they can do.' Destruction

from God is a terror to them, beyond all the evil that man can threaten ;

as he said to the emperor, Thou threatenest a prison, but Christ

threateneth hell.

(2.) It is distinguished from temporary faith, which is an assent to

scriptural or gospel truth, accompanied with a shght and insufficient

touch upon the heart, called ' a taste of the heavenly gift, and of the

good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,' Heb. vi.

4-6. By this kind of faith, the mind is not only enlightened, but the

heart affected with some joy, and the life in some measure reformed,

at least from grosser sins, called, 'escaping the pollutions of the world/

2 Peter ii. 20 ; but the impression is not deep enough, nor is the joy

and delight rooted enough to encounter all temptations to the contrary.

Therefore this sense of religion may be choked, or worn off, either by

the cares of this world, or voluptuous living, or great and bitter per-

secutions and troubles for righteousness' sake. It is a common deceit;

many are persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the only Son of God,

and so are moved to embrace his person, and in some measure to obey

his precepts, and to depend upon his promises, and fear his threatenings,

and so by consequence to have their hearts loosened from the world in

part, and seem to prefer Christ and their duty to him above worldly

things, as long as no temptations do assault their resolutions, or sensual

objects stand not up in any considerable strength to entice them ; but

at length, when they find his laws so strict and spiritual, and contrary

either to the bent of their affections or worldly interests, they fall

off, and lose all their taste and relish of the hopes of the gospel, and

so declare plainly that they were not rooted and grounded in the

faith and hope thereof. This is true faith generally considered, which

SERMONS UPON 2 THESSA LONIANS I. 3. 115

foundation being laid, it will be easy to show tlie nature of special

faith, which now followeth to be discussed.

Secondly, The special objects of faith are God's transactions about

man's salvation by Christ; therefore, besides the general faith, there

is a special faith, whereby we receive Christ, and rest upon him.

Saving faith is called a receiving of Christ : John i. 12, ' To as many

as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God,

even to them that believe in his name ; ' and Col. ii. 6, ' As ye have

received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.' We take him as

God offereth him, and to the ends for which God offereth him ; to do

that for us and to be that to us which God hath appointed him to do

for and to be unto poor sinners. The general work of Christ as

mediator is to bring us to God : 1 Peter iii. 18, ' For Christ also hath

once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us

to God.' And the great use that we make of him, is to come to God

by him. There is implied in faith an intention of God as our chiefest

good, for otherwise Christ is of no use to us ; and a consent to Christ's

undertaking, that he may bring us to God, or a thankful acceptance

of him for those ends. All tbey are rejected that will have none of

him: Ps. Ixxxi. 11, 12, 'But my people would not hearken to my

voice, and Israel would none of me ; so I gave them up unto their

own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels ; ' that \* will not

come to him that they may have life,' John vi. 40 ; that ' will not have

him to reign over them,' Luke xix. 27. But they who consent to

receive him as their lord and saviour are accepted with him ; only

let us see how this consent is qualified.

1. It is not a rash consent, but such as is deliberate, and serious,

and well-advised. When God in the gospel biddeth us to take Christ,

men are ready to say, With all their hearts ; but they do not consider

what it is to receive Christ, and therefore retract their consent as soon

as it is made. No ; you must sit down and count the charges, Luke

xiv. When you have considered his strict laws, and made a full allow-

ance for incident difficulties and temptations, and can resolve, forsaking

all others, to cleave to him alone for salvation, it is an advised consent.

2. It must not be a forced and involuntary consent, such as a person

maketh when he is frightened into a little righteousness for the pre-

sent ; such as a person would not yield to if he were in a state of

liberty. It may be in a distress or pang of conscience ; by all means

they must have Christ when sick, when afraid to die, when under some

great judgment. No ; the will must be effectually inclined to him, and

to God the Father by him, as our utmost felicity and end. Christ's

people are a willing people : Ps. ex. 3, ' Thy people shall be willing in

the day of thy power.'

3. It must be a resolved consent, a fixed, not an ambulatory will,

which we take up for a purpose, or at some certain times, for a solemn

duty, or so. No ; you must cleave to him : Acts xi. 23, ' He exhorted

them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.'

You must trample upon everything that will separate you from him :

Phil. iii. 8, 9, ' Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the

excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I

bave suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that

116 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

I may win Christ,' &c. ; and Eom. viii, 38, 39, ' I am persuaded that

neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor

things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any

other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God,

which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

4. It must be not a partial consent, but total ; not only to take

Christ as offered with his benefits, but a consent of subjection to him

as our Lord. We are to take him and his yoke : Mat. xi. 29, ' Take

my yoke upon j'ou, and learn of me.' We are to take liim> and his

cross : Mat. xvi. 24, ' If any man will come after me, let him deny

himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' It is accompanied

with a resolution to obey his laws and keep his commandments, that

we may abide in his love.

Thirdly, Besides this consent, there must be a recumbency, depend-

ence, resting, or a fiduciary reliance upon him for all things we stand

in need of from him. Recumbency is a special act of faith : Isa. xxvi.

3, ' Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee,

because he trusteth in thee.' Now what do we rest ujion him for ?

For somewhat here and somewhat hereafter — (1.) Here ; for tlie inward

man, for all kind of grace, justification, sanctification, privileges, duties,

for the beginning and continuance : Phil. i. 6, ' Being confident of this

very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform

it until the day of Jesus Christ ;' and Acts v. 31, ' Him hath Cod ex-

alted to be a prince and a saviour, for to give repentance to Israel,

and forgiveness of sins.' He is the author and fountain of grace, as

well as a Lord and lawgiver, and the ground of our hope and confidence,

as giving us that righteousness whereby we may stand before G-od,

and have comfortable access to him. And then for the outward man,

God hath not only undertaken to give us heaven and happiness in the

next world, but to carry us thither with comfort, supplying us in a

way most conducible to his glory and our welfare : Ps. Ixxxiv. 11,

' The Lord is a sun and shield ; the Lord will give grace and glory ;

no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' All

things are yours, ordinances, providences : 1 Cor. iii. 21, ' For all

things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world,

or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and

ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' (2.) Hereafter ; that Christ will

give us eternal glory and happiness in the other world: 1 Tim. i. 16,

' For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might

show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should here-

after believe in him to life everlasting ; ' and John xx. 31, ' These are

written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,

and that believing, ye might have life through his name.' This is the

main blessing which faith aimeth at : 1 Peter i. 9, ' Eeceiving the end

of yom- faith, even the salvation of your souls.' By this all temptations

of sense are defeated.

Now, if you would know whether your faith groweth or no, you must

discover it by the firmness of your assent, or the resolvedness of your

consent, or the peace and confidence of your reliance.

1. For assent. If you believe the word of God, especially the gospel

part, with an assent so strong that you can resolve to venture your

SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I, 3. 117

whole happiness in this bottom, and let go all that you may obtain the

liopes which the gospel oflereth to you, certainly he hath a strong faith

who taketh God's promises for his whole felicity, and God's word for

liis only security ; he needeth no more, nor no better thing, nor surer

conveyance to engage him to hazard all that he hath, when the enjoy-

ment of it is inconsistent with his fidelity to Christ.

2. Your consent. A full, entire, hearty consent to resign yourselves

to Christ ; not a feeble consent, such as is contradicted by every foolish

and hurtful lust, but a prevalent consent, such as can maintain itself

notwithstanding difficulties, temptations, and oppositions of the flesh,

and control all other desires and delights whatsoever.

3. For reliance. When you can trust him for deliverance from the

guilt, power, and punishment of sin, and to quicken, strengthen, and

preserve grace in you to everlasting life. You trust him in all his offices;

as a priest, when you believe his merits and sacrifice, and comfort your-

selves with his gracious promises and covenant, and come to God with

more boldness and hope of mercy upon the account of his intercession,

especially in all extremities and necessities: Heb. iv. 14-16, 'Seeing

then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens,

Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession ; for we have not

tm high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infir-

mities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin :

let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may

obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' You trust him

as a prophet when you give up yourselves as his disciples to the con-

duct of his word and Spirit, being persuaded that he will infallibly

teach you the way to true happiness : John vi. 68, ' Lord, to whom

shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life.' You trust him as a

king when you become his subjects, and are persuaded that he will

govern you in truth and righteousness in order to your salvation, and

defend you by his mighty power from all your enemies : 2 Tim i. 12,

' I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded, that he is able to

Iceep that which I have committed unto him against that day ; ' and

2 Tim. iv. 18, ' And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work,

and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom ; to whom be glory

for ever and ever. Amen.'

SERMON III

Your faith groiuetJi exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you

all towards each other aboundetli. — 2 Thes. i. 3.

The growth and increase of faith may be judged of — (1.) By the

nature of faith ; (2.) The properties of it ; (3.) The examples and

instances of great faith in scripture.

We are now upon the second thing, the properties.

1. A dependence upon God for something that lieth out of sight.

118 SERM(JNS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

That this is an essential pi'operty of faith appeareth by the description

of it : Heb. xi. 1, ' The evidence of things not seen; ' that is, not seen

by sense and reason. 8ome things are invisible by reason of their

nature, as God, for ' no man hath seen God at any time/ John i. 18 ;

and therefore he is called ' the invisible God,' Col. i. 15. And some

things by reason of their distance, because they are absent and future,

as the glory of the world to come, and therefore it is an object of faith

and hope : Rom. viii. 24, ' For hope that is seen is not hope ; for what

a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it ? ' Vision and possession

exclude hope, and leave no room and place for it. Now without faith

a man can have no sight of these things : 2 Peter i. 9, 'He that lacketh

these things is blind, and cannot see afar off.' There is a mist upon

eternity, and we cannot look beyond the clouds of this lower world

unless we have the eagle-eye of faith ; but by faith we can see them,

so as to frame our lives accordingly : 2 Cor. v. 7, ' For we walk by faith,

and not by sight.' By sense we see what is pleasing or displeasing to

the flesh, but by faith what conduceth to the saving or losing of the

soul. Faith being very much like sight, and serving us for the govern-

ment of the soul, as sight doth for the body, it may much be explained

by it. Now to bodil}'' sight there must be an object, a medium to make

the object conspicuous, and a faculty or organ. (1.) The great object

of faith is eternal life, as procured by Cln-ist and promised in the gospel.

There is no use of sight where nothing is to be seen ; therefore the

object is set before us in the view of f'Aih, in the promises of the gospel,

Heb. vi. 18, and xii. 2. God's truth is as certain as sight itself can be

in it ; we see all things promised as sure and near. (2.) The medium;

as we see colours in the light of the air, so these spiritual and heavenly

things in the light of the Spirit: 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12, 'For what man

knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him?

even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which

is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of

God.' (3.) The eye, or visive power. A blind man cannot see at

noonday, nor the sharpest sight at midnight. Now this eye is faith,

which is the evidence of things not seen ; we are as sure of them as if

we saw them with our eyes, or as we are of those things which we now

see with our eyes.

The sight of faith may be considered either — (1.) As to its certainty

and clearness ; (2.) As to its power and efficacy.

[1.] As to its certainty and clearness. We do so see God, heaven,

Christ, that we are affected in some measure as if we saw them with

our bodily eyes. God, whilst we walk before him : Acts ii. 25, ' I fore-

saw the Lord always before my face.' Christ: Gal. iii. 1, 'Before

whose eyes Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth, crucified among

you.' Christ was set forth before their eyes, as if they had seen him

lianging and dying upon the cross. Heaven ; they have it in their eye,

and are affected in some measure, as if they were in the midst of the

glory of the world to come. I say, only in some measure ; for compare

the light of faith and tlie light of glory, and there is a difference in the

degree. The light of glory nullitieth sin, the light of faith only morti-

fieth it ; but yet really it maketh us do those things whicli we would

SERMONS UPON 2 THES3AL0NIANS I. 3. 119

^0 if we saw the glory of heaven, shun those things which are to be

avoided as if we saw the flames of hell. There is a certainty and firm

belief which hath a great influence upon us, so compare it with the

light of sense. Those things which we are to see and feel move the

more passionately, for while the soul dwelleth in flesh, and looketh out

by the senses, the objects of sense are more apt to move the passions,

but yet faith doth efiectually move us, though not so passionately.

[2.] As to efficacy and prevalency, this sight prevails over those

things which we see and feel. A christian hath senses as well as

others, and knoweth that he dwelleth in a world full of sensible objects,

which are pleasing to that flesh which he still carrieth about with him ;

but God hath opened the eyes of his mind, by which he seeth better

^nd more glorious things, which take up his heart and mind, life and

love, care and time, and so is weaned from sense-pleasing vanities, and

can deny them, and trample upon them, for the enjoyment of these

better things ; and neither life, nor anything comfortable to life, is

counted so dear as that, for their sake, he should hazard the favour of

God, his Redeemer's blessing, and the happiness of the world to come.

If sight and sense invite and entice him to sin, and forsake his God

and Christ, the objects of faith prevail against the amusements of sense,

and sway his choice, and incline his heart, and govern his resolutions

in the whole course of his life. He looketh not to things as they seem

for the present, or relish to the flesh, or as they appear to short-sighted

men who are governed by sense, but as they will appear at last, and

will prove to all eternity, and so can leave things which he seeth and

feeleth for things which he never saw, but expecteth shortly to enjoy.

AVell, then, this is the essential property of faith, to look to things

not seen by sense, but revealed by God in his word ; and this property

showeth itself in all the acts of faith, elicit and imperate. Elicit acts

are those which are proper to this grace ; imperate are such as belong

to other graces, but faith hath an influence upon them by virtue of

which they are produced. We may more plainly call them acts and

efiects.

(1.) As the acts of faith, which are assent, consent, trust, or depend-

ence.

{1st.) For assent to such truths as God hath revealed in his word.

When we have sufficient evidence of this revelation, the less sensible

helps we need to underprop our assent, the stronger is our faith. Let

me instance in the great article of the christian faith, Christ's person

and office. I shall produce that place of the apostle, 1 Peter i. 8,

' Whom having not seen ye love, in whom though now ye see him not,

yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' Though

they had never seen Christ in the flesh, and he was now absent from

them in regard of his bodily presence, being withdrawn into the heavenly

sacrary, yet this did not hinder their faith ; they loved him and rejoiced

in him as if they had seen him and conversed with him bodily. It was

an advantage certainly to have seen Christ in the flesh, and to converse

with him personally here upon earth, to see his miracles and hear

his gracious words ; but faith can embrace him as offered in the promise

though it never saw him in the flesh ; and the fewer sensible helps

faith hath besides the word, it is the more highly esteemed by Jesus

120 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

Christ. The same appearelb by Christ's words to Thomas : John xx.

29, ' Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed ; but blessed

are they that have not seen, yet have believed.' Thomas must have

the object of faith under the view of his senses, which argued a great

weakness and imbecility : ' Unless I see in his hand the print of the

nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, I will not believe.'

What if Christ would not give him that satisfaction, but other sufficient

evidence ? This was his infirmity, therefore Christ telleth us they

have the stronger and more acceptable faith that do not give laws to

heaven, or prescribe to God upon what terms they will believe, but

accept of the assurance Grod ofFereth, without satisfaction to sense.

(2d.) For consent, when we come to enter into covenant with God,

God is invisible Avho maketh the promise, and heaven, which is the

great promise that he hath promised us, is future and yet to come, and

lieth in another world, and before we get thither we must encounter

many difficulties, yea, shoot the gulf of death ; but the believer can as

really and heartily transact with the great God, and give the hand to

the Lord to become his, as he can with a man that is present, and

ofFereth a good bargain upon easy terms and conditions ; he hath so

firm a belief of the life to come, that he taketh it for his portion and

happiness : 2 Cor. iv. 18, ' While we look not at the things which are

seen, but at the things which are not seen ; ' he looketh to things unseen,

which he. taketh for his treasure and happiness, and is resolved to be

anything and do anything which God will have him be and do, that he

may obtain it.

(3d) Another elicit act of faith is trust and dependence, which

maintaineth us in a course of patient and cheerful obedience to God,

though our happiness be yet to come ; yea, though for the present we

are harassed with great troubles and afflictions, and it may be, see not

the signs, i.e., any sensible tokens of God's favour and respect to us,

yet the sight of an invisible God, and confidence of a future reward,

keepeth up joy in the soul, and no violence of temptation is able to

break it, and remove us from the truth : Eom. viii. 24, 25, ' We are

saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth,

why doth he yet hope for ? But if we hope for that we see not, then

do we with patience wait for it.' They are confident that in God's

time they shall have salvation and final deliverance, though it be not

to be seen anywhere but in God's promise by Jesus Christ. Well, then,

the fewer external comforts we need, the stronger is our faith ; the

more, the weaker. Weak christians must be carried in arms, dandled

on the knees, fed with sensible pledges and ocular demonstrations, or

else they are ready to faint.

(2.) The imperate acts or effects of faith, they are produced by

virtue of this property, faith's prevailing oversight and sense. I shall

name four —

(1st.) To promote holiness, and reduce us and reclaim us from the

false happiness. Surely none will accomplish the work of faith with

power, and so glorify God aiid Christ in the world, that is, live in all

holy conversation and godliness, but those that have that faith which

is the evidence of things not seen. Those that live always as in the

sight of an invisible God, are the thorough christians. What greater

SEK1I0^■S UPON 2 THES6AL0NIANS I. 3. 121

check can tliere be to temptations to sin than to live always in the sight

of an invisible God ? Gen. xxxix. 9 ; or to temptations to the world,

than an invisible glory ; or to the troubles and molestations of the

world? Eom. viii. 18, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present

time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be

revealed in us ; ' and 2 Cor. iv. 17. ' Our light affliction, which is but

for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight

of glory.' If godliness expose us to difficulties, molestations, and

troubles, faith seeth the final rest, glory, and happiness. If we are

inclined to the honours and pleasures of the world, faith seeth the most

shining glory will soon burn out, and end in a snuff: Ps. cxix. 96, ' I

have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding

broad;' and 1 John ii. 17, 'The world passeth away, and the lust

thereof, but he that doth the will of God abldeth for ever.' If sense

present the bait of present profit, pleasure, or honour, faith seeth the

final shame, ignominy, and loss ; and so we are guarded on all sides

against right-hand and left-hand temptations. This is a general ; I

shall speak of more particular eftects.

(2d.) To keep the heart tender and in awe of God's word. Surely

it is a blessed frame of spirit, and very useful to us, to tremble at the

word of God : Tsa. Ixvi. 2, •' To this man will I look, even to him that

is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word ; ' and to

stand in awe of his word: Ps. cxix. 161, ' My heart standeth in awe of

thy word.' Xow this can never be unless we have that faith which is

the evidence of things not seen ; for many times the word threateneth

evils which are not likely to come to pass, if we look to the visible face

of things, and all that part of God's discipline is lost unless we can

believe unseen things. See Heb. xi. 7, ' By faith Noah, being warned

of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to

the saving of his house, by which he condemned the world, and became

heir of the righteousness which is by faith.' The world was then in a

jolly condition, and little dreamt of a flood. The earth flourished as

much as ever, and there was building, and marrying, and planting ; but

God had told him of a universal destruction of all things by a deluge,

therefore he admonisheth the careless world, and provideth for his own

and family's safety. So we read of Jo.siah, when he heard of the words

of the ' book of the law, he rent his clothes,' 2 Kings xxii, 11. We do

not read of any actual trouble that was then in the land, or any danger

nigh. When an age is very corrupt and ripe for judgment, God giveth

warning. But alas ! few take it or lay it to heart, for the world is led

by sense, and not by faith : they are not affected with things till they

feel them. Few can see a storm when the clouds are ingathering, but

securely build on the present ease and peace, though God be angry.

But in the eye of faith a sinful estate is always dangerous ; therefore

they fall a praying and humbling themselves, and cry to God mightily,

and use all means of safety, while a judgment is but yet in its causes.

(2>d.) To support us against the greatest dangers and terrors : Heb.

xi. 27, 'By faith Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the

king, for he endured as seeing him that is invisible.' To depend upon

God s aid and succour in a time of great extremity and danger needeth

a strong faith. As to appearance, he was ready to be swallowed up, being

122 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS T. 3.

pursued by a wrathful and puiosant king ; the sea was before him, the

Egyptians behind him, and the craggy and inaccessible mountains on

each side ; but the terrors of sense may be easily vanquished by those

invisible succours which faith relieth upon ; an invisible God can bear

us out against visible dangers.

(4.) To teach us how to carry an equal mind in prosperity and ad-

versity. In prosperity, when we are borne up by the chin, we have

but too much confidence, and when we are lessened and cut short in

the world, we are full of diffidence and distrustful fears: Ps. xxx. 6,

' In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.' When a child of

CJod hath gotten a carnal pillow under his head, he lieth down, and

sleepeth sweetly, dreaming many a pleasant dream of uninterrupted

felicity in the world, but if God taketh away his pillow from under his

head, then he is as diffident as formerly confident, then ' God will be

favourable no more.' God is the same, his promises the same, the

covenant the same, the Mediator the same, but our condition is changed,

because we look to things seen, live upon things seen, and still imagine

of things according to what we see and feel. So for supplies of main-

tenance and provision ; if we have them not in view and sight, how

little can we depend upon God I If sense be against the promises, the

promises do us but little good. How few can comfort themselves in

God when all faileth, Hab. iii. 18, or make his all-sufficiency their

storehouse ! Gen. xvii. 1. No ; they must have a full heap in their

own keeping. How few can take his promises for their heritage ! Ps.

cxix. 11. No ; they must have lands and fixed revenues, or else they

know not where to have food and raiment for themselves and children.

How few can be contented to trust the purse in God's hands, and be

contented to take their daily allowance from him ! which yet is a

necessary point of faith, of continual practice. How few can see all

things in God when they have nothing in the creature ! 2 Cor. vi. 10.

Many talk of living by faith, but it is when they have enough in the

world to live upon ; they eat their own bread ; wear their own apparel,

only call it by God's name. The life of sense is more evident than the

life of faith. Well, now, this being the nature of faith, thereby we

may know the measure of it ; for the excellency and degree of every-

thing is known by the essential properties.

2. The second property of faith is self-denial, or a venturing of all

in Christ's hands, or a foregoing all for Christ. That this is included

in the nature of faith, yea, essential to it, I must prove to you —

[1.] By the description of faith in scripture : Heb. x. 39, ' We are

not of the number of them that draw back to perdition, but of them

that believe to the saving of the soul ; ' e'/c 7rtcrTe&)? 649 7repiTro[riaiv^v)(j)'i,

the purchasing of the soul ; not purchasing in the way of merit, but

means. A true and sound faith will cause us to save the soul, though

with the loss of other things. The flesh is for sparing or saving the

body, but faith is for saving the soul whatever it costs us. The flesh

saith. Favour thyself ; faith saith. Hazard all for Christ.

[2.] By reason. I will prove that it not only necessarily results from

the nature of faith, but is included in it ; for faith builds upon the

promise of salvation by Christ. Now this promise is not only true but

good, 1 Tim. i. 1. It is certainly true, and requireth the firmest be-

SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3. 123

lief ; it is eminently good, and worthy to be regarded above all other

things; the happiness is most desirable, and the assurance of enjoy-

ing it as strong as can be given us. Now we do not close with this

promise rightly unless we assent and embrace, take the thing promised

for our whole happiness, and the promise itself for our whole security.

The thing promised we do not take for our whole happiness unless we

forsake all other hopes and happiness, and can let go all pleasures,

profits, worldly reputation, and honour ; yea, life itself, when it is in-

consistent with our fidelity to Christ, or the way we should take to

enjoy the blessedness that he offereth. Not only wilful sin, and all

carnal pleasures, but anything, though never so near and dear to us.

No ; we will not take up with any other portion and felicity for all the

temptations in the world. And also there must be a confidence of

God's promise in Jesus Christ, that we may venture our all upon this

security, and, if God call us to it, actually forsake all ; so that without

self-denial we can neither trust God nor be true to him.

[3.] This suiteth with the nature of the conditional and baptismal

covenant. There is an absolute covenant whereby God promiseth to

give faith to the elect, and a conditional covenant sealed in baptism,

wdierein it is said that ' He that believeth and is baptized shall be

saved,' Mark xvi. 16. Now by this covenant none can be believers or

disciples of Christ, but those that forsake all for Christ's sake : Mat.

xiii. 45, 46, ' The kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant-man seek-

ing goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, he

went and sold all that he had and bought it.' Christ knew the nature

of faith better than we do. Many cheapen the pearl of price, but do

not go through with the bargain, because they do not sell all to pur-

chase it, all that is inconsistent with this choice and trust. So Luke

xiv. 26, ' If any man come unto me, and hate not father, and mother,

and brother, and sister, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple.'

Shall we think to go to heaven at a cheaper rate, after such express

declarations of the will of Christ? All christians are not called to

lhis, but all must be ready for this : Eph. vi. 15, ' Your feet shod with

the preparation of the gospel of peace ; ' Actsxxi. 13, 'I am ready not

to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the

Lord Jesus ; ' 1 Peter iii. 15, ' Be ready always to give an answer to

every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with

meekness and fear.' This every disciple must be, prepared to undergo

martyrdom if God calls him to it.

[4.] I prove it by the instances of believers, ordinary and extraor-

dinary. Faith was ever a venturing all and a forsaking all upon God's

veracity and truth of his promises.

(1.) Extraordinary. Noah had but God's bare word for the flood,

Heb. xi. 7, yet notwithstanding the mocks of the incredulous world,

with vast expense and care he prepareth an ark, which was the pre-

.scribed means to save himself and household. Abraham leaveth his

father's house, though he knew not whither God would call him, Heb.

xi. 8. Here was venturing all on God's fidelity ; and afterwards we

read that he was ready to off'er Isaac, leaving the way to God how to

fulfil his promises, ver. 17, 18. So the Israelites passing through the

Red Sea, ver. 29, there they put their all into God's hands, when upon

124 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIAXS I. 3.

his word themselves and little ones and all their substance ventured

into the great deep. So Christ's trial of the young man : Mark x. 21,

' Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou

shalt have treasure in heaven,' &c. ; but the promise of eternal life and

great treasure in heaven could not part the young man and his great

estate.

(2.) Ordinary. Moses : Heb. xi. 24-26, ' By faith Moses, when he

was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to en-

dure the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ

greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the

recompense of reward.' So those that the apostle speaketh of, Heb. x.

34, ' Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves

that ye liave in heaven a better aad an enduring substance.' They

had such a faith in Christ, that though they had lost their goods, yet

because they lost not Christ and the hopes of heaven by him, they

thought themselves happy enough. So Paul's quitting all honour and

respect with his countrymen : Phil. iii. 8, ' I count all things but dung

and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my

Lord.' It is endless to instance in all, but this is enough to show you

that the true believers are still known by their self-denial. But you '

will say, if this be necessary to the very truth and being of faith (as

certainly it is), how shall we know our growth, for we can but forsake

all ? I answer — By your readiness and willingness to part with all for

Christ. The weakest believer can part with no more but all, but the

stronger this faith is, he doth it with the more readiness of mind, and

with least defaults in his duty and blots in his fidelity to Christ.

Would you know then whether your faith be strong or weak ? know

it by this — The more you can adhere to Christ, whatever temptations

you have to the contrary, if you can venture not only some, but all

things, upon the account of the promise of eternal life —

{1st.) Deny the sinful pleasures of the flesh ; they were never worth

the keeping. If 1 cannot deny a littf j vain pleasure, what can I deny

for Christ ? Surely momentary delight is bought too dear if it must

be bought with the loss of eternal joys. Esau is represented as a pro-

fane person, that sold his birthright for one morsel of meat, Heb. xii.

15. If the vain delights of the world prevail so with men that all the

promises of the gospel cannot reclaim them, these comply with the

motions of the flesh, which is importunate to be pleased, but have no

sense of the offers of Christ, who calleth upon us to save our souls.

The true christian is a stranger and pilgrim on the earth, whose mind

and heart is set upon better things, which are to come, 1 Peter ii. 11.

Upon the security of God's word, he is taking his journey into another

world.

(2d.) AVe must be willing to sacrifice all our interests : Mat. xvi.

24, ' If any man will come after me, and be my disciple, let him deny

himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' If God be trusted as

our felicity, worldly felicity must be no impediment to our duty ;

therefore, if we cannot incur blame and shame with men, yea, damage

and loss, that we may be faithful with God, our faith is worth nothing.

(3c?.) If God call you not to sufferings, yet there are some expense-

SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3. 125

ful and self-den3"ing duties which ever are incumbent npon you, Mat.

XXV. '65. Visiting the sick, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry :

Luke xii. 33, ' Sell that ye have, and give alms ; provide yourselves

bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heaven that faileth not.'

Can you trust Christ upon such promises, and be at some loss for the

gospel ? for a religion that costs nothing is worth nothing. Most men

love a cheap gospel, and the flesh engrosseth all ; faith gets little from

them to be laid out for God. These men run a fearful hazard of being

rejected for ever ; they sow to the flesh : Gal. vi. 8, ' He that soweth

to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to

the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.'

(4:iJi.) If your faith maketh you to submit to providence. When we

first entered into covenant with God, we entirely and absolutely gave

up ourselves to God, to be governed by his commanding will, and to be

ordered by his disposing will. You cannot shift yourselves out of his

hands, but your voluntary submission to anything, if you may have

Christ and heaven at last, is the trial of your faith : Job i. 21, ' The

Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the

Lord ; ' Phil. i. 20, ' So Christ be magnified in my bodj^, whether it be

by life or death.' He was come to a point ; nothing should be reserved.

So Christ may be glorified, and you may have his saving grace, let

him give or take ; the more willingly you do this, the stronger is your

faith. Certainly to deny all is an essential property of faith.

3. The third evidence of a growing faith is when our light is turned

into love ; for faith is not a bare knowledge, but a sound, a savoury

and effective knowledge, a knowing things as we ought to know them

1 Cor. viii. 1, 2. A knowledge with a taste ; for such a difi'erence as

there is between the sight of meat and the tasting of it, such a differ-

ence there is between speculative knowledge and the apprehension of

faith, 1 Peter i. 3. You may dispute him out of his belief that seeth,

but you can never dispute him out of his belief that tastes, for you

cannot make him go against his own sense. The steadfastness of

unlearned christians cometh mainly from their taste and love ; they

adhere more closely to Christ than those that have only a dead opinion,

because they received the truth not only in the light but love of it,

2 Thes. ii. 10. Now the more taste we have of the things we know

and believe, .the stronger is our faith. Now, besides the manner of

apprehension, the truths apprehended tend mainly to raise our love to

God, that we may love him that loved us first, 1 John iv. 19. We

know God that we may love him, and faith is nothing else but a behold-

ing the love of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that our hearts may be

warmed, attracted, and drawn to God. Faith is the bellows to enkindle

the fire of love in our souls ; and therefore faith, the more sound and

sincere it is, the more it worketh by love, Gal. v. 6. Faith is required

sub ratione medii ; love, sub ratioue finis. The end of the gospel

institution is love, 1 Tim. i. 5. Well, then, when you make it your

great business to love God, and count it your great happiness to be

beloved by him, then may you best judge of the growth of your faith.

The gospel representeth the goodness and amiableness of God, that he

may be more lovely to us, and be beloved by us ; for this was the end

of reconciling and saving man by Christ ; his incarnation, life, sufiferings,

126 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession is all to reveal the love

of- God in Christ, and to work our hearts to love God again. To this

end also tend his merciful covenant and promises, and all the benefits

given to the church, all the privileges of the saints, his Spirit, pardon,

peace, glory, all these to warm our hearts, and fill them with a sense

of the love of God. Now if we slightly reflect upon these things, with

cold and narrow thoughts, we have not the true faith, certainly not a

grown faith.

SERMON IV.

Your faith groweth exceedingly. — 2 Thes. i. 3.

The fourth essential property of faith is its respect to the word of God»

That I may explain this with more full satisfaction, I shall open four

things — (1.) The relation of the word to faith ; (2.) The acts of faith

about the word ; (3.) The eftects of faith thus exercised ; (4.) The

notes whereby we may discern a strong or grown faith.

First, The relation of the word to faith.

1. It is a means to beget and breed faith : Eom. x. 14, 15, \* How

shall they call on him on whom they have not believed ? and how

shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard ? and how

shall they hear without a preacher ? and how shall they preach except

they be sent ? ' Every part of the gradation hath its weight. First,

what I am bound to adore and invocate ; I must believe in him as a

divine power. For the second, how shall men believe in Christ as a

God unless they have heard of him ? Faith is a believing such things

as God hath revealed because he hath revealed them ; therefore the

divine revelation must be conveyed to them by some means or other.

The third, there is no hearing without a preacher ; some messenger or

interpreter that may bring tidings of pardon and life by Christ. Then

for the fourth branch, ' How shall they preach except they be sent ? '

that is, come with authority, evidence, and power, whereby it may be

known that he is a messenger authorised and sent by God, tliat the

things propounded may be received as a certain truth of God's own

revelation, that we may depend upon the credit of his word, and that

with such a lively and efi^ectual belief as may prevail with us to assent

unto it, and embrace it notwithstanding all difiiculties and objections

to the contrary. Now such is the doctrine of salvation by Christ, which

inviteth us to call upon his name or name ourselves by the name of

Christ, because we may believe in him, and run all hazards for him,

2 Tim. i. 12. Why ? Because we have heard of him ; the fame of

his doctrine, so suitable to the glory of God and the necessities of

mankind ; and the fame of his miracles, especially his death and

resurrection, and that by authentic preachers, or faithful men author-

ised by God, and sufficiently owned by him, as those that are commis-

sioned to instruct the world, and to teach them the way of salvation ;

so that the word is the great means to work faith.

SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIAXS I. 3. 127

2. It is the warrant of faith, which stateth the laws of commerce

between us and God, which showeth how far God hath obhged him-

self, and we may depend upon him, as appeareth by the words of

Christ : John xvii. 20, ' jSTeither pray I for these alone, but for them

also that shall believe in me through their word.' The principal

object of faith is Christ ; we believe in him ; and the warrant of faith

is the word, that is, the doctrine which by the apostles is consigned to

the use of the church. For these and no other Christ prayeth, and

according to this way or law of grace God offereth himself to be recon-

ciled to his creatures. So that here you may hold him to his covenant ;

the word is gone out of his lips, and without this you make promises to

yourselves which God will not stand unto.

3. It is the object of faith, or the thing which we do believe : Acts

xxiv. 14, ' I believe all things which are written in the law and the

prophets ; ' and add to that, in the writings of the apostles. To make

the object of the christian faith complete, take in also what is written

in the apostles, for ' We are built upon the foundation of the apostles

and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone,' Eph.

ii. 20; that is, the doctrine of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Cln-ist

being the chief sum and scope of it, who is to be accepted of as he is

revealed and offered in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament,

betwixt which there is a sweet harmony and agreement. But because

this is too bulky and large for us to manage at one time, let us consider

the sum of the scriptures in the method wherein God hath put it, and

that is, the covenant of grace ratified by the blood of Christ, which is

the most glorious discovery whereby God hath made known himself to

his creatures : Ps. cxxxviii. 2, ' I will praise thy name for thy loving-

kindness and thy truth, for thou hast magnified thy word above all

thy name.' There we see that God's word is the chiefest discovery

that he hath made of himself to the creature, for it is magnified above

all his name ; that is, it doth set forth God above all that is named,

famed, spoken, or believed, or known, or understood of God. And

what is the matter of his word ? His loving-kindness and his truth ;

that is, in the word there are contained admirable promises, which God

will certainly perform to the utmost importance of them. There we

see his mercy and loving-kindness in making such great promises.

The promises of the new covenant are beyond all expression great and

precious, 2 Peter i. 4 ; they contain as much as the heart of man can

desire, all spiritual and eternal riches, pardon of sin, taking away the

stony heart, eternal life ; these are ofi'ered to men to believe. And

then his truth and fidelity in performing these promises most punctually

to all those that do believe, and will accept the pardon, grace, and

blessedness ofi'ered, and behave themselves accordingly. Well, then,

God's mercies in Christ to them that repent, believe, and obey God are

the matter and object of our faith.

4. The word is the security and strength of our faith — (1.) As it

puts God's grace into the way of a promise ; (2.) As this promise is

the promise of God.

[1.] AVe have much advantage in believing by the formality of a

promise. A promise is more than a purpose, more than a doctrinal

declaration, more than a prediction of prophecy.

128 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

(1.) More than a purpose. A purpose is only the thought of the

heart, a thing secret and hidden, but a promise is open and manifest

A pui'pose is the intention of a person, a promise is his intention revealed,

whereby we have a knowledge of the good intended to us. If God

had only purposed to give us eternal life, Ave might at last have enjoyed

it, but we could not have known it beforehand ; it would have been as

an hidden treasure. Promises are the eruptions and overflows of God's

love to us ; his heart is so big with kindness and designs of goodness

that it cannot stay till the accomplishment of things : Isa. xlii. 9,

' Before they spring forth I tell you of them.' God's purposes are a

sealed fountain, but his promises are a fountain broken open, bubbling

forth. He might have done us good, and given us no notice, but love

concealed would not be so much for our comfort. Besides, they are

obligations which God taketh upon \umiiQ\i 2yromittendo se fecit debit-

orerii. So far as God hath promised, so far he hath made himself a

debtor. God's purpo.'^es are unchangeable, but his promises are a

security put into our hands, so that we have a greater holdfast upon

God now the word is gone out of his lips, Ps. Ixxxix. 34. We may

put the bond in suit, throw him in his handwriting : Ps. cxix. 49,

' Piemember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused

me to hope.' We have the pawn of the thing promised, which we

must hold fast till performance cometh. His truth and holiness lie at

stake, and are as it were impawned with the creature.

(2.) It is more than a doctrinal declaration. It is one thing to

reveal a thing, another to promise it. A doctrine maketh a thing

known, but a promise mal:eth a thing sure. A doctrine giveth us notice,

but a promise giveth us right and interest if we be qualified. Christ

hath brought life and immortality to light through the doctrine of the

gospel, 2 Tim. i. 10 ; but he hath not only manifested, but granted,

assured it to believers by the promises of the gospel, 1 John ii. 25.

It is so conveyed to us as that we may be sure of obtaining it.

(3.) It is more than a prophecy or simple prediction. Scripture

prophecies will be fulfilled because of God's veracity, but scripture

jiromises will be fulfilled, not only because of God's veracity, but also

because of his fidelity and justice. As by our promise another man

cometh to have a right to the thing promised, therefore it is just it

should be given unto him, so it is in God ; it was his mercy and good-

ness to make the promise, but his holiness and justice biudeth him to

make it good : 1 John i. 9, 'He is faithful and just to forgive us our

sins.' And as for pardon, so for life : 2 Tim, iv. 8, ' Henceforth there

is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the righteous judge

shall give me on that day.' It becometh a debt of grace. This may

be illustrated by what divines say of an assertory lie and a promissory

lie. An assertory lie is when we speak of a thing past or present other-

wise than it is, and a promissory lie is when we speak of a tiling for

the time to come which we never intend to perform ; and this is the

worst sort of lies, because it doth not only prevent the end of speech,

which is truth, but also defeateth another of that right which we seem

to give him by our promise in the thing promised, which is a further

degree of injustice. Now we should a])prehend God to be very far

from this : Titus i. 2, ' In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot

SERMON'S UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3. 129

lie, promised before the world began ; ' and Heb. vi. 18, ' That by two

immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might

have a strong consolation.'

[2.] It is the promise of God. In every promise, that it be certain

and firm, three things are required — (1.) That it be made seriously and

heartily, with a purpose to perform it ; (2.) That he that promiseth

continue in his purpose without change of mind ; (3.) That it be in

the power of him that promiseth to perform what he hath so promised.

Now in the promise of God there can be no doubt of any of these

things. Certainly God meaneth as he speaketh, when he promiseth

eternal life to the faithful servants and disciples of Jesus Christ ; for

what need had he to court his creatures into a false and imaginary

happiness which he never meant to bestow upon them ? to send his

Son with a commission from heaven, to assure them of it, who also

wrought miracles to confirm the message that he brought from God,

died upon this truth, and rose again, and entered into the happiness

that he spoke of, to give us assurance, and a visible demonstration of

the truth of it ? sent abroad his apostles to invite the world to embrace

it, his Holy Spirit accompanying them, and sealing their message also

with divers signs and wonders ? And surely he doth continue in the

same mind, for there is no repeal of this law of grace. And he is

able to perform it ; for what difficulty is there which omnipotency can-

not subdue and overcome? Surely what God hath promised he is

fully able to perform.

Secondly, The acts of faith about the word.

1. We are to believe and credit it upon solid and sufficient evidence.

It is said, Heb. xi. 11, ' They saw these thing? afar ofi'. and were per-

suaded of them ; ' and Acts xiii. 48, ' When the gentiles heard this,

they glorified the word of God, and believed ; ' that is, blessed God for

his glorious mercy revealed in the gospel. The sound belief and firm

assent leadeth on other things, for the most powerful truths work not

till they are believed : 1 Thes. ii. 13, ' Ye received the word not as the

word of man, but (as it is in truth) the word of God. which efiectually

worketh also in you that believe.' Here beginneth the efficacy. Now

usually we receive the truth at first upon low and insufficient evidence,

but afterwards our assent is upon better grounds, and more valid and

strong ; as the Samaritans : John iv. 42, ' Now we believe, not because

of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is

indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.' Her saying was much,

for the woman had testified that she had met with an holy person that

had told her of all that ever she did. So Nathaniel was drawn to Chi-ist •

by Philip's persuasion, but when he perceived that he knew the heart

and secret things, John i. 48, 49, ' He saith unto him, Whence knowest

thou me ? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip

called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Nathaniel

answered, and saith unto him, Eabbi, thou art the son of God, thou art

the king of Israel. Christ then promiseth him further assurance and

greater evidence, which should beget a more confirmed and strong faith :

ver. 50, ' Jesus answered and said unto him. Because I said unto thee,

I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou ? thou shalt see greater

things than these.' The church is in possession of a religion which

VOL. XVII. I

130 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

God hath blessed throughout successions of ages, and we received the

doctrine of the gospel and new covenant upon report and hearsay ;

hereafter we see farther and better grounds, and the scriptures are

owned with more certainty of evidence. Well, then, here is the first

thing, assent, or a receiving all truths about supernatural things upon

the credit of God's word.

2. The work of faith is to apply these things ; for the closer such

blessed truths are laid to our own souls, the more we feel the virtue of

them : Job v. 27, ' Lo, this it is ; know thou it for thy good ; ' Eom.

viii. 31, 'What shall we then say to these things?' The promise

includeth you as well as others, and promiseth and offereth you pardon

and life if you will believe in Christ ; therefore the application I press

you to is not a claim of privileges (stay a while there), but an exciting

yourselves to perform the duties of the gospel, that you may turn away

from all other ways of felicity, and choose this alone. Faith must be

applicative, and the closer the application the better ; but there is a

difference between the application which is an excitement of your duty,

and that application which is an assurance of your interest : Acts xiii.

20, ' To you is this word of salvation sent.' It is my duty to make

general grace particular, but not presently, and at first dash to enter

ray plea and claim, but to oblige me to take God's way. God calleth

upon me to repent and believe in Christ, that I may have pardon and

life.

3. We are heartily to consent to this blessed covenant which is

contained in the word of God, taking the promises offered for our

happiness, resolving upon the duties required as our work : Acts ii. 41,

' They received the word gladly, and were baptized.' There was a

precept and a promise, ver. \*38 ; they accepted the counsel, and waited

for the promise. Our respect to the word is made up of a mixture of

obedience and dependence ; there must be a consent to both, and we

must resolve for the holy and heavenly life. Faith is an act of the

will as well as of the understanding : Heb. xi. 13, ' These all died in

faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off,

and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.' Besides being

persuaded, there is embracing : \* The promises of God in him are Yea,

and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us,' 2 Cor. i. 20 ; and

they are \* exceeding great and precious promises,' 2 Peter i. 4. In

one place you have both : 1 Tim. i. 15, ' This is a faithful saying, and

worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to

save sinners.' Therefore embrace them you must with all your hearts,

and submit to this way of covenanting with God.

4. Your judgments must highly esteem these promises, and your

hearts find full contentment and satisfaction in them. We read often

of receiving the word with joy, and the confidence and rejoicing of

hope, Heb. iii. 6. Usually the word of God hath too cold and slight

entertainment in our affections, and we do not value those precious

promises as we ought to do. They should be dearer to us than our

lives, and give us more satisfaction than all the enjoyments of the

world : Ps. cxix. Ill, ' I have taken thy testimonies as an heritage for

ever ; they are the rejoicing of my soul.' They do you good to

your very heart, and the more you are acquainted with them, the

SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3. 131

more you will see the worth of them : Luke vi. 23, ' Rejoice and leap

for joy, for great is your reward in heaven.' And of the eunuch, when

he had sealed covenant with God, Acts viii. 39, it is said, ' he went

his way rejoicing/ Faith cannot do its office, that is, out of an holy

gratitude to God, to draw us off from the allurements of sense, and

fortify us against adversities and troubles, and engage us to the duties'

of Christianity, which are distrustful to flesh and Llood, unless it did

fill our hearts with an higher and better joy than the world yieldetb.

Surely it is comfortable to be jiardoned and reconciled to God, to be in

the way, and under the hopes of eternal life.

Thirdly, The effects which these acts produce. These may be stated

by the several uses for which the word of God serveth. (1.) It is the

seed of a new life ; (2.) The constant rule of all our actions ; (3.)

The sure charter of our hopes ; (4.) Our strength and preservation

against all temptations from the devil, the world, and the flesh ; (5.)

Our comfort and cordial in all afflictions.

1. It is the seed of a new life : 1 Peter i. 23, ' Being born again,

not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God,

Avhich liveth and abideth for ever ; ' and James i. 18. ' Of his own

will begat he us, with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of

first-fruits of his creatures ; ' and also, 2 Peter i. 4, ' AVhereby are given

unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you

might be partakers of the divine nature.' When we so believe the

pardon, and grace, and blessedness offered, that our hearts are changed

into the life and likeness of God ; for the truth is not rightly owned

and believed till this change be wrought both in heart and life, then

we are cast into the mould of this doctrine : Rom. vi. 17, ' Te have

obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine that was delivered to you.'

Gospel truths serve not for speculation or mere talk and discourse, but

for sanctification ; and therefore if this seed be sown and engrafted in

your hearts, and you begin to live to God an holy and heavenly life,

you have the surest evidence of your faith ; for causes are made sen-

sible to us by their effects. It is usually brought as a proof of the

word, the sanctifying virtue of it ; so it is of the sincerity of your

faith, for the word profiteth not unless it be mingled with faith ; and

since both faith and the word concur to this effect, it may be ascribed

to either. Surely therefore if we believe the word of God, and value

it as we ought, it doth leave the impression of God's image upon us,

for it is the fairest draught and representation of God that ever was

in the law and life of Christ, 2 Coi'. iii. 18. If our souls and lives be

a transcript of the word, this image is thence deduced to us by the

Spirit, and of necessity it must be so, for Christ's comforting promises

of mercy and glory are made to these new creatures who live the holy

and heavenly life. They have God's mark and signature upon them,

and therefore are said to be ' sealed to the day of redemption,' Eph. ii.

30, and Eph. i. 3. This renovation of the soul is the seal of God, the

pledge of his love, and the earnest of the heavenly inheritance.

2. The constant rule of all our actions. There is a fixed determined

rule from whence we cannot swerve and vary without sin, and if we

would have communion with God here or enjoy him hereafter. We

must keep close to this rule : Gal. vi. 16, ' As many as walk according

13- SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.'

This rule, that is the word of God, which directeth us as to our

genei'al path and way, and all our steps or particular actions : Ps. cxix.

105, ' Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my paths.'

We must hide the word in our hearts : Ps. cxix. lIO, ' Thy -\vord have

I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.' We nuist con-

sult with it upon all occasions, as willing to understand our duty : Ps.

cxix. 24, ' Thy testimonies also are my delight, and my counsellors.'

And because we may mistake through error of mind, or be tempted

aside through aversion of heart and manifold temptations, therefore

we must earnestly beg it of God : Ps. cxix. 133, ' Order my steps in

thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' And we

must nse all study ourselves, Kom. xii. 2, and constant watchfulness :

Eph. V. 15, ' See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as

wise.' Now that which I say is this : When the word ruleth the

main course of our lives, and teacheth us how to live in the world,

soberly, righteously, and godly, the tenderness of the word, and high

respect to it, that we dare not transgress it whatever temptations we

have so to do, showeth that faith hath obtained its effect in us ; for

trembling at the word, fearing of a commandment, and whatever of

that kind is spoken of in the scripture, they are all fruits of faith.

3. It is the charter of our hopes : John xx. 31, ' These things are

written that ye might have life through his name ; ' 1 John v. 11,

' This is the record that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this

life is in his Son.' Now the work of faith is to ' lay hold upon eternal

life,' 1 Tim. vi. 12 ; that is, seize upon it as ours, as assured to us by

the word of God, or to take it as our happiness, and accordingly pur-

sue after it : Eph. i. 13, ' In whom ye trusted after ye heard the word

of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' Now, when we choose this

felicity for our portion, set our hearts upon it, make it the chief care

and business of our lives to seek it, and do all as means thereunto,

carry ourselves as strangers and pilgrims in the world, and look for no

great matters here, but wholly depend upon God's faithful word for

this happiness to come, then is faith wrought in us.

4. It is our strength and preservative against all temptations from

the devil, the world, and the flesh. The word of God is the ' sword

of the Spirit,' Eph. vi. 17, a weapon of excellent use in the spiritual

warfare ; and it is said, 1 John ii. 14, ' Ye are strong, and the word of

God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.' This

helpeth us to ward off the blow of any temptation. When the lieart is

well stocked and furnished with this word of God, you have something

to oppose still to darken the splendour of the world, to check the

desires of the flesh, and so do the better carry on a continual warfare

and watchfulness. And so the fleshly inclination is overruled, and the

profits, honours, and pleasures of the world have less force upon us.

When the devil showeth the bait, and the flesh is ready to swallow it,

faith showeth the hook. A belief of the word of God being of a lively

and vigorous nature, produceth noble efiects in us. It casteth down all

that rebelleth against God, and casteth out all that would be preferred

before him : Ps. xxxvii. 31, ' The law of his God is in his heart, none

of his steps shall slide.' A lively active sense of his duty is kept fresh

upon his heart.

SEKMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3. 133

5. To be our comfort and cordial in our afflictions : Ps. cxix. 59,

' This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word hath quickened me ; '

ver. 92, ' Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished

in my affliction,' Heb. xii. 5 ; 'Ye have forgotten the exhortation which

speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the

chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.' So

Ps. xciv. 19, ' In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts

delight my soul.' God's comforts are such as God allowetb, or God

worketh. The matter of both is in the scriptures, though the Spirit be

the author of them, and the instrument he worketh by is faith. In

wants and straits how sweet is it to a believer to consider how amply

we are provided for in the covenant. When God's hand is heavy upon

us, and providence represents him as an angry judge, yet the covenant

represents him as a father. In a time of trial, one promise of God

will give you more true comfort and support than all the arguings of

men.

Fourthly, The notes whereby we discern a strong and grown faith

as to this property of it, its respect to the word.

1. When the consolations laid down in the word of God are more

prized than any extraordinary dispensations. Certainly it is a weakness

when men undervalue the comforts of the word, as slender, empty,

unsatisfactory, and would have the manifestations of God's love exhibited

to them in some singular and extraordinary way. Eliphaz chargeth it

on Job wrongfully, Job xv. 11, ' Are the consolations of God small with

thee ? is there any secret thing with thee ? ' God's ordinary way is

the sure way, the other layeth us open to a snare. Surely our consci-

ences are best settled in the ordinary way of God's word, in a way of

faith, repentance, and close walking with God ; but as Naaman despised

the waters of Jordan, so many despise the ordinary comforts, and would

have signs and wonders to assure them. These may long sit in dark-

ness, because if God comforts them not in their way, they will not be

comforted at all. Now, though God sometimes, in condescension to his

people, may grant their desires, as Christ did to Thomas, yet it is with

an upbraiding of their weakness and unbelief, John xx. 28. You

should acquiesce in the common allowance of God's people, lest you

seem to reflect on the wisdom and goodness of God, and lay open your-

selves to some false consolation and dream of comfort, while we affect

new rules without the compass of the word ; especially M'hen we find

not our expectations there speedily answered, like hasty patients ready

to tamper with every medicine they hear of, rather than submit to a

regular course of physic. Gregory telleth us of a lady of the emperor's

court that never ceased importuning him to seek from God a revelation

from heaven that she should be saved. Rem difficileni petivit et

inutilem. It was a thing difficult, and unprofitable; difficult for him

to obtain, and unprofitable for her to ask, having a surer way by the

scriptures : 2 Peter i. 19, ^e^aiorepov Xoyov, ' We have a more sure

word of prophecy ' than oracles. The adhering of the soul to the

promises is the unquestionable way to obtain peace. Luther, as he con-

fesseth, was often tempted to ask for signs or some special revelation.

He tells also how strongly he withstood these temptations. Pactum

feci cum Domino meo, ne mihi miftat visiones, vel etiam anrjelos; con-

tentus enim sum hoc dono, quod habeo scripturam sanctam quce ahunde

134 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. :{.

docst et suppeditat omnia quce necessaria sunt, tarn ad hanc viiam, tarn

ad futuram — I indented with the Lord my God that he would never

send me dreams and visions ; I am well contented with the gift of the

scriptures.

2. When the word is matter of joy and firm confidence to us before

there is any appearance of performance. This in two cases —

[1.] In case of delay, when it is long ere God appeareth, and faith

doth not require the existence and pre-essence of the thing believed,

only the promise of it. Therefore though the promise be delayed, it

eyeth the blessing at a distance : Heb. xi. 13, ' These all died in faith,

not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were

persuaded of them, and embraced them.' Abraham was one of them :

John viii. 56, ' Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he

saw it, and was glad.' And we, if we would be strong believers, must

do likewise : Heb. vi. 12, ' Be not slothful, but followers of them who

through faith and patience inherit the promises.' A christian is not

to be valued by his enjoyments, but his hopes ; heaven is all performance.

Here he dealeth with us by promises, but you will find his payment

sure, and that God in effect is better than all his promises ; for they

cannot signify and convey the full sense of all that God meaueth to

bestow. Therefore we must wait, whether the promise be to be ful-

filled in this life or the life to come ; let us dig the pit, and tarry till

God fill it with rain from heaven.

[2.] In case of difficulties, wants, distresses, the naked promise must

be ground of hope and comfort to you ; though it seem to be contra-

dicted in the course of God's providence, when it is neither performed

nor likely to be performed, you are to go by his word whatever his

dispensation be : Eom. iv. 18, ' Abraham against hope believed in

hope ; ' and David saith, Ps. Ivi. 4, ' In God will I praise his word, in

God I have put my trust ; I will not fear what man can do unto me.'

So ver. 10, ' In God will I praise his word, in the Lord will I praise his

word.' The best holdfast faith can have on God is to take him by

his word ; though he withholdeth comfort and deliverance from us,

yet we may praise him as long as we have his word. His dispensation

giveth no satisfaction, yet the soul can find rest and contentment in his

word. Well, then, if the word be an impregnable bulwark against

all fears and dangers, and comfort against all wants and distresses,

your faith is grown ; for the more simply our dependence is upon the

word of God, without sensible encouragements, the stronger is our

faith.

3. When all the trust we have in God concerning the comforts we

expect by the way is still referred to the great blessing of eternal life.

AVe are to trust God by the way for our protection and defence, as well

as for the reward at the end of the journey ; by swimming in the

shallow brooks we learn to venture in the great ocean, but still in sub-

ordination to the main blessing. This is the great comfort : Luke xii.

32, ' Fear not, little flock ; it is your Father's good pleasure to give

you the kingdom.' And our faith in the word tendeth to this : Kom.

XY. 4, ' Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our

learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might

have hope.' Therefore strength of faith is hereby determined.

SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3. 135

4. Because the word is not only our charter, but our rule. The

strength of faith is known by this. If we value the word of God as it

maketh us wise unto salvation, therefore we delight in the plain word

without the ornaments of wit, as painting in glass windows hindereth

the light. Everything communicateth to its own nature ; heat causeth

heat, cold causeth cold. Ministers speak as the oracles of God, and so

the people receive.

SERMON V.

Your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every 07ie of you

all toiuards each other aboundeth. — 2 Thes. i. 3.

We come to the fifth property of faith, which is an high value and

esteem of Jesus Christ. I mention this —

1. Because faith in the new covenant mainly and distinctly respects

Christ: Acts xx. 21, 'Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the

gentiles, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus

Christ.' Why repent<ince respects God I showed you lately, because

from God we fell, and to God we return. We fell from him as we

withdrew our allegiance and sought our happiness elsewhere ; we return

to him as to our rightful Lord and proper happiness. But faith respects

the Mediator, who is the only remedy of our misery, and the means

of eternal blessedness. He opened the way to God by his merit and

satisfaction, and actually bringeth us into this way by his renewing

and reconciling grace, that we may be in a capacity to please and enjoy

God, and that is the reason why faith in Christis so much insisted on,

as it begets a title to the blessings of the new covenant. It hath a

special aptitude and fitness for this work of our recovery from sin to,

God, partly because a guilty conscience is not easily settled, and brought

to look for all kind of happiness from one whom we have so much

wronged. Adam, when once a sinner, was shy of God, Gen. iii. 10.

Guilt is suspicious, and maketh us hang off from God, Ps. xxxii. 13 ;

and if we have not one to lead us by the hand, and bring us to God,

we cannot abide his presence.

2. Partly because the comfort of the promises is so rich and

glorious, and the persons upon whom it is bestowed so unworthy, that

it cannot easily enter into the heart of a man that God will be so good

and gracious to us, unless we have a sound belief of his merit who hath

piocured these mercies and hopes for us : 1 Cor. ii. 9, ' Eye hath not

seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the

things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' Therefore

since sense and reason could look for no such thing, a strong faith is

necessary.

3. The way God hath taken for our deliverance is so supernatural

and strange that nothing but faith can receive it : John iii. IG, ' God

so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoso-

ever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life ;

136 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

and Rom. viii. 32, ' He spared not his own Son, but gave him to die

for us.'

[4.] The chief of our blessings lie in another world, and nature can-

not see so far off: 2 Peter i. 9, 'He that lacketh these things is blind,

and cannot see afar off.' Unless we believe Christ, and his message

to us, we shall never entertain these things.

[5.] For the present Christ's people are assaulted, and afflicted with

so many difficulties, and so seemingly forsaken, and temptations to

unbelief in this lower world are so manifold and pressing, that we can

take no comfort in the new covenant unless we have faith in Christ,

who is able to maintain and defend us till he hath brought us home

to God : 2 Tim i. 12, 'I know whom I have believed, and I am per-

suaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him

against that da}'.'

[6.] Faith in Christ is most fitted for the acceptance of his free gift.

Faith and grace go always together, and are put as opposites to law and

works: Piom. iv. 16, 'Therefore it is of faith, that it might be of

grace ; ' and Eph, ii. 8, ' By grace ye are saved, througli faith, and that

not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.' Faith establisheth the free grace

and favour of God, or his condescension to us in the new covenant,

wherein pardon and life are offered to penitent believers. What we

receive by the grace of God in Christ cannot be of right, or such as we

may challenge by virtue of obedience to the law upon that account.

He might condemn us, but he doth accept us upon these new terms

which Christ propounded of his mere grace : and therefore faith solvetli

the interest of grace in our pardon and salvation.

[7.] Because the duties of the new covenant are opposite to the bent

of the carnal heart, which is set upon liberty and uncleanness : Rom.

viii. 7, ' The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject

to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' And nothing will bind us

but faith in Christ, to whom we must give an account in the solemn

judgment : Acts xvii. 30, 31, ' He commandeth all men everywhere to

repent, because he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the

world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained ; whereof

he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from

the dead.' In which words I observe four things — (1.) That God

requireth of all that will submit to the gospel repentance and new

obedience ; (2.) That the binding consideration is, that the judgment

of every man's estate is put into Christ's hands, who in the day ap-

pointed will declare and determine every man's right and qualification ;

(3.) That the efficacy of this consideration depeudeth on the strength

of our faith or belief in Christ; (4.) That the strength of our faith

dependeth on that assurance given, TrtaTiv irapay^oovrrdacv. Woe be to

those that now refuse Christ, or do not believe him so as to obey him :

2 Thes. i. 8, ' In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not

God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

[8.] Till we believe in Christ all his offices are useless to us, and

therefore without faith he will do us no good. Who would learn of

him that doth not believe him to be the great Prophet sent of God to

teach the world the way to true happiness ? Who would obey him

that doth not believe that he is our Lord, that he hath power over all

SERMONS UPON 2 THES3ALONL4NS I. 3. 137

flesh, at whose judgment we must stand or fall ? Who would depend

upon the merit of his obedience and sacrifice, and be comforted with

his gracious promise and covenant, and come to Gixl with boldness and

hope of mercy in his name, and be confident that he will justify and

save, who doth not believe that he is a priest who once made an atone-

ment, and doth continually make intercession for us ? In the days ut

liis flesh, all that would have benefit by Christ he did put them to this

question, whether they did believe he was able to do it? To the

father of the possessed child, ' Belie vest thou that I am able to do this ? '

Mark ix. 23 ; to Martha, John xi. 26, ' Whosoever liveth and belie veth

in me shall never die : believest thou this ? ' So stUl it hokleth good ;

this is the most necessary grace, that maketh way for all other respect

to Christ.

That this respect is an high value and esteem of Christ above all

other things. That faith implieth an esteem of Christ is plain by that

of the apostle, 1 Peter ii. 7, ' Unto you therefore which believe he is

precious.' And that it is a transcendental respect and esteem, so as

that all other things are lessened in our opinion of them, and estima-

tion of them, and respect unto them in comparison of Christ, appeareth

by other scriptures ; as Phil. iii. 8, ' I count aU things but loss for the

excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have

suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may

win Christ.' He had counted, and did count, as not repenting of his

choice ; he could deny his own honour, ease, profit, and estate, his own

everything but his own God and his own Christ. So Mat. xiii. 45, 46,

'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodlv

pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and

sold all that he had and bought it.' The pearl was accounted of great

price, if he would sell all things for it. Christ is so dear and precious,

that the most excellent things are not dear and precious when they are

to be ventured for his sake : Acts xx. 24, ' But none of these things

move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might

finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of

the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.' No faith

but this will allure and draw our hearts to Christ, and no faith but

this will keep our hearts to him, there being so many other things

either to keep us, or to draw us off from him. Nothing but this trans-

cendental respect begets the close adherence to Christ.

Now I will show three things — (1.) That Christ hath deserved this

esteem : (2.) That faith only will give it him ; (3.) The notes, or how

this esteem of Christ will show itself.

1. That he deserveth it ; and that —

[1.] By what he is in himself, the Son of God and the Saviour of the

world. This is the chief ground of our respect to the mediator : Acts

viii. 37, 38, ' If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest ; and he

answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So

Martha maketh her confession of faith : John xL 27, ' Yea, Lord, I

believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God that should come into

the world.' So Peter in his own name and the name of his fellow-

disciples : John vi. 69, ' We believe and are sure that thou art the

Christ, the Son of the living God.' This is the ground of adherence to

138 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

him and dependence upon him, that he whom the christian world hath

hitherto called their Saviour is the very Son of God, appointed by God

to execute the office of king, priest, and prophet to the church. This

giveth us ground to adhere to him, and vanquish all temptations : 1

John v. 5, ' Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth

that Jesus is the Son of God.' The most part of the christian

"world leap into this opinion, and the name of Christ is prized, but his

office is neglected ; there is a fond esteem of his memory, but no real

improvement of his grace. Quandoquidem panis Christi Jam pinguis

factus est, tractatur in concilns, discepiatuy- in jadiciis, disputatur in

scJiolis, laudatur in eclisiis, questiosa res est nomen Christi. But this

is the true ground of a christian's esteem, when soundly persuaded that

he is the Christ.

[2.] What he hath done for us. Christ requireth not so much at

our hands as he himself hath voluntarily performed for our sakes. He

' pleased not himself,' that he might promote the glory of God and our

salvation, Eom. xv. 8 ; ' He became poor that we might be rich,' 2 Cor.

viii. 9 ; He ' was obedient to the death, even the death of the cross,'

that we might have life, Phil. ii. 7 ; ' He was made sin for us, that we

might be the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Cor. v. 21 ; ' He was

made a curse for us,' that we might have the blessing; Gal. iii. 13.

Doth he require so much of us ? It is grievous to the flesh to be

crossed, but he hath suffered greater sorrows and agonies, that we might

have eternal life.

[3.] What he still doth for us. He is ' our life,' Gal. ii. 20. You

live ujDon and by his life : John xiv. 19, ' Because I live, ye shall live

also.' We use him not as an instrument which is laid by when our

turn is served, but as an head and root. He is your righteousness, 1

Cor. i. 30, and 2 Cor. v. 21, ' He hath made him to be sin for us who

knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.'

You have the effect of his merit and obedience to plead to God; he is

your blessedness for the present : Col. i. 27, ' Christ in you the hope of

glory.' All the fatherly goodness of God cometh to you by him ; all

your helps, mercies, and hopes are founded in him alone. It is he pre-

sents your requests to God, and you take all your mercies out of his

hands : 1 Cor. viii. 6, ' To us there is but one (Jod, tlie Father, of whom

are all things, and we in him ; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom

are all things, and we by him.' Your petitions are presented by the

hands of him who is the beloved of God.

2. That faith doth give him this esteem, as it is an assent, consent,

and affiance.

[1.] As an assent, we believing what he is, hath done, and doth still

do for us, therefore we prize him. Faith knoweth him partly by what

the word revealeth : John iv. 10, ' If thou knewest the gift of God, a,nd

who it is that saith to thee. Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked

of him, and he would have given thee living water;' and John vi. 40,

' This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the

Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life.' They see such

an excellency, fulness, and all-sufficiency in him as draweth off their

hearts from all other things, and they cleave to him alone. Partly by

experimental feeling, that he is such an one to us. As they see him to

SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3. 139

be such, they find him to be suoh : 1 Peter iii. 3, ' If so be that ye have

tasted that the Lord is gracious.' The word revealeth, and experience

findeth him to be so.

[2.] As it is a consent. We see Christ is so necessary for us, so

beneficial to us, that we accept him for our Lord and Saviour, and count

all the choicest concernments in the world but base things in compari-

son of his grace ; therefore, forsaking all others, we devote ourselves

to him, and are married to the Lord, that we may bring forth fruit to

God, Rom. vii. 4. Nothing is allowed to rival Christ in the soul, or to

be a competitor with him : Hosea iii. 3, this is the form of the con-

jugal covenant, ' Thou shalt not be for another, but thou shalt be for

me.'

[3.] As it is a trust and affiance in him, that we may be reconciled

to God, and saved by him from sin and punishment, and so be brought

safe into a state of perfect happiness. Every one of these benefits doth

endear him to the soul. Surely dependence will beget observance, and

we will love him and please him in whose hands we venture our all,

even our eternal interests and concernments.

3. The notes, or how this esteem will show itself.

[1.] In labouring to get Christ above all. This is the prime care, and

must be carried on, whatever is left undone : Mat. xvi. 33, ' Seek ye

first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things

shall be added unto you ; ' Ps. xxvii. 4, ' One thing have I desired of the

Lord, that will I seek after ; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord

all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire

in his temple ; ' Prov. iv. 7, ' Wisdom is the principle thing, therefore

get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding.' The acces-

sary things must give way to the principal, the arbitrary things to the

necessary. Food and raiment is not so necessary as Christ ; temporal

want is not so great an evil as eternal misery. Well then, communion

with God in Christ must be minded, whatever is neglected. Most

men's time and labour is laid out upon unsatisfying vanities ; their life,

and love, and time, and strength, and care is spent on worldly thino-s,

and they have seldom and cold thoughts of salvation by Christ, cannot

deny themselves a little worldly pleasure or carnal ease, that they may

attend upon this work, to get an interest in Christ's renewing and

reconciling grace. Of those that were invited to the marriage-feast it

is said, Mat. xxii. 5, ' They made light of it.'

[2.] A care in keeping Christ above all. Nothing should be so near

and dear to you as Christ ; he is your life and your strength, ^our

great care is, that he may lie as a bundle of myrrh in your bosoms :

Cant. i. 13, ' A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me ; he shall

lie all night betwixt my breasts ; ' or ' dwell in your hearts by faith,'

Eph. iii. 17. Christ is all in all to you. You are loath to put the com-

forts of his presence to hazard for a little carnal satisfaction, are chary

and tender of your respects to your Redeemer, that he be not displeased

or provoked to withdraw by any unkind dealing of yours. Whatever

temptations would withdraw you from your duty you reject with loath-

ing and indignation. Christ hath pitched upon this as the true and

proper evidence of our love to him and esteem of him : John xiv. 21,

' He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth

140 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

me ; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love

him and will manifest myself to him.' We are apt to flatter ourselves

with an airy religion, that we value Christ and prize Christ ; if so, we

will be careful he be not offended and displeased.

[3.] By a willingness to lose all rather than lose Christ : Luke xiv.

33, ' Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he

cannot be my disciple.' Counting the most dishonourable things in

the world as honourable for his sake : Heb. xi. 26, ' Esteeming the re-

proach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he

had respect unto the recompense of reward ; ' Acts v. 41, \* And they

departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were

counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.' They see a beauty in

his despised ways. You can worship Christ as the wise men did,

though in a stable, and are contented to be made vile for his sake : 2

Sam. vi. 22, ' I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in my

own sight.' And we read of Marsacus, when he was led forth to

suffer, and because of his quality they bound him not as they did others,

he cried out, Cur no7i et me quoque torque donas, dx. — Why do you not

give me also my chain, and make me a knight of this noble order ?

Some will pretend to prize Christ, but can hardly suffer a disgraceful

word for him, or endure to be browbeaten with a frow^n.

[4.] By delighting in him and the testimonies of his love above all

things else. Faith must breed such a confidence in Christ as keepeth

up our delight in him, and such a delight and well-pleasedness of mind

as we find not elsewhere : Ps. iv. 7, ' Thou hast put gladness in my

heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased ; '

and Cant. i. 4, ' We will be glad and rejoice in thee ; we will remem-

ber thy loves more than wine.' The choicest contentments of the flesh

are nothing so satisfying as the joy of his salvation. This joy is called

' unspeakable and glorious,' as being better felt than uttered, 1 Peter

i. 8. The strength of it is seen when other comforts fail : ' How pre-

cious are thy thoughts unto me, God ! how great is the sum of them ! '

Ps. cxxxix. 17.

Sixthly, The sixth property of faith is victory over the world : 1

John. V. 4, 5, ' For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world,

and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith : who

is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the

Son of God ? ' I shall despatch this briefly, and shall show you —

1. What is the world that is to be overcome ? All worldly things

whatsoever, so far as they lessen our esteem of Christ and heavenly

things, or as they hinder us in our duty to God. In short, the delights

and terrors of this world ; for we must be armed on both sides with

the armour of righteousness, both on the right hand and the left, 2

Cor. vi. 7. The fears of this world are apt to stagger us, so do snares

prevent and inveigle us. Moses had temptations of all kinds, right-

hand temptations from riches, honours, pleasures : Heb. xi. 24-26,

' By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the

Son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the

people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming

the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt ; '

left-hand temptations : ver. 27, ' By faith he forsook Egypt, not fear-

SERMONS UTOX 2 THESSALONTANS I. 3. 141

ing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is

invisible.' The armour of the right hand is called temperance ; of

the left hand, patience : 2 Peter i. 6, ' To knowledge temperance, and

to temperance patience.' In the parable of the sower sowing his seed

v/e read that which fell on the stony ground withered in persecution :

Luke viii. 13, \* They on the rock are they which, when they hear, re-

ceive the word with joy ; and these have no root, which for a while

believe, and in time of temptation fall away. That which was sown in

the thorny ground was choked with the cares, riches, and pleasures of

the world : ver. 14, ' And they which tell among thorns are they which,

when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches

and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.' If the

terrors of sense assault our constancy, we must set loss against loss,

pain against pain, fear against fear : Mat. x. 28, ' Fear not him that

can kill the body, and do no more, but fear him that can cast both

body and soul into hell.' If they threaten a prison, remember God

threatens hell ; if they threaten fire, God threatens everlasting fire ; if

they threaten loss of estate, loss of heaven is much worse. If the

delights of sense are likely to corrupt us, to pervert or divert our minds

from better things, we must look to it, and remember what better

tilings are reserved for us. Persecution is opposite to profession with-

out, but this obstructs the very vigour, life, and power of godliness

within : 1 John ii. 15, ' If any man love the world, the love of the

Father is not in him.' And then for pleasures : 2 Tim. iii. 4, ' Lovers of

pleasures more than lovers of God ; ' Heb. xii. 16, ' Or profane person

as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.' Honours are

baneful to our faith : John v. 44, ' How can ye believe which receive

honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from

God only ? ' They eat out the heart of it. These are our daily temp-

tations.

2. The necessity of overcoming the world.

[1.] It is by the world that our spiritual enemies have advantage

against us. The devil seeketh to tempt or fright the fleshly nature in

us either by the terrors or allurements of sense. Therefore conquer

the world, and the tempter is disarmed ; he blindeth us as the god of

this world : 2 Cor. iv, 4. ' In whom the god of this world hath blinded

the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious

gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.'

He vexeth as the prince of this world, and having a strong party

in the world, he findeth it no great matter to entice a sensual

worldly mind to almost anything that is evil. The baits and provi-

sions of the flesh are in the world: 1 John ii. 16, ' For all that is in

the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of

life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.' The world fits us with

a bait agreeable to every appetite, or a diet that suiteth with every

distemper of our souls. A proud mind must be honoured and

humoured, and will go nothing lower than high place and pomp of

living. A sensual mind must have its pleasures, and the covetous

the increase of wealth, and religion is either cast ofi" or neglected and

made an underhng.

[2,] The world is the great let and impediment to our obedience.

142 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

In the first epistle of John, chap, v., in the context to the words that I

am now explaining, ver. 2, 3, it is said, ' By this we know that we love

the children of God,when we love God, and keep his commandments ;

for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and. his

commandments are not grievous.' Then it followeth, ver. 4, 'For

whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world,' &c. So Titus ii. 11,

12, ' For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to

all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we

should liv^e soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' The

one must be done that the other may be done. We shall soon be

tempted to make a breach upon righteousness, sobriety, or godliness

if we do not labour to overcome the world. So Ps. cxix. 36, ' Incline

my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness,'

[3.] This victory over the Vv'orld distinguisheth the spiritual from

the animal life. The world of mankind is distinguished into two

sorts — some that live the animal life, and some that live the spiritual

life. They that live the animal life are such as only behave themselves

merely as living creatures, or as a wiser sort of beasts, and the comfort

of their life is only kept up by the good things of this world, land,

heritages, honours, pleasures, riches ; and so reason is subjected ta

sense, all their contrivance is for the flesh. But the spiritual and

divine life is supported by the comforts of the Spirit and the foresight of

eternal joys in the world to come, and so reason is raised and subli-

mated by faith. These two lives are distinguished : John iii. 6, ' That

which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit

is Spirit ; ' 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15, ' But the natural man receiveth not the

things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him ; neither

can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned : but he that

is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man;'

and Jude 19, ' These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having

not the Spirit.' Now the more we live this spiritual life, the more

thorough christians we are. Another kind of spirit cometh upon a

man, he liveth as a man of another world ; he can bear up when the

outward and animal life is exposed to the greatest difficulties, 2 Cor,

iv. 16 ; he fetcheth his solace and comfort from those great and glorious

things which are kept for him in heaven. It is a mighty thing to have

this spirit of faith.

[4.] We cannot hold out with Christ whilst any temporal and

sensitive thing lieth too near the heart : 1 Tim. vi. 10, ' For the love of

money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have

erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many

sorrows,' and 2 Tim. iv. 10, ' Demas hath forsaken us, having loved

this present world.' The devil hath them in a string, and we are

easily taken again, though we seem to make some escape from him.

3. Faith is the grace that is employed in overcoming the world. It

is not only said to be a means of overcoming, but the victory itself ;

for it is the nature of faith. There are terms in it as in other graces ;

it is a recess from the world, and an access to God, a drawing off the

heart from things visible and temporal to those which are invisible and

eternal. How doth faith overcome the world ?

[1.] As it is an assent to God's word, and chiefly to the promises of

SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3. 143

the gospel. Now this strong and firm assent doth prepossess the mind

with the glory of the world to come : Heb. xi. 26, ' Moses had an eye

to the recompense of reward ; ' and 2 Cor. iv, 18, ' We look not to the

things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; ' and Heb.

xi. 1, ' Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things

not seen.' By this sight and view of heavenly things our esteem of the

world is abated, so by consequence the force of the temptation. Alas !

whatever this world offeretli must be left on this side the grave, pomp,

pleasure, estate : 1 Tim. vi. 7, ' For we brought nothing into this world,

and it is certain we can carry nothing out.' Here we lust for greatness,

but death soon endeth the quarrel. In the grave no difference is to be

discerned between rich and poor, both are aliiie obnoxious to rottenness

and corruption ; but faith persuadethus.of better things : Heb. xi. 13,

' These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having

seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them,

and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth,'

[2.] As it is a consent. It causeth us to surrender ourselves to Christ's

discipline, or that religion which wholly draweth us off from this world

to the world to come. Its purpose and drift is that we may deny our-

selves, bear the cross, and follow him. This we promise in baptism :

1 Peter iii. 21, ' Baptism saveth us (not the putting away the filthiness

of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the

resurrection of Jesus Christ.' The spirit of our religion is not the

spirit of the world : 1 Cor. ii. 12, 'Now we have received not the spirit

of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the

things that are freely given to us of God.'

[3.] As it is a dependence and trust in Christ's power and sufficiency

to maintain you, and defend you safe, till you are brought home to God.

He died for this end : Gal. i. 4, ' Who gave himself for our sins, that

he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will

of God and our Father.' He intercedeth for us to the Father for this

end : John xvii. 15, ' I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of

the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil' He over-

came the world in his own person for this end, not only to encourage

us, but to enable us by his example : John xvi. 33, ' These things I

have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace ; in the world

ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the

world.' He sendeth his Spirit into our hearts to preserve us against

the assaults of the devil, the world, and the flesh : 1 John iv. 4, ' Ye

are of God, little children, and have overcome them ; because greater

is he that is in you than he that is in the world.' And because eveiy

state of life is thick-set with temptations, he reneweth his influence

upon us: Phil. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ which

strengthens me.' He had before spoken of carrying an equal mind in

all conditions ; Christ enabled him as well as taught him this content-

ment.

Well, then, reckon the growth of your faith by the exercise of your

mortification and weanedness from the world, rather than by strong

confidence of your good estate or highflown joys and comforts. The

comforts of the Spirit will not be tasted by an unmortified worldly

heart. Most men's confidence cometh from their security and mind-

144 SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

lessness of these things. The comforts are more suspicious when the

mortification is a sure note.

Sevenilily, The seventh property of faith is quieting the heart against

fears and doubts, and waiting on God. I join these two things to-

gether because the scripture doth : Lam iii. 26, ' It is good that a man

should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of God.' But we

must handle them asunder.

1, Waiting. Sense is all for present satisfaction, but faith can tarry

God's leisure till these good things which we do expect do come in

hand : Isa. xxviii. 16, 'He that believeth shall not make haste.' Men

that cannot tarry for relief will yield up a town upon the basest terms.

The children of God were always forced to eat their words when they

spoke in haste : Ps. xxxi. 22, ' For I said in my haste, I am cut off

from before thine eyes; nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my

supplication when I cried unto thee ; ' and Ps. cxvi. 11, \* I said in my

haste, All men are liars.' But where faith and hope is there is patience:

Kom. viii. 25, ' If we hope for what we see not, then do we with patience

wait for it ; ' James v. 7, 8, ' Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the

coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious

fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the

early and latter rain. Be ye also patient ; stablish your hearts, for the

coming of the Lord draweth nigh.' Unbelief leapeth overboard on the

first danger. Impatience and precipitation is the cause of all mischief.

What moved the Israelites to make the golden calf, but impatience in

not waiting for IMoses till he came down from the Mount, where he

was with God? What made Saul to offer sacrifice, but want of

patience till Samuel came ? 1 Sam. xiii. 8-10, ' He tarried seven days,

according to the set time that Samuel had appointed. But Samuel

came not to Gilgal, and the people were scattered from him. And Saul

said, Bring hither a burnt- offering to me, and peace-offerings; and he

offered the burnt-ofifering, and it came to pass that as soon as he had

made an end of offering the burnt-oflfering, behold Samuel came,' &c.

What made the bad servant to smite his fellow-servant, and to eat and

drink with the drunken, Mat., xxiv. 40, but this, ' My Lord delayeth his

coming ? ' Hasty men are loath to be kept long in doubtful suspense.

The voluptuous cannot wait their time, when they shall have pleasures

at God's right hand for evermore, therefore take up with present

delights, like those that cannot tarry till the grapes be ripe, but eat

them sour and green. Solid everlasting pleasures they cannot wait for,

therefore choose the pleasures of sin that are for a season. A covetous

man will wax rich in a day, cannot tarry the leisure of God's provi-

dence : Prov. XX. 21, 'An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the

beginning, but the end thereof shall not be blessed.' The ambitious

man will not stay till God gives crowns and honours in his kingdom.

All revolts and apostacies from God proceed hence ; they cannot wait

for God's help, and tarry the fulfilling of his promises, but finding

themselves pressed and destitute, the flesh, which is tender and delicate,

groweth impatient. It is tedious to suffer for a while, but they do not

consider it is more tedious to suffer for evermore. Thence come mur-

murings and unlawful attempts, stepping out of God's way. An impetu-

ous river is always troubled and thick, so is a precipitated impatient

spirit, out of order, and ready for a snare.

SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3. 145

2. Quieting the heart against doubts, fears, and cares. By a growu

faith thoughts are established : Prov. xvi. 3, ' Commit thy works unto

the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established/ Fire well kindled

casteth the least smoke. We have firm ground to stand upon, there-

fore we must not reel to and fro in a doubtful agitation of mind :

James i. 6-8, 'Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that

wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed ;

for let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.

A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' Faith fixetli the

heart against fears : Ps. cxii. 7, ' He shall not be afraid of evil tidings ;

his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord ; ' Isa. xxvi. 3, ' Thou wilt keep

him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth

in thee ; ' Eom. v. 1, ' Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace

with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ; ' Phil. iv. 7, ' And the peace

of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and

minds through Christ Jesus ; ' Kom, iv. 20, ' Abraham staggered not at

the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving

glory to God ; ' and Mat. vi. 30, ' Wherefore if God so clothe the grass

of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall

he not much more clothe you, ye of little faith ! ' so Mat. viii, 26,

' He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, ye of little faith ! ' The

weak are mated with every difficulty : Mat. xiv. 31, '0 thou of little

faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? ' Ps. xlii. 5, 'Why art thou cast

down, my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope

thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.'

Well, then, here is a sure note of a grown faith, the more we can quiet

GUI-selves in the promises of God, and wait his leisure for their accom-

plishment.

YOL. xvn.

SERMON UPON MATTHEW VIII. 5-10.

And ivhen Jesus ivas entered info Capernaum, there came unto htm a

centurion, beseeching him, and saymg, Lord, my servant lieth at

home sick of the palsy, grievously afflicted. And Jesus saith

unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion ansioered

and said, Lord, I am not loorthy tJiat thou shouldest come under

my roof; hut speak theivord only, and my servant shall he healed.

For L am a man under authority, having soldiers under me : and

I say to this man. Go, and he goeth ; and to another, Come, and

he cometh ; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When

Jesus heard it, he mar-veiled, and said to them that followed.

Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not

in Israel. — Mat. viii. 5-10.

I COME now to the instances of a grown faith, and begin with the faith-

of the centurion ; and that deservedly, for —

1. Christ owneth it as great faith : ver. 10, \* I have not found so

great faith, no, not in Israel ;' that is, a faith so ripe and mature, and

that in a military man and an heathen.

2. Because he marvelled at it. In ordinary cases wonder is a fruit

of ignorance. When we are ignorant of a thing, or a thing exceedeth

our capacity or apprehension, we wonder at it. But this cannot be

imagined in Christ, for he knoweth what is in man, and could not be

surprised, being the author of this faith. Therefore some interpret it

of some external gesture of wondering, which he used to commend the

centurion's faith. Why not the passion of wonder itself ? for we won-

der at things strange and unusual though we be not ignorant of them ;

and Christ would discover all our sinless infirmities ; therefoi-e this

showeth it was a remarkable thing. We read that twice Christ

wondered ; once here, and another time, Mark vi. 6, ' And he mar-

velled because of their unbelief.'

3. Because he was the first-fruits of the gentiles : ver. 11, 12, ' And

I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall

sit down willi Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into utter darkness ;

there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' This was the first

occasion which Christ took to 'speak of the rejection of the Jews and

SERMON UPON MATTHEW VIII. 5-10. 147

the calling of the gentiles. This man was a Konian and an heathen,

but it seemeth had gotten some knowledge of the true God and the

true religion ; and though he were not a proselyte, yet the Jews gave

him this testimony, Luke vii. 5, \* He loveth our nation, and hath built

us a synagogue ; ' and indeed we read nothing but well of him. The

very errand that brought him to Christ was care of his servant, and

looking out for cure for him. Many have no more care of their

servants than they have of their horses and oxen ; but this man was of

another temper, good to the Jews, good in all his relations. Now, that

we may profit by this example, let us consider these three things — (1.)

What was his faith, and wherein the greatness of it lay ; (2.) How

this faith was bi-ed and begotten in him ; (3.) The efi'ects and fruits

of it, or how it discovered itself,

I. The nature of his faith. It was a firm persuasion that all power

and authority was eminently in Christ, and that he could do what he

pleased. The great end of Christ in all his miracles was to discover

himself to be the Son of God, and one in whom the divine nature and

power resided,' and so by consequence that true Messiah and Saviour

of the world. This was Peter's confession of faith : Mat. xvi. 16,

' Thou ai't Christ, the Son of the living God ; ' the promised Messiah,

the anointed Saviour of the world. And with Peter all the rest of the

disciples join: John vi. 69, 'We believe, and are sure, that thou art

that Christ, the Son of the living God.' This the Samaritans, being

convinced and converted, confessed also : John iv. 42, ' We know that

this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world,' This Martha

acknowledges : John xi. 27, ' She saith unto him, Yea, Lord, I believe

that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the

world.' This was it which the apostles preached: Acts xiii. 23, 'Of

this man's seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel

a saviour, Jesus.' This they required of all whom they converted to

the christian faith : Acts viii. 37, ' I believe that Je.sus Christ is the

Son of God.' Now this the centurion cometh off roundly with, being

firmly persuaded of a divine power and authority in Christ ; for he

ascribeth an omnipotency to his word, and reasoneth it out notably :

' Speak but the word, and my servant shall be healed ; ' ver. 8, 9, ' For

I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me ; and I say to

this man. Go, and he goeth ; and to another, Come, and he cometh ;

and to my servant. Do this, and he doeth it.' Here then was the

greatness of his faith.

Object. You will say then. All have great faith, for all the christian

world professeth this truth that Jesus is the Son of God, papists and

protestants, carnal and renewed ; the rabble of nominal christians as

well as the seriously godly are of this opinion that Jesus is the Son

of God and the Saviour of the world.

Ans. 1. Distingue iempora — You must distinguish of the times

In that age there was no human reason to believe this truth. Anti-

quity was against it, and therefore, when Paul preached Jesus, they

said, ' He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods,' Acts. xvii. 18.

Authority was against it : 1 Cor. ii. 8, ' Which none of the princes of

this world knew, for had they known it they would not have crucified

the Lord of glory.' Authority, not only civil, but ecclesiastical, was

148 SEUMON UrON MATTHEW VIII. 5-10.

tigainst it : Acts iv. 11, ' This is the stoue which was set at nought of

you builders.' The universal consent of the habitable world was

against it; only a small handful of contemptible people owned him:

Luke xii. 32, ' Fear not, little flock,' /Mi.Kpov ttoI/jlviov. At that time

it was the critical point, the hated truth, that the carpenter's son

should be owned as the son of God. Those bleak winds that blow in

our backs, and thrust us onward to believe, blew in their faces, and

drove them from it ; those very reasons which move us to own Christ

moved them to reject him. For many ages the name of Christ hath

been in request and honour, but then it was a despised way. For meu

to lay aside their old religion, and temples, and altars, and ceremonies,

and rights of worship, for the new way of Jesus of Nazareth, never

heard of before, born of a Jewish woman, living in a mean way, cruci-

fied like a malefactor, and dead and buried ; that he should be owned

us the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, what could be to

appearance more unreasonable ? Alas ! what should we have done, if

we had been put to encounter with these difficulties and prejudices?

And no sooner did any man own this truth, but he was presently

exposed to all manner of troubles and persecutions, brought before

magistrates, tortured, murdered by all the cruel deaths that could be

devised ; and all this to be endured upon the hopes of an unseen world.

Therefore then it was an undoubted truth : 1 John v. 1, ' Whosoever

Ijelieveth that Jesus is the Son of God is born of God ; ' and 1 John

iv. 2, ' Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the

flesh is of God.' Nay, somewhat less than faith and great faith. At

liis first appearance a certain persuasion, impressed upon the soul by

the Spirit of God, of the divine power and all-sufficiency of Christ, so

as to repair to him for help, was faith and great faith ; when the veil

of his human nature and infirmities did not keep the eye of faith from

seeing him to have a divine power, though they could not unriddle all

the mysteries about his person and office, this was accepted for saving

faith.

2. The speculative belief of this truth was not sufiicient then, no

more than it is now, but the practical improvement. Grant that truth,

that Jesus is the Son of God, and other things will follow, as that we

must obey his laws, and depend upon his promises, and make use of his

])ower, and trust ourselves in his hands ; otherwise the bare acknowledg-

ment was not sufficient. If a man had at that time with some kind of

belief owned Christ as the Son of God, and yet could not overcome the

shame and fear of the world, he would not have been accepted ; for it

is said, 1 John v. 5, \* Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that

believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.' Unless that efiect followed,

the belief was vain. Therefore it is said, John ii. 23-25, ' Many

believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did. But

Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,

and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was

in man.' Christ knew the inside of men, and therefore knew this faith

was unlikely to bear any stress, or hold out against temptations. Men

might be convinced of some excellency and divine power in Christ, and

)'et remain unconverted. So Acts viii., Simon Magus believed in Christ,

yet remained in the ■' gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity.' So we

SERMON UPON MATTHEW VIII. 5-10. 149

read again, John viii. 30, 31, 'As he spake these words, many believed

on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him. If ye

continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.' Some are his

disciples in show, not truly and really, being not settled and rooted in

the faith. So it is noted, John xii. 42, 43, ' Nevertheless among the

chief rulers also many believed on him ; but because of the pharisees

they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue ;

for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.' They

had faith, but it was too weak to encounter temptations ; they were too

tender of their reputation, lest they should be despised, and turned out

of their places for deserting the old way wherein they were bred. But

none of this can be imputed to our centurion, whose faith Christ

approved and rewarded ; for in contemplation of this faith the cure

was wrought : ver. 13. ' And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy

way ; and as thou hast believed, so be it unto thee,' And he venturetli

the credit he had with his nation ; and though the particular address

concerned not him, but his servant, yet he maketh an open acknowledg-

ment of Christ,

II. How was this faith wrought and bred in him ?

I answer — The groundwork was laid in his knowledge of the omni-

potency and power of God, and his acquaintance with the scriptures of

the Old Testament, though he were not a professed Jew. This prepared

for his faith in Christ ; the report or hearing was the ground of faith :

Isa. liii. 1, 'Who hath believed our report? ' He had heard by fame

of his excellent doctrine: Mat. vii. 29, ' That he taught as one having

authority, and not as the scribes.' And he had heard the rumour of

his miracles, more particularly the late instance of curing the leper,

which was notorious and public ; for Christ biddeth him ' show Inmself

to the priests,' Mat. viii. 4 ; and also the miracle in recovering the ruler's

son, an instance near, which was done in time before this : Jolm iv.

46, 47, ' And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at

Capernaum ; and he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into

Galilee, and he went unto him, and besought him that he would come

down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.' By all wdiich

he was moved to ascribe the omni{)Otency of God, which he knew before,

to Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God can bless slender motives to a will-

ing heart ; and there is a readiness in holy souls to believe sooner and

easier than others : Acts xvii. 11, ' These were more noble than those of

Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind,

and searched the scriptures whether these things were so or no.' They

were not light of belief, for they searched the scriptures ; yet they were

more ready to believe than perverse and prejudiced persons, irpodvixoi.

When there is sufficient evidence, they can hold out no longer. Thus

the Spirit of God blessed the knowledge of this centurion, and the

rumours that were brought to him of Christ's doctrine and miracles.

III. The effects or fruits of it, or how it discovered itself.

1. In that he applieth himself to Christ. They that believe in Christ

will come to him, and put him upon w^ork, whilst others prize his name

but neglect his office. A gracious heart will find occasions and oppor-

tunities of acquaintance with Christ, if not for themselves yet for others ;

for when they have heai'd of him, they cannot keep from him. Faith

150 SERMON UPON MATTHEW VIII. 5-10.

never wants an errand to the throne of grace ; either necessity brings us

thither, or delight. Christ inviteth us to come for what he hath to

give : Mat. xi. 28, ' Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy

laden, and I will give you rest' He is angry that we will not come :

John V. 40, ' And ye will not come to me that ye may have life.' If

we be backward, he sendeth afflictions upon ourselves and families :

Hosea v. 15, ' In their affliction they will seek me early.' Surely it is

a delight to him to do his office in helping distressed creatures, or else

he would never have taken it upon him. The elect shall be brought

to him upon one occasion or another, and he will kindly receive them:

John vi. 37, ' All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and he

that Cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' An apoplexy fallen on

a beloved servant bringeth this centurion to Christ. Well, then, since

Christ is ' able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him,'

Heb. vii. 25, let us not neglect the occasions of coming to him, but get

nearer to God by repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Would

Christ stoop so low as to take our nature and purchase us with his blood,

and be strange to us when we come for the fruits of his purchase and

his mercy, to help us and ours?

2. That he accounteth misery an object proper enough for mercy to

work upon. The centurion came to him, snying, ' Lord, my servant

lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented,' ver. 6 ; that is,

grievously affected with the disease. Alas ! what can we bring to

Christ but sins and sicknesses ? Justice seeketh a meet object, for it

giveth to every one what is due, but mercy only seeketh a fit occasion.

It doth not consider what is deserved, but what is desired and wanted.

Etiam si sim indignus, sum tamen indigens, saith Romeranius — I am

not worthy, but I am needy. The more affected we are with our misery,

the fitter for Christ's mercy : Ps. ix. 18, ' The needy shall not always

be forgotten.' The more hope we have, the more we are sensible of

our need : Ps. xl, 17, ' But I am poor and needy, yet the Loi'd thinketh

upon me.' Faith giveth us this ground of hope, that misery is a motive

to God's pity. Thoug'n we have nothing within us or without us to

commend us to Christ, yet he will not despise the miserable and the

needy, and they shall not perish who in the sense of that need repair to

him. God bringeth all-sufficiency to the covenant, we bring nothing

but all-necessity ; as the widow was only to provide empty vessels ;

the oil failed not till the vessels failed. Christ's bowels yearn towards

the distressed.

3, When Christ offereth to come and heal him, ver. 7, 'I will come

and heal him' (which was the great condescension of the Son of God

to a poor servant), see how the centurion taketh it, ver. 8, 'He answered

and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shonldest come under my

roof.' Humility is a fruit of faith. A sound believer hath an high

esteem of Christ and a low esteem of himself, and the one breedeththe

other; they see Christ so excellent and themselves so vile, in regard of

past sin and present infirmities. What ! the Son of God come to the

house of an ethnic, and one that hath lived in idolatry and the worship

of false gods ! The godly are ever acknowledging their vileness and

baseness, and indignity and unworthiness, when they have to do witli

God and Christ : Gen. xviii. 27, ' And Abraham answered, and said,

SERMON UPON MATTHEW VIII. 5-10. 151

Behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am

but dust and ashes;' 2 Sam. vii, 18, ' Then went David in, and sat

before the Lord, and ho said, Who am I, Lord God, and what is my

house, that thou hast brought me hitherto ? ' Gen. xxxii. 10, ' I am

not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth whicli

thou hast showed unto thy servant.' So Mat. iii. 11, ' Whose shoes L

am not worthy to bean' So when Christ had let out a beam of his

xiivinity in that great draught of fishes, Peter said, ' Lord, depart from

me, for I am a sinful man,' Luke v. 8. The prodigal : Luke xv. 19,

\* I am not worthy to be called thy son.' So 1 Cor. xv. 9, ' I am the

least of the apostles, and am not meet to be called an apostle.' So

though the Jews had said of our centurion, Lord, go to him, for ' he is

worthy,' Luke vii. 4 : yet he saith of himself, ' Lord, I am not worthv

that thou shouldest come under my roof.'

Quest. Why are true and sound believers so ready to profess their

imworthiness ?

Ans. They have a deeper sense of God's majesty and greatness than

others have, and also a more broken-hearted sense of their own vileness

by reason of sin. They have a more affective light and sight of things ;

God is another thing to them than before, so is sin and self. The more

unworthy they are in their own apprehension, the more is God and

■Christ exalted. Faith is an emptying grace, and the best men have

lowest thoughts of themselves. A proud man thinketh all things due

to him, but an humble man nothing.

4. He is content with Christ's word without his bodily presence :

' Speak but the word, and my servant shall be healed.' God's word is

enough to a believer ; he doth not limit him to a certain way of work-

ing as if there were no way of working but that way only ; that is a sign

of weakness of faith ; Ps. Ixxviii. 41, ' They limited the Holy One of

Israel.' We are to depend upon him and submit to him, and not pre-

scribe how and when he should help us, nor straiten and confine his

power to such or such means. Compare John iv. 47, 48, with this cen-

turion : ' A certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum' (the

town where this centurion was in garrison), he again and again ' be-

sought Jesus that he would come down and heal his son, for he was at

the point of death. And Jesus said, Except ye see signs and wonders

ye will not believe.' The cure must be done in their way : ver. 49, ' The

nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.' Christ

refuseth to go to the ruler's house, being twice entreated, but here he

ofi'ereth to come to visit this poor servant ; but the centurion saith,

' Speak but the word ; ' he was loath to give him this trouble to come to

his house ; one word will as easily cure him as if he come personally ; he

doth not tie his virtue to his bodily presence, but ascribeth all to his word.

God made the world by a word, sustaineth the world by a word, therefore

the centurion only desireth a word. There is a threefold word of God —

[1.] Verhum scriptum, his written word, his promise, and that is

the food of faith ; and a believer can make a feast to himself in the

promises when he is seemingly starved in the creature.

[2.] There is vei'hum henedictionis, his word of blessing. So Mat.

iv. 4, ' Man liveth not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth

out of the mouth of God.' It is quoted out of Deut. viii. 3. In the

152 SERMON UPON MATTHEW VIII. 5-10.

wilderness, where they had neither bread nor water, they were not

famished with want, nor compelled to use unlawful means for their

relief, God blessed manna. He that provided forty 3^ears for such an

huge multitude in the desert will not be wanting to his own Son who

had fasted but forty days. It is not bread, but the blessing of God

that sustaineth us. If they reserved aught of the manna till morning, it

putrified and stank ; yet the same manna, kept by the commandment

of God, was sweet and good in the Ark. God gave his blessing to the

one, and not to the other.

[3.] There is verhum potenticB the word of his power : ' He spake,

and it was done,' Ps. xxxiii. 9. So here the centurion desireth a word.

The word made the world, and the word upholdeth it : Heb. i. 3,

' Upholding all things by the word of his power,' The powerful word

of God doth all in the world : \* He sendeth forth his commandment

upon earth; his word runneth very swiftly,' Ps. cxlvii. 15. So Ps.

cvii. 20, 'He sent his word, and healed them;' it is dictum factum

with God. So ' the word of the Lord tried them.' Ps. cv. 19 ; that is,

his power ; there is a powerful commanding word, which is enough.

5. Here is Christ's power and dominion over all events, and events

that concern us and ours, fully acknowledged, and that is a great point

gained : ' He is Lord both of the dead and living,' Eom. xiv. 9.

Health and sickness are at his command. So Isa. xlv. 7, ' I form the

light, and create darkness ; I make ])eace, and create evil ; I the Lord

do all these things.' So Job xxxiv. 29, 'When he giveth quietness,

who then can make trouble ? and when he hideth his face, who then

can behold him ? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man

only ? ' Here is a clear confession of Christ's omnipotency and sove-

reign dominion. This sovereign dominion is backed with omnipotency,

and extendeth to all things. To devils: Mark ix. 25, ' I charge thee

come out of him, thou dumb and deaf spirit.' To sickness : Luke iv.

39, \* He rebuked the fever, and it left her.' Christ can speak to the

leprosy: ' I will ; be thou clean,' Mat. viii. 3. To the winds and seas:

' Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the seas, and there was a

great calm,' Mat. viii. 26, 27. To death: 'Lazarus, come forth,' John

xi. 43. To nothing, as if it had ears and reason : Rom. iv. 17, ' And

calleth those things which are not as though they were.' To the fishes

in the sea : Jonah ii. 10, ' The Lord spake to the fish, and it vomited

up Jonah upon the dry land.' Thus all creatures have an obediential

ear, to hearken to what God saith, and God can make use of them

according to his own pleasure ; yea, he can speak to sinners, who are

the most stubborn and obstinate pieces of the creation : Ezek. xvi. 6,

' I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live ; ' Eph. v. 14,

^Wherefore he saith. Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the

dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' Every creature is a servant of

omnipotency, and doth suspend or exercise its natural operations as

God biddetli it. Christ hath this power as God and heir of all things.

[1.] Let us see what is this all-sufficient power and dominion of

Christ. It lieth in three things — (1.) A right of making and framing

anything as he will, in any manner as it pleaseth him : Jer. xviii. 6,

\* Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O

house of Israel.' (2.) A right and power of possessing things so made.

SERMON UPON MATTHEW VIII. 5-10. 153

all is his ; they are rebels that said, Ps. xii. 4, ' Our tongues are our

own; who is lord over us?' (3.) A right of using, governing, and

disposing of all things so possessed : Mat. xx. 15,' 'Is it not lawful for

me to do what I will with my own ? ' whether men or any other

creature in the world.

[2] This dominion and all-sufficient power is a great stay to the

souls of true believers, to cause them with comfort to trust themselves

and all their affairs in the hands of Christ. We have no reason to

doubt of his care, protection, and merciful disposal of us ; and if poor,

sick, and desolate, you may go to him ; it is in the power of his hands

to help you. (1.) There is no want, but he can easily supply it : Ps.

xxiii. 1, ' The Lord is my shepherd ; I shall not want.' (2.) There is

no pain or suffering, but he can easily mitigate or remove it : Mat. viii.

2, ' Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.'

[3.] There is no danger so great from which he is not able to deliver

thee : Dan. iii. 17, 18, ' If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to

deliver us, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, king : but if

not, be it known unto thee, king, that we will not serve thy gods,

nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up ;' 2 Cor. i. 10,

' Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver ; in whom

we trust that he will yet deliver us.' Where can we be so safe as in

the love and covenant of such an almighty saviour? Get but this

imprinted upon your hearts, and it will beget a strong and steadfast

confidence in him.

6. He reasoneth from the strict discipline observed in the Eoman

armies, where there was no disputing of commands or questioning why

and wherefore : ' I am a man under authority, having soldiers under

me ; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth ; and to another, Come,

and he cometh ; and to my servant. Do this, and he doeth it,' ver. 9.

Where he compareth person with person : I am a man, thou a God ;

condition with condition, a subordinate officer with Christ the supreme

Lord ; he knew what it was to obey and to have power over others ;

power with power, his power over soldiers and servants with Christ's

command over all events, health and sickness, life and death. Keason-

ing for God and his promises is a great advantage. We are naturally

acute in reasoning against faith, but when the understanding is quick

and ready to invent arguments to encourage faith, it is a good sign.

Use. Go you and do likewise. From the example of the centurion

let me encourage you —

1. To readiness of believing : James iii. 17, ' The wisdom that is

from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated.'

This is opposite to that slowness of heart to believe which we read of,

Luke xxiv. 25, ' fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the

prophets have spoken.' These are more receptive and easy to enter-

tain a doctrine than others : John. vii. 17, ' If any man do his will, he

shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.' The sincere and

renewed need less ado to convince them. There is a light credulity :

Prov. xiv. 15, ' The simple believeth every word ; ' and there is the

readiness of a sincere mind to embrace the truth. We are to captivate

our understandings to the obedience of faith, but not every fancy, lest we

be like children, ' tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind

154 SKRMON UPON MATTHEW VIII. 5-10.

of doctrine,' Eph. iv. 14. No ; a christian must not be like a reed

shaken witli the wind, nor believe every spirit ; but yet, where the

truth is sufficiently evidenced, we must embrace it. Most of our hesi-

tancy in religion comes not so much from the conflict between our

light and the doubts of our mind, as from the conflict between our

light and lusts, which maketh us irresolute ; but a sincere heart soon

overcoraeth the difficulty.

2. To represent our necessity to Christ, and refer the event to him,

to commit and submit all to him. There is an all-sufficiency of power,

and infinite pity arid goodness, that we need not trouble ourselves about

the event. Submission before the event is faith, as after it is patience.

Tliis is true faith, in such cases as the centurion came about, to refer

all to Christ.

3. To be humble. In all our commerce with Christ, ftiith must

produce a real humility. Faith is most high when the heart is most

low: Luke xviii. 11-14, 'The pharisee stood and prayed, saying, God,

I thank thee I am not as other men are, &c. I fast twice a week, I

give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar oft",

would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his

breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner ! I tell you, this man

went down to his house justified rather than the other ; for every one

that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself

shall be exalted.' The one challenged a debt, the other begged a favour.

Humble supplications to God become us better than proud expostula-

tions.

4. To meditate often on the sovereign dominion of Christ, and his

power over all things that fall out in the world. To keep us from

warping and running to unlawful shifts, God proponndeth his all-

sufficiency to our faith when we enter into covenant with him : Gen.

xvii. 1, ' I am the Almighty God ; walk before me, and be thou perfect.'

He hath power enough to help, defend, and reward us ; we need not

seek elsewhere for a protector or paymaster ; the word of his provi-

dence is enough. He can heal our diseases, supply our necessities, or

bless a little, as he did the pulse to the captive children : Dan. i 15,

\* Their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the

children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.'

SERMON UPON MATTHEW XV. 21-28.

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into t7te coasts of Tyre and

Sidon. And behold, a ivoman of Canaan came out of the same

coasts, and cried unto him, saying. Have mercy on me, Lord,

thou Son of David ; my daughter is grievously vexed ivith a devil.

But he ansiuered her not a luord. And his disciples came and

besought him, saying, Send her aivay ; for she crieth after us.

But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep

of the house of Israel. Then came she and icorshipped him, saying,

Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take

the children's bread and cast it to dogs. And she saith, Truth,

Lord : yet the dogs eat of the crumbs lohich fall from their

masters table. And Jesus answered and said unto her, woman,

great is thy faith : be it unto thee even as thou ivilt. And her

daughter loas made whole from that very hour. — Mat. xv. 21-28.

We come now to the second instance of a great and grown faith ;

this ought to be considered by us. In the centurion we had an

instance of a reasoning faith, now of a wresthng faith — faith wrestling,

with grievous temptations, but at length obtaining help from God.

We ought to consider this for these reasons —

1. Because Christ pronounceth it to be great faith, and so proper

for our imitation, ' woman, great is thy faith.' It is the foith of a

woman ; a woman not proselyted or embodied with the visible people

of God at that time ; a woman whose faith is approved and commended

by Christ. And surely this should provoke every christian heart to be

furnished with a like faith.

2. To instruct us that the life and exercise of faith is not easy, but

will meet with great discouragements. We must reckon of trials, and

iirepare for them. They that leap into profession, and do not count

the charges, will soon find their rash confidence disappointed. They

may meet with rebukes from men. David's enemies said, 'There. is no

help for him in God,' Ps. iii. 2. Or from mistaking friends, as those

that would not have Christ hindered in his passage : Mark x. 48,

' Many charged him that he should hold his peace ; but he cried the

more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me ! ' But this

woman seemeth to be checked and disappointed by Christ himself, who

at first answereth her not a word, and then seemingly defeateth her

166 SERMON UPON MATTHEW XV. 21-28.

confidence. To wrestle, not only with temporal discouragements, but

disappointments of our hope in God, is the sorest trial. The blind

man wrestled with the rebukes of men, but she with the rebukes of

Christ himself. Yea, here is trial upon trial ; she is put back after a

first and second address. Christ, as God, knew the strength of her

faith at first, but 5'et he would exercise her faith to the uttermost ; as

in another miracle it is said, ' He himself knew what be would do, but

this he said to prove him ; 'John vi. 6, ' Whence shall we buy bread,

that so great a company may eat.' Christ loveth to try them with

whom he hath to do, sometimes the weakness, sometimes the strength

of their faith.

3. Because of the success : ver. 28, ' Be it unto thee even as thou

wilt ; and her daughter was made whole from that very hour.' When

faith is sufficiently tried, Christ can hold out no longer. As Joseph's

bowels yearned, and he could not refrain himself : Gen. xlv. 3, ' I am

Joseph ; ' so when the strength of faith is sufficiently discovered, Christ

cannot continue the conflict any longer ; the believer shall have what

he doth desire : Hosea xi. 8, ' Mine heart is turned within me, my

repentings are kindled together; ' and Jer. xxxi. 20, ' Is Ephraim my

dear son ? Is he a pleasant child ? For since I spake against him, I

do earnestly remember him still ; therefore my bowels are troubled for

him. I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.' So Isa.

xl. 1, 2, ' Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God ; speak ye

comfortably to Jerusalem, and say unto her that her warfare is accom-

plished, that her iniquities are pardoned ; for she hath received of the

Lord's hand double for all her sins.' Now it is enough ; let them have

their mercies and their comforts.

In opening this instance, let us consider —

1. The quality of the woman. She is called in Mat. xv. 22, 'a

woman of Canaan ;' in Mark vii. 26, ' a Greek,' a Syrophoenician by

nation. Phoenicia was that country which was inhabited by the relics

of the ancient Canaanites : she was by nation a Phoenician, and by

religion a Greek ; for the term of Jew and Greek distinguished the then

world: Rom. i. 16, ' It is the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew

first, and also to the Greek ; ' and it is as much as Jew and gentile.

She was a devout woman among the gentiles, that, bordering upon

the people of God, was acquainted with the true religion, though she

professed it not.

2. That she was a believer appeareth by her coming to Christ to

cure her daughter, who was bodily vexed with the devil. How she was

acquainted Avith Christ, it is .«aid, Mark vii. 25, 'She heard of him;'

that is, by the rumour of his miracles. And if God blessed rumours,

or the fame of Christ's miracles, we may be ashamed that we do no

more improve a clear word. And not by her coming only, but also by

the title she gave to Christ ; her calling him, ' The Son of David,' ver.

22. This was the solemn name of the true ]iromised Messiah. So the

blind men, Mat. xx. 30, ' Have mercy on us, Lord, thou Son of David.\*

So Bartimeus (if it be a distinct story), Mark x. 47, ' Jesus, thou Son

of David, have mercy on me.' ' Son of David' was the common title

by which our Saviour was called and known among the Jews : Mat.

ix. 27, 'Thou Son of David, have mercy on us ;' because Christ was

SERMON UPON MATTHEW XV. 21-2S 157

to be horn of the seed and posterity of David: Jer. xxiii. 5, ' Behold,

the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise up unto David a right-

eous branch ; ' Rom. i. 3, ' Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lo;d,

who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.' The

Messiah was to come as a king, to rule and feed his church, and there-

fore he is called sometimes ' David' in the prophets ; and in the days

of his flesh, in the addresses that were made to him, ' Son of David.'

So that in this she showcth her faith. There is in faith knowledge,

assent, and affiance, and all three are in this woman's faith. That

the Messiah was to be the Son of David, there is her knowledge.

There was her assent, that Jesus was the Christ or true Messiah, for

she applieth the title to him upon the rumours of his miracles. Then

there was her affiance and dependence in this address to him, as one

tliat was able and willing to help all distressed creatures ; and that

she renewed her suit after so many repulses showed a notable confidence

in his mercy and power.

3. The greatness and strength of her faith. To set forth that we

must consider — (1.) Her trials and temptations ; (2.) Her victory over

them, by her importunity, humility, and resolved confidence.

First, Her temptations ; they are four —

1. Christ's silence, ' He answered her not a word,' ver. 23.

2. The coldness of the disciples' dealing in her behalf, in the

same verse, ' His disciples besought him, Send her away, for she

crieth after us.'

3. Christ's answer to his disciples, seeming to exclude her out of his

commission, ver. 24, ' He answered and said, I am not sent but to the

lost sheep of the house of Israel.'

4. Her renewed importunity draweth another answer from Christ,

which implieth a contempt of her, or at least a strong reason against

her, ver. 26, ' It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it

unto dogs.' So that you see here are sore trials, multiplied trials ; but

yet she keepeth begging and arguing with Christ till he giveth her

satisfaction.

First, Christ's silence : ver. 23, ' And he answered her not a word.'

It is a great trial to our faith, but such as the people of God usually

meet withal. It is sad to go to a dumb oracle, and get not a word

from God ; so here. What ! not a word from a merciful and gracious

Saviour, who was so ready to hear and help upon all occasions, and to

cure all those that came to him ! But she gets not a word, though

her daughter was grievously tormented by the devil ; a notable temp-

tation to a poor woman, who had heard so much of Christ's power and

compassion towards all those that came to him for relief. He heard

well enough what she asked, but not a word of answer gets she from

him. I will show you, that though Christ love our persons, and dis-

likes not our petitions, but meaneth to grant them, yet for a time he

will seem to take no notice of them.

1. That this is a sore temptation.

2. That it should not yet weaken our faith.

1. That it is a sore temptation appeareth by the complaints of the

saints and servants of God : Lam. iii. 8, ' When I cry and shout, he

shutteth out my prayer ; ' as if God had locked up himself, that their

158 SERMON UPON MATTHEW XV. 21-28.

prayers should not come at him, or find access to him. So ver, 44,

' Thou coverest tliyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass

through ; ' as if God had wrapped up himself in a thick cloud of dis-

pleasure against our sins, that our prayers could find no entrance. So

the spouse : Cant. v. 6, ' I sought him, but I could not find him ; I

called him, but he gave me no answer.' That God should refuse and

reject our prayers is a grievous trial to the faithful, who value com-

munion with God. Nay, this delay may be so long till the cause seem

hopeless : Ps. Ixix. 3, ' I am weary of my crying ; my throat is dried,

mine eyes fail, while I wait for my God.' So Ps. xxii. 2, ' my God,

I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not ; and in the night season, and

am not silent.' And all this while God seenieth to forsake them, nor

to regard the suit, as if he had no respect to their hard condition. To

lose our labour in prayer is one of the saddest disappointments that

we can meet with, when our loud and importunate cries bring no relief

to us. But —

2. It should not weaken our faith ; for God's delay is for his own

glory and our good.

[1.] For his own glory and the beauty of his providence. We read,

John xi. 5, 6, ' Jesus loved Martha, and her sister and Lazarus ; and

when he heard he was sick' (even to death), ' he abode still two daj's

in the same place where he was.' There is little love in that, you will

think, to a sick friend who was ready to die. Martha expostulateth with

liim about it, ver. 21, 'Lord, if thou hadstbeen here, my brother had not

died.' But Christ giveth the true account of it, ver. 40, ' Said I not

unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of

God.' It was more for the glory of God to raise a dead man than to

cure a sick man. So when the disciples were in a storm, Christ made

a show of passing by : Mark vi. 48, ' He cometh unto them, walking

on the sea-side, and would have passed by them.' So Christ delayeth

the woman as to appearance, and denieth her, that the glory and great-

ness of her faith might be more seen. "Iva a-Te^avwur] ttjv ^waUa,

saith Chrysostom, that he might crown the woman as a notable

believer.

[2.] For our good, and to exercise our faith, patience, love, and desire.

(1.) Our faith, to wait and depend upon God for things we see not ;

for faith is a dependence upon God for something that lieth out of

sight. This woman was delayed, but had at last that which she de-

sired ; but first her great faith was discovered.

(2.) Our patience in tarrying God's leisure. His dearest children

are not admitted at the first knock. David saith in three verses, ' I

cried, I cried, I cried,' Ps. cxix. 145-147. Our Lord Jesus prayed

thrice before he got any comfort in his agony : Mat. xxvi. 44, ' And

he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time ; and

then an angel appeared to him from heaven, and strengthened him,'

Luke xxii. 43. Elijah prayed thrice for the dead child ere he got him

to life : 1 Kings xvii. 21, 'And he stretched himself upon the child

three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, Lord my God, I

pray thee let this child's soul return unto him again.' Paul prayed

thrice : 2 Cor. xii. 8, ' For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that

it might depart from me.' The Lord useth the like dispensation to

SEinrON TJPOX MATTHEW XV. 21-28. 159

ns that are their followers : Heb. vi. 12, ' Be followers of them who

through faith and patience inherit the promises.' We are told, Lara,

iii. 26, ' It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for

the salvation of the Lord.' It is bonum honestum et utile. It is our

duty, and it is our profit. Our times are always present with us.

Hungry stomachs must have the meat ere it be sodden or roasted.

We would have our mercies too soon, like the foolish husbandman who

would reap his corn and get it into the barn before it be ripened.

(3.) Our love ; though we be not feasted with felt comforts and

present delights, or bribed with a sensible dispensation, or indulged

with a ready condescension to our requests. God will try the deport-

ment of his children, whether we love hirn or his benefits most;

whether sensible consolations, especially external, be more to us than a

God in covenant : Isa. xxvL 8, ' Yea, in tbe way of thy judgments,

Lord, have we waited for thee.' A child of God will love him for his

judgments and fear him for his mercies. God will try whether we

can rejoice in himself in our greatest wants and destitutions : Hab. iii.

17, 18, 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be

in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall

yield no meat ; the flocks shall be cut ofi" from the fold, and there be

no herd in the stalls ; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the

God of ray salvation.' A resolute dependence on an unseen God is

the power and glory of faith, and a resolute adherence to a withdrawn

God is the vigour of love. Lime, the more water you sprinkle upon it,

the more it burneth. ' Many waters cannot quench love, neither can

the floods drown it,' Cant. viii. 7.

(4.) To enlarge our desires, and put greater fervency into them. A

sack that is stretched out holds the more. Delay increaseth importu-

nity : Mat. vii. 7, ' Ask, seek, knock ; ' the door is kept bolted that we

may knock the harder. The choicest mercies come to us after great

wrestlings. She prayeth, but Christ keepeth silence. Silence is an

answer, and speaketh thus much, Pray on, and continue your praying

still. Though Christ loved the supplicant, and meaneth to grant the

petition, yet at first he answereth her not a word.

Secondly, Her next temptation was from the small assistance she

had from the disciples : ver. 23, ' Send her away, for she crieth after

us.' Interpreters dispute whether this was spoken out of commisera-

tion or impatience. I incline to the former, and the sense is, ' Send her

away by granting her request ; do that for her which she desireth, that

she may be quiet.' But though it were commiseration, yet they spake

too coldly as to her distress, and seem to have a greater respect to

their own trouble than the woman's affliction, that they might not be

troubled with her cries, but they desire for quietness' sake that she

might be despatched one way or another. Many a poor benighted soul

pray themselves, and set others on praying, till they are weary, and

God heareth not, which is a great discouragement to a poor afflicted

creature ; but yet it is but a temptation ; for though man's drop be

soon spent, yet God's ocean of compassions faileth not When they

are troubled, yet importunity is welcome to Christ.

Thirdly, Her next temptation is sorer. Christ seemeth to exclude

her out of liis commission : ver. 24, 'But he answered and said, I am

160 SERMON UPON MATTHEW XV^ 21-28.

Dot sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel/ This was a truth,

for Christ in the days of his flesh was a minister of the circumcision,

Kora. XV. 8. His personal and particular ministry was principally

designed for the people of the Jews ; they were to liave the morning

market of the gospel, and the first handsel of the Redeemer's grace ;

which, by the way, was a rebuke to the Jews that they did no more

prize his ministry and dispensation when this stranger was so impor-

tunate to receive the benefit of it. But, however, it was a great trial

to the woman, as if she were not one of these lost sheep whom Christ

came to seek. When salvation itself refuseth to save us, when Christ

shall in effect say, I am a Saviour, but not unto thee ; thou art not one

of my redeemed ones : this is an amazing thing. Poor believers, when

they are in this conflict, seem to be driven from Christ, not only by

their own misgiving hearts, but the denunciation of his word : they

question their election and the intention of God's grace, whether ever

it were meant to them or no. But this is but a temptation ; we must

not betray our duties by our scruples ; though it be midnight now, we

cannot say it will never be day. Our rule, which we must stick to in

such cases, is, God may do what he pleaseth, I must do what he com-

mandeth. Our necessities are great, and so are Christ's compassions ;

therefore a believing soul must not be put off by groundless fears, nor

must the threatenings of the word drive us from, but to the promise ;

for God opposeth for a while that he may at length give faith the

victory.

Fourthly, when the woman reneweth her suit : ver. 25, 'Then she

came, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.' Yet ver. 26,

' He answered and said. It is not meet to take the children's bread and

cast it to dogs.\* By implication Christ reckoneth her among the dogs;

a grievous word to drop from the mouth of a gracious Saviour. But

when Christ trieth us, he will try us to the quick, and humble us to

the very dust. Our Lord speaketh this according to the common rate

of language among the Jews, who accounted all the heathens as dogs,

and without the covenant. Such as were within the covenant and

pale of grace were holy and consecrated to God ; others who were

without the covenant, because of their false religion, were accounted

profane and unclean. Dogs and sheep were opposed one to another.

The people of Israel are deciphered by the appellation of ' lost sheep ; \*

others are called ' dogs ; ' Rev. xxii. 15, ' Without are dogs,' a term

applied to this day by all oriental people to those whom they count

to be misbelievers. Surely one would think now here were an end of

her faith and address to Christ. No ; the humble soul maketh an

advantage of this: ver. 27, 'Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the

crumbs which fall from their master's table.' Faith is quick to observe

all advantages whereby it may strengthen itself. A dog is allowed to

creep under the children's table, and to feed on what falls down there.

Thus she maketh a seeming rebuke to be a kind of claim and title.

And then Christ can hold out no longer, for he will at length yield,

and will not always hide himself from the seeking soul. They that

wrestle will at length overcome : Mark vii. 29, ' And he said unto her,

For this saying, Go thy way ; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.'

Secondly, Her victory over these temptations. (1.) By her importu-

SERMON UPON MATTHEW XV. 21-28. 161

Dity : (2.) Her humility ; (3.) Her resolved confidence ; all which are

the fruits of great faith.

1. Her importunity. She will not be beaten ofi" by Christ's silence;

but she maketh some advantage of it ; for it is not said, he ' heard her

not a word,' but ' answered her not a word.' Christ may hear his people

when he doth not presently answer them. She seemed to be excluded

out of Christ's commission, but neither this nor reproach of her own con-

dition doth hinder the exercise of her faith, but still she reneweth her

suit, \* Lord, have mercy on me ; Son of David, help me.' The woman

will not be put off praying when Christ seemeth to forbid or not to

regard her pra}'ing. Her daughter was sore vexed, and she must have

help from Christ or none. The more God seemeth to refuse us, the

more instant should we be in prayer, and pursue our suit constantly.

Let Grod answer how he pleaseth ; if he be silent, we must resolve to

follow the suit till we get audience ; if he seem to deny, we must get

ground by denials ; if he rebuke us, we must still make supplications.

Be it a suspension, a seeming denial, a contrary providence, faith will

not give over. To sink under the burden argueth weakness, but it is

strength of faith to wrestle through it. We read of Pherecides, a

Grecian, in a naval fight between his nation and Xerxes, that he held a

boat in which the Persians were fighting, first with hiij right arm, when

that was cut off with his left, when that was cut off with his teeth, and

would not let go his holdfast but with his life. This doth somewhat

represent an importunate soul. This woman, when Christ doth seem to

tm'n away from her and refuse her prayer, yet she prayeth, ' Lord, help

me.' When he reasoneth from his charge, yet still she will come and

worship him. When he putteth her off with the common reproach

which the Jews did cast upon all that were not of their religion, his

doctrines and miracles were children's bread, she turueth a discourage-

ment into an argument, and maketh her claim, ' The dogs eat of the

crumbs that fall from their master's table.' Thus all true believers are

in good earnest ; come what will of it, they are resolved to pray stilL

Thus blind Bartimeus, the more they rebuked him, the more he cried,

Mark x. 48. Faith is like fire, the more it is pent up, the more it

striveth to break out, and worketh effectually in us. We read of

Jacob's wrestling with God : Gen. xxii. 24, ' There wrestled a man

with him until the breaking of the day.' And it is explained, Hosea xii.

3, 4, ' He had power with God ; yea, he had power over the angel, and

prevailed ; he wept, and made supplications to him.' Wrestling souls

that are good at holding and drawing with the Almighty will not let

him go till he bless them. The woman doth not turn her back upon

Christ, but draws the nearer to him the more he seemeth to drive her

away from him, and keepeth arguing with him, and beseeching of him,

till he giveth her satisfaction.

But how shall we do to keep up prayer in the midst of so many dis-

couragements ? A71S. (1.) Our necessity should quicken us ; and (2.)

God's goodness and power should support us. Faith pressed with

need is earnest in prayer, when it is dealing with a God gracious and

powerful ; why should we give over the suit ?

2. Her humility. We read of no murmuring and impatience or

discontent at Christ's carriage. No ; if we will wrestle with God, we must

VOL. xvn. I,

162 SERMON UPON MATTHEW XV. 21-28.

wrestle with prayers and tears, with humble and broken hearts ; there

must be no complaining of God, but to God. The woman doth not

tax Christ as harsh and severe, but only maketh supplication, ' Lord,

have mercy upon me ; Son of David, help me.' It is said, Mat. xv.

25, 'She worshipped him.' But in Mark. vii. 25, it is said, 'She fell

at his feet.' She fell prostrate before him, and owneth the term of

'dog,' that justly she might be accounted so, and maketh it her plea

and claim. Humility is contented to be humbled as deeply as the

Lord pleaseth, but cannot bear this, to be excluded from Christ and

the benefit of his grace. In all faith there is always a deep humility.

When Christ rebuketh her as a dog, she doth not make a murmuring

retort, but an humble plea, that some of the mercy provided for Israel

might be spared to a poor Canaanite, a crumb at least.

3. A resolved faith under our greatest pressures : Job. xv. 14,

' Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him.' As Antisthenes told

his master that taught him philosophy, that he should not find a club

big enough to beat him from him. Faith will not quit its adherence

to God for any difficulty whatsoever ; when God seemeth to quit the

believer, the believer will not quit God, but take him as a friend when

he seemeth to deal as an enemy, and still put a good construction upon

his providence. This resolute adherence is seen in three things —

[1.] An adherence to his way, how little -soever he seemeth to own

it: Ps. xliv. 17, 18, 'AH this is come upon us, yet have we not for-

gotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant : our heart

is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way.'

Sharp affiictions do not discharge us from our duty in professing the

truth ; as our steps must not decline, so not our hearts : Dan. iii. 17,

18, ' Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning

fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, king ; but if

not, be it known unto thee, king, that we will not serve thy gods,

nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.' However God

disposes of us, we must keep to our duty.

[2.] In perseverance in the use of means : Kom. xii. 12, ' Continu-

ing instant in prayer.' We are to use the duty still, though we have

no satisfaction as to the event, and as long as there is life in the duty,

it will come to something at the last : Luke v. 15, ' We have toiled all

night, and have taken nothing ; nevertheless, at thy word we will let

down the net.' It is enough that these means are appointed by God,

and we must use them, though hitherto we have gained little comfort

and success by them.

[3.] In a dependence upon his promises and powerful providence.

The woman sticketh to Christ as only able to help her, though there

was little appearance of any help from him. She runneth not away to

another helper, but worshippeth him, cleaveth to him. Better lie

dead at Christ's feet than die in a state of alienation from him. We

must resolve to be his, though we cannot know that he is ours. No

trouble, how great soever, is a warrant to quit our trust ; and what-

ever disappointment saith to us, it doth not say, put your confidence

elsewhere, or trust no longer in God. This resohite confidence is justi-

fiable upon these grounds.

(1.) His providence will never give his word the lie. Let God do

SERMON UPON MATTHEW XV. 21-28. 163

what he will, they are approved who are approved by his word,

and they are condemned who are condemned by his word : Ps.

Ixxiii. 17, ' When I went into the sanctuary of God, then under-

stood I their end ; ' Job. iii. 3, ' I have seen the foolish taking root ;

but suddenly I cursed his habitation.' And, on the contrary, Ps. iv.

3, ' But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for him-

self ; the Lord will hear when I call unto him ; ' Isa. iii. 10, ' Say ye

to the righteous that it shall be well with him ; for they shall eat of

the fruit of their doings.'

(2.) There is more good-will in his heart than is visible in his deal-

ings. The merciful nature of God should be a support to us, though

we see nothing of the effects of it in his providence : Job. x. 13, ' These

things hast thou hid in thine heart ; I know that it is with thee.' He

speaketh of his favourable inclination to show pity to distressed crea-

tures. We are not able always to reconcile his present dispensations

with his gracious nature yet faith must not quit its holdfast. We

must see what is hid in God's heart, and comfort ourselves with that

favour and mercy which we know to be essential to him. Though,

the mercy and pity be not visible and obvious to sense, the disposition

and inclination abideth in God unchangeable and sure. God is a

merciful God still, and Christ a compassionate Saviour, though the

effects be suspended to try and sharpen our faith.

(3.) Because God loveth to bring light out of darkness, to give the

valley of Achor for a door of hope to ' bring meat out of the eater,

and sweetness out of the strong,' to bring about his people's mercies by

means very improbable and contrary, that he may train us up to hope

against hope. When deliverance is a-coming, it is not always in sight.

Christ at a wedding calls for water when he intended to give wine :

John ii. 7, and here he rebuketh the woman as a dog when he meant to

treat her as a daughter of Abraham.

(4.) When he seemeth to resist and be opposite to his people,

he giveth them secret strength to prevail over him. AYhen Jacob

wrestled with God, it was by God's own strength ; God in Jacob

seemed to overcome God without him, or against him. Was not the

spirit of Christ at work in the heart of this woman all the while he

seemed to be struggling with her ? He never striveth with his servants

but he giveth them suitable strength to the task he imposeth on them :

1 Cor. X. 13, ' God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted

above that you are able : but will with the temptation also make a

way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it ; ' Ps. cxxxviii. 3, ' In the

day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with

strength in my soul.' He heareth not as to deliverance, but yet he

heareth as to support.

(.5.) Because the saints are wont to train up themselves for these

difficulties, by proposing hard cases to themselves ; as Ps. iii. 6, ' I

will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set them-

selves against me round about ; ' Ps. xxvii. 3, ' Though an host should

encamp against me, my heart shall not fear ; though war should rise

against me, in this I will be confident ;' Ps. xlvi. 1, 2, 'God is our

refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.' Therefore will

we not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains

164 SERMON UPON MATTHEW XV. 21-28.

be carried into the midst of the sea.' Presumption is a coward, and a

runaway from all thoughts of danger ; but faith meeteth its enemy

in open field ; it supposeth the worst, that the heart may be fortified

aforehand against whatever may fall out. They much inure their

thoughts to God, and dwell in and with the Almighty, and reckon

upon the changes of a reeling world, and so are prepared to be martyrs,

and suffer the worst for God.

Use. You have heard this faith opened to you ; labour to get such a

wrestling faith in expecting the benefits of the Messiah. You may

have your difficulties —

1. About your spiritual estate and acceptance with God in Christ.

You would have the devil cast out of your souls : you beg it of God,

but he seemeth not to hear you ; you are to wait, not to give over the

matter as hopeless, and in despondency to throw up all at first : ' The

Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against his commandment,' Lam.

i. 18. He hath called, and you would not hear, and therefore now God

may delay. It may be you have doubts whether ever God will hear

you, and you question your election ; then consider God's mercy and

your necessity. Christ hath taught us how to pray for the spirit :

Luke xi. 8, ' Though he will not rise and give him because he is his

friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him.' You

continue praying, and it is with you as before ; it may be worse : Eom.

vii. 9, ' But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' A

bullock is most unruly at first yoking ; fire at first kindling casteth

forth much smoke. What then ? Should you give over seeking to

Christ ? That is to shut the door upon yourselves. God seemeth to

shut you out, and you are discouraged with a deep sense of your own

unworthiness. Will he look upon such a dead dog as I am ? In such

cases you should creep in at the back door of the promise, as Paul

doth : 1 Tim. i. 15, ' This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all accep-

tation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom

I am chief.' If Christ came to save sinners, I am sinner enough for

Christ to save , or, as the woman here, ' dogs lick up the crumbs.'

2. In some prevailing carnal distempers, that you have long wrestled

with to get rid of, and you desire the physician of souls should cure

you. Follow the means, lay open before him the plague and sore of

your own heart. You do not presently find success ; will you therefore

give over the business as hopeless, and go still with a wound or thorn

in your conscience ? No ; consider — (1.) It must be cured ; (2.) If

ever it be cured, it must be by Christ ; (3.) Use all his healing methods ;

(4.) And beg a blessing upon all by prayer, ' Lord, if thou wilt, thou

canst make me clean,' Mat. viii. 2 ; (5.) Believe his grace to be suffi-

cient for thee. Be earnest and importunate ; we scratch the face of

sin, but we do not seek to root it out. If you are resolved, you will

take no nay. In a little time, and after some serious wrestling with

God, you will be eminent in the contrary grace.

3. In great straits and pressures you seek to God ; plead his cove-

nant, and yet no answer cometh. Will you turn atheist, and say, It

is in vain to pray to God ? No ; ' He that believeth will not make

haste,' Isa. xxviii. 16. Or will you faint and give over the suit ?

Where then is the exercise of your faith and patience ? It may be

SERMON UrON MATTHEW XV. 21-28. 165

God sliOTveth himself strange to you in your troubles ; as Jonah ii. 4,

' I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again toward thy

holy temple,' Let faith look to heaven and the covenant made with

Christ. Will you give way to the temptation till you are bribed by

sense ? No ; look again and again. Let faith triumph over diffi-

culties, and the issue will be comfortable.

4. For the church, as God's children prefer Zion above their chief

joy. You pray for the welfare of it, and God giveth no comfortable

answer ; what then ? Will you neglect your duty or abate of your

love ? It may be the clouds are thickened, dangers greater. What !

will you swell against providence ? Hab. ii. 4, ' Behold his soul, which

is lifted up, is not upright in him ; but the just shall live by his faith.'

No ; it is importunity, humility, resolved confidence will do you good

at the last ; follow the suit still, and say, ' For Zion's sake I will not

hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the

righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof

as a lamp that burneth,' Isa. Ixii. 1. There should be an unwearied

solicitation of God for the church's restitution. Christ is the church's

advocate, we are her solicitors. This is an example, not to gaze upon,

but to imitate.

SERMON UPON JOHN VIIL 66.

Your Father AhraJiam rejoiced to see my day ; and he sniv it, andj

tvas glad. — John viii. 56.

The next instance and pattern of a strong faith we find in Abraham,

We must consider his faith in two thins^s —

1. His clear sight of things to come, before the exhibition of Christ

or his coming in the flesh.

2. His overlooking the difficulties which seemed to obstruct the

accomplishment of the promise. A believer hath two great works to

do — to open the eye of faith, and shut that of sense. In both Abra-

ham was eminent. His opening the eye of faith is spoken of here,

\* He saw my day.' His shutting the eye of sense in Kom. iv. 13, ' And

being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead,

when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of

Sarah's womb.' The former falleth under our consideration now,

Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see my day ; and he saw it, and was

glad.' The Jews were always cracking and boasting that they were

children of Abraham. Christ disproveth their claim because they did

not his works : John viii. 39, ' If ye were Abraham's children, ye would

do the works of Abraham ; ' and in particular, because they imitated

not his faith with respect to Christ ; they despised what Abraham made

great account of. Abraham rejoiced to see what you see, but they

rejoiced not in him, and the privileges of the gospel offered by him.

He desired to see me, though future and absent, and you despise me

now present. He valued what you scorn, and therefore they were

degenerate children of Abraham,

In the words observe three things — :

1. The earnest desire Abraham had to see Christ's day, ' Abraham

rejoiced to see my day.'

2. His obtaining his desire in some sort, and in that way which

pleased God, ' And he saw it.'

. 3. The effect of that sight : it bred joy and contentment in his mind,

■" And he was glad.'

Some explicatory questions shall be handled —

[1.] What was Christ's day ?

[2.J In what sense he earnestly desired to see it ?

[3.] How he saw it ?

168 SERMON UPON JOHN VIII. 56.

[4.] The gladness which was the fruit of it.

[1.] What was Christ's day ? I answer — His coming in the flesh,

and setting up the gospel dispensation. Day in scripture is put for

all that space of time wherein any one hath lived, together with the

state of things during that time. So Christ's day was the time when

Christ came to fulfil his office of a redeemer, and the state of the gos-

pel kingdom there begun.

[2.] How he earnestly desired to see it. His earnestness is employed

in that word riyaXkidaaTo, ' He rejoiced to see my day.' With great

pleasure of mind he thought of Christ's coming into the world to save

sinners, and desired it might fall out in his time. He had no greater

desire than to see Christ's kingdom set up and flourish in the world.

He rejoiced, he vehemently and with ardent affection desired this might

come to pass.

[3.] How he saw it ? Not with bodily eyes ; that negative is proved :

Luke X, 24, 'Many prophets and kings have desired to see those things

which ye see, and liave not seen them ; and to hear those things which

ye hear, and have not heard them.' Abraham was one of these. But

affirmatively he saw it with the eye of faith: Heb. xi. 13, 'AH these

died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them

afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.' There it is

explained. The object to be seen was revealed and set before them in

the promise, and their eye and visive power was faith. Thus God

granted him his desire in a better way. God may suspend the satisfy-

ing the desires of his people in their own way all their days, and yet i:i

effect grant them in a way that is as good, and better for them. Moses

would fain enter into the land of Canaan, but God would only give him a

Pisgah-sight. The exhibition of Christ in the flesli was denied to

Abraham and the patriarchs during their lives, but yet he gave that

which was better than a simple bodily sight, a spiritual sight of him

in the word of promise. We desire the restoration of the church

speedily, but it may be it doth not suit with the harmony of God's

providence ; therefore we must submit our will to the wisdom of his

counsels.

[4.] He was glad, and heartily rejoiced at it : Gen. xvii. 17, ' Then

Abraham fell on his face and laughed.' Not as Sarah laughed, as

doubting of the event. Gen. xviii. 12, but wondering, rejoicing at it,

being strong in faith that God could and would make good his promise.

There is the laughing of exultation, and the laughing of derision, when

one telleth an improbable thing. Sarah's was the laughter of derision

and unbelief ; Abraham's was the laughing of exultation. The exhibi-

tion of the Messiah, and the setting up his kingdom in the world, was

matter of great joy and consolation to him.

Docf. That a strong faith giveth such a clear sight of Christ as pro-

duceth an holy delight and rejoicing in him.

In handling this point —

1. I shall speak of the ground of Abraham's faith.

2. Of the strength of it, set forth by a double effect— (1.) His clear

vision and sight of Christ; (2.) His deep affection, or rejoicing in it.

1. The ground of his faith ; for except the thing to be believed be

represented to us in a divine revelation, it is not faith but fancy. This

SERMON UPON JOHN Vill. 26. 169

sure ground was the promise of God. And if you ask, What promise

had his faith to work upon ? I answer — That which you have : Gen.

xii. 3, ' In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' ' In thee,'

that is, in thy seed, as it is explained. Gen. xxii. 18, ' In thy seed shall

all the nations of tlie earth be blessed.' Now, to open tbis promise we

must inquire — (1.) What this seed was ; (2.) What this blessedness

was.

1. What was this seed ? We must distinguish of a twofold seed of

Abraham — his seed to whom the blessing was promised, which was to

be blessed, and his seed in whom both Abraham himself and also his seed

and all nations were to be blessed. The promise of blessing to his seed is

spoken of. Gen. xvii. 7, ' I will establish my covenant between me and

thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting

covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.' Now this

promise to his seed was either to his carnal seed which descended from

his loins (God was there God, in visible covenant with them), or his

spiritual seed : Gal. iii, 7, ' Know ye therefore that they which are of

faith, the same are the children of Abraham ; ' because they walked in

the steps of Abraham, and did receive and obey the doctrine of faith or

covenant of grace which he himself believed and received. But then

there was another seed, in whom he himself and all the families of the

earth were to be blesj=ed, that is, in the Messiah who was to come, who

is the Lord Jesus Christ. The promise of multiplication and blessing

of his seed was but an appendage of this promise, and the means to

effectuate it, and so subservient to it.

2. What was this blessedness ? All that good which resulteth to us

from God's covenant ; chiefly reconciliation with God and life eternal.

[1.] Our reconciliation with God, which consists of two parts-

remission of sins, and regeneration ; without these two no man can be

capable of blessedness, and both these are included in the covenant

made with Abraham.

(1.) Eemission of sins. Certainly they are blessed whose sins are

forgiven : Ps. xxxii. 1,2,' Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,

whose sin is covered ; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth

not iniquity.' And this is included in the blessing of Abraham ; for

it is said, Gal. iii. 8, 'And the scripture, foreseeing that God would

justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto

Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.' So that justi-

fication by faith, a principal part of which is remission of sins, is that

gospel blessing which was purchased by Christ for Abraham's seed.

(2.) Eegeneration was included also, as a considerable part of the

Mediator's blessing : Acts iii. 25, 26, ' Ye are the children of the

prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, say-

ing unto Abraham, And in thee shall all the kindreds of the earth be

blessed. Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent

him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.\*

There the blessing is interpreted.

[2.] That eternal life is included in it also is evident from the nature

of the thing ; for this being the chief blessedness, it cannot be excluded ;

and may be further proved from the double reasoning of the apostle

from this covenant.

170 SERMON UPON JOHN VIII. 26.

(1.) Because tlie patriarchs sought it by virtue of this promise :

Heb. xi. 13-15, 'All these died iu faith, not having received the pro-

mises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and

embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims

on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they

seek a couutry ; and truly if they had been mindful of that country

from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have

returned. But now they desire a better countr}^, that is, an heavenly.'

The argument is, they did not think themselves to be at home in

Canaan, but sojourned there as in a strange country. The apostle is

speaking of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were heirs of the same

promise, namely, of blessedness in the seed of Abraham; they still

sought another place.

(2.) Because else God could not act suitably to the greatness of his

covenant love and relation, and did not make good his title : ver. 16,

' Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath

prepared for them a city.' God, having made so rich a preparation for

tliem, may be fitly called their God. Note our Saviour's reasoning :

Mat. xxii. 31, 32, ' But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have

ye not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, I am the

God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ? God

is not the God of the dead, but of the living.'

II. Come we now to the strength of his faith ; that is seen in two

things — (1.) His clear vision ; (2.) His deep affection.

1. His clear vision and sight of Christ : ' He saw my day.' The

eagle eye of faith will see afar off and through many impediments, and

draw comfort not only from what is present, visible, and sensible, but

from what is distant and future, and but obscurely revealed. The sight

of faith may be illustrated by bodily sight.

Three things argue the strength of bodily sight —

[1.] When the things are afar off that we see ; for a weak eye cannot

see afar off.

[2.] When there are clouds between, though the things be clear ;

to pierce through these clouds argueth the sight is strong.

[3.] When there is but a little light to see by. To see a thing at a

distance, either in the morning or evening twilight, argueth a strong

sight. All these concur here.

[1,] The things to be seen were at a great distance, not to be

accomplished in their time, nor a long time after. Thousands of years

and many successions of ages intervened ere the Messiah was exhibited

to the world, and came in the flesh to erect his gospel kingdom ; yet

they went to the grave in assurance of this promise, that in due time

the redemption of sinful man should be accomplished. Well, then,

we see the nature of faith, that it can look upon things absent and

future as sure and near ; and without it man looketh no farther than

present probabilities : 2 Peter i. 9, ' But he that lacketh these things

is blind, and cannot see afar off,' TV(j)X6'i koX ^ivunrd^wv. A purblind

man cannot see things at a distance from him ; but faith surmounts

all successions of ages, and can fly over many thousands of years in a

moment to the object expected ; as the apostle John : Kev. xx. 12, ' I

saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.' He saw it in the

SERMON UPON JOHN VIII. 26. 171

light of prophecy ; but tlie light of faith and prophecy differ little.

They agree in the general ground, viz., divine revelation; they differ

only as the general revelation is the ground of faith ; a particular

revelation is the ground of prophecy. They agree in the manner of

perception, by divine illumination ; the Spirit enlighteneth believers,

and the Spirit enlightened the prophets, for they were moved by the

Holy Ghost. But only believers by that general way of illumination

which is common to all the saints ; the special illumination is peculiar

to prophets. They agree in the object, things absent and future and

at great distance ; here there is no difference. They agree in the cer-

tainty of apprehension; only by prophecy they may define particular

events ; by the other, the accomplishment of general promises. They

agree as to the affections of the heart, but they differ in the degree ;

the one hath more esctatic motions, the other is a more temperate

confidence. So that you see by this comparison a strong faith can see

things at a distance, and we are affected with them in some manner as

if they were present.

[2.] When clouds come between faith and the object to be seen.

When the promise was given to Abraham, he was childless, and so re-

mained a long time. In the course of nature his own body and Sarah's

womb were dead ; and after he had a son, God commands him to slay

him and offer him in sacrifice ; a command not only against his natural

affection, but hope. And then afterwards his seed was few in number

for a long time, and when they did multiply they were oppressed, which

was revealed to Abraham. Now, to strive against all these difficulties

was ' to believe in hope against hope,' Kom. iv, 18. But this I must

reserve to the next time. However it is said of Abraham, ' He saw

my day ; ' he rested in the truth and power of God, and by it resolved

all difficulties. To see through such natural impossibilities argueth a

strong sight of faith.

[3.] For their light to go by, it was but a little; the revelation was

but obscure; the patriarchs had only that promise, Gen. iii. 15, 'And

I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed

and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel'

Abraham's was a little clearer ; all that he had was but this, ' In thy

seed all nations shall be blessed.' Yet this was but a small glimmer-

ing light in comparison of what we enjoy, far short in clearness and

plainness of the many precious gospel promises which are made to us.

The daylight is not only broken out, but it draweth nigh to high noon.

Though they saw not Christ so nearly and clearly revealed as we do,

yet they could do more mighty things with their faith than we can do

with ours, and did more excel both in comfort and holiness.

You will say. What is this clear vision of Christ to us ? How shall

we judge of the strength or weakness of our faith by this ?

Ans. 1. As to Christ, there is a sight of Christ past, present, and to

come, which still belongeth to faith.

(1.) Past : To see him whom we have not seen, that is, so to be

affected with his miracles and acts of mediation as if we had seen him

in the flesh, is still the work and exercise of our faith. So the apostle

telleth the Galatians, chap. iii. 1, ' Before whose eyes Christ Jesus hath

been evidently set forth crucified among you ; ' that is, before you he

172 SEKMON UPON JOHN VIII. 26.

bath been convincinj2;ly declared, as if he were set before your eyes

nailed to the cross. We should receive Christ as it were crucified in

the midst of us ; and the more lively and impressive thoughts we

have of this in the word and sacraments, the stronger is one's faitli.

We do so believe it, and our hearts are so warmed by it, as if it were

all done before our eyes. Such evidence and conviction should we have

as to warm our hearts.

(2.) Present '. To see him so as to make him the object of our love

and trust : John vi. 40, ' And this is the will of him that sent me, that

he that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.'

There is a clear sight of Christ still necessary to believing ; we must

see him and know him spiritually. Though he be removed from us

within the curtain of the heavens, yet we must see him, and such

worth and excellency in him as may draw off our hearts from other

things ; see him so as to believe that he is at the right hand of God,

negotiating for us, that we may trust ourselves and our all in his hands.

Stephen said, Acts vii. 56, 'Behold, I see the lieavens opened, and the

Son of man standing at the right hand of God.' He saw the Lord

Jesus as' in a posture of readiness to assist and help him ; that was by

extraordinary vision, for it is said, ' The heavens opened.' But faith

doth the like in its degree and proportion. Especially must we see him

at the right hand of God ready to receive us when we die.

(3.) Future : We must see him ; that is, be assured of his second

coming, and thoroughly persuaded that we shall see him ; as Job, chap.

xix. 25-27, ' For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall

stand in the latter days upon the earth ; and though after my skin,

worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God ; whom I

shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold him.' At the resur-

rection we shall get this sight and blessed vision of God. Now failli

must overlook all impediments to assure ourselves of this.

Ans. 2. There are other objects about which the vision of faith is

exercised, as the glory and blessedness of the world to come. Faith is

the perspective of the soul, by which it can see things at a distance as

present. It can look beyond and above the world, and draw unspeak-

able joy from the hope of eternal life. Moses, Heb. xi. 26, ' Esteemed

the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt ; for

he had respect to the recompense of reward,' eVe/SXeTrey ; he looked to

it. The glory of the world to come is represented and set before us in

the promise ; we see it clearly there : Heb. vi. 18, ' That by two im-

mutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might

have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the

hope set before us ; ' Heb. xii. 2, ' Looking unto Jesus, the author and

finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured

the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of

the throne of God.' To this we should look, and see it as if it were

before our eyes, that we may not be allured or terrified by the things

that are before our eyes. But of this I have already spoken in the

nature of faith. (See Sermons on Heb. xi. 1.) Only let me advi.se you

now to keep the eye of faith clear, that Christ and heaven may be

always in view. The devil seeks to shut it : 2 Cor. iv. 4, ' In whom

the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them which helieve not,

SERilOX UPON JOHN YIII. 26. 173

lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of

God, should shine unto them.' He doth it by the world, deluding" and

bribing the flesh, and enchanting the mind with worldly felicity, so that

God and heaven are forgotten, and that necessary care which we should

use in preparation for it is neglected and omitted. But it is opened

by the Spirit : Eph. i. 17, 18, ' That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,

the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and reve-

lation in the knowledge of him ; the eyes of your understanding being

enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and

what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' And

therefore we should always pray for this spiritual eyesalve, that we '

may have a due sense of the world to come fresh and strong upon our

hearts.

2. The next effect is deep affection or rejoicing in Christ, and all

the work of redemption done in his day. Certainly a sight of Christ

by faith doth bring true joy and peace into the soul.

Here I shall show —

[1.] That no other affection will become Christ, and the salvation

offered by him and received by faith, but great joy. This is evident

by the whole drift and current of the scriptures. The angels told the

shepherds at Christ's birth, Lukeii. 10, 'And the angel said unto them,

Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall

be to all people.' Sm'ely tidings of Christ, the Eedeemer of the Avorld,

are tidings of great joy, because then there was a w,ay found out for

our reconciliation with God, and the taking up that dreadful contro-

versy between us and him, that heaven and earth may kiss each other,

and meet again in a covenant of love and peace and grace, purchased

by Christ, whereby we might overcome the devil, the world, and the

flesh. The great enemies of our salvation are defeated, and a propor-

tionable happiness found out for man, without which he would have

been as Leviathan in a little pool. So when this grace was offered to

any, as to Zaccheus, by Christ's coming into his house and bringing

salvation with him : Luke xix. 6, ' He made haste, and came down,

and received him joyfully;' or published in the word: Acts xiii. 48,

' When the gentiles heard these things, they were glad, and glorified

the word of the Lord, and as many as were ordained to eternal life

believed.' Now we are concerned as well as they. The gospel should

never be as stale news to sinners, or as a jest often told. Our necessities

are the same with theirs, and the benefits are offered to us as well as

them. The Virgin Mary was thus affected : Luke i. 47, ' My spirit

hath rejoiced in God my Saviour ; ' that Christ was to be born of her,

and was formed in her. The eunuch, when Philip had preached to

him Jesus, and he was baptized into this fiiith. Acts viii. 39, ' He

went on his way rejoicing;' as men do that have met with a good

bargain, and have sealed it and made it sure. So the jailer : Acts

xvi. 34, ' He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house ; ' he was but

newly converted, and recovered out of the suburbs of hell, ready to

kill himself just before, so that a man would have thought you might

as easily fetch water out of a flint or a spark of fire out of the bottom

of the sea, yet he rejoiced when he was acquainted with Christ. So

that you see none reflect seriously on the gospel but they find cause of

174 SERMON UPON JOHN VIII. 26.

joy. We cannot consider and believe tlie great things which Christ

hath done and purchased for us, with some hope of the enjoyment of

them, without joy.

[2.] The reasons of this joy. These must be considered with respect

to the object, the subject, the causes.

(1.) The excellency of the object, which is Jesus Christ, and the

incomparable treasure of his grace.

{1st.) He is excellent in himself, as being the eternal Son of God.

Now, when he will come down, not only to visit, but redeem a sinful

world, this should be matter of joy to us. He came down, was not

thrust down ; he came as the pledge and instance of the Father's love :

John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten

Son.' To make divine nature more amiable, that we might not fly from

him as a condemning God, but return to him as a pardoning God, and

willing to be reconciled to sinful man : 2 Cor. v. 19, ' God was in Christ

reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.'

And in our nature died for us : Eev. i. 5, \* Who hath loved us, and

washed us from our sins in his own blood.' Christ would show us a

love that passeth knowledge, and would surprise men and angels with

a heap of wonders in the whole business of our deliverance from sia

and misery. And surely we bring down the price of these wonders of

love if we entertain them with cold thoughts, and without some con-

siderable acts of joy and thankfulness.

(2c?.) He is also necessary for us; Kom. iii. 19, 'And all the world

may become guilty before God,' vttolkos ©ew ; subject to the judg-

ment of God, or obnoxious to his wrath and vengeance. What could

we have done without his passion and intercession ? If he had not

died for sinners, what had we to answer to the terrors of the law or

accusations of conscience, or to appease the fears of hell and approach-

ing damnation ? How could you look God in the face, or think a

comfortable thought of him, or call upon his name, or pray to him in

your necessities ? In good sadness what could you do ? Would you

bewail sins past ; but what recompense or ransom for your souls was

there ? If you had wept your eyes out, it would not have been accepted

without a redeemer or some satisfaction to divine justice : Micah

vi. 6, 7, ' Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself

before the high God ? Shall I come before him with calves of a year

old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten

thousand of rivers of oil ? shall I give my first-born for my trans-

gression ? the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ? ' Would you

commit sin no more, or serve God for the future exactly ? If that had

been possible with a sinning nature, yet payment of new debts doth

not quit old scores ; or paying what we owe doth not make amends

for what is stolen ; you might have lain in your blood. We could not

find out a ransom which God would accept : Ps. xlix. 7, 8, ' None of

them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom

for him ; for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth

for ever.' No ; it is the Lord's mercy to find out a ransom for us : Job

xxxiii. 24, ' Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from

going down to the pit ; I have found a ransom.'

(3d.) He is so beneficial to us. We have cause to rejoice if we con-

SERMON UPON JOHN VIII. 26. 175

sider the many benefits we have by him : 1 Cor. i. 30, 31, ' But of hun

are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and right-

eousness, and sanctification, and redemption : that according as it is

written. He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.' Ignorance alien-

ates from God ; depraved nature brings doubts and fears, which always

haunt us about eternity and the way thither. Now, when God hath

provided such a suitable and all-sufiicient remedy, should we not rejoice,

and esteem him, and delight in him, and count all things but dung

and dross in comparison of him, that we may gain him and his grace ?

(2.) The subject.

(isf.) They are affected with their misery ; for according as our

sense of our misery is, so is our entertainment of the remedy. Those

that heal their wounds slightly little care for the physician. A doc-

trinal sight of sin maketh way for a dead opinion about Christ. It

is they that are often in tears and groans, through the feeling of sin

and fears of the wrath of God, who do most esteem Christ and rejoice

in him : Mat. ix. 13, ' I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners

to repentance ; ' Acts ii. 37, ' And when they heard this, they were

pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles,

Men and brethren, what shall we do ? ' A saviour is welcome to them,

for he is to them a comfortable and suitable remedy.

(2c?.) They mind their end, which is to return to God as their proper

happiness. When the soul seeth nothing better than God, then

nothing is sweeter than Christ. Intention of the end maketh the means

acceptable : John xiv. 6, ' Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the

truth, and the life ; no man cometh to the Father but by pie ; ' Heb.

vii. 25, ' Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all those that

come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for

them.' Christ is of no use but where God is our chiefest good ; for if

we be indifferent as to the favour of God, why should we prize Christ ?

{3d.) Their heart is suited to spiritual things. To excite delight

and complacency there are two things necessary — the attractiveness of

the object, and the inclination of the faculty. Delight and pleasure is

applicatio convenient is convenienti. If the object be never so lovely,

yet, if the faculty be not suited, there is no delight. We use to say,

One man's food is another man's poison : Eom. viii, 5, ' For they that

are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh ; but they that are

after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.' Every man's taste is accord-

ing to his constitution ; some are so lost and sunk in the dregs of

pleasures, honours, and profits, that they have no relish for better tilings.

Though Christ be so excellent and so suitable, and so all-sufficient to

soul-necessities, yet carnal men cannot savour him : this excellency is

only valued by a spiritual mind. Scarlet maketh no more show in the

dark than a better colour. The mystery of redemption to the carnal

is but a cold story, and the rose of Sharon but as withered flowers, and

the promises of the gospel are as dry chips.

(3.) The causes of it ; they are the Holy Ghost, and faith as his

instrument. This joy is stirred up by the Holy Ghost, therefore often

called joy in the Holy Ghost : Eom. xiv. 17, ' For the kingdom of God

is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the

Holy Ghost ; ' 1 Thes. i. 5, ' For our gospel came not unto you in word

176 SERMON UPON JOHN YIIL 26.

only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost.' And the comforts of

the Spirit : Acts ix. 31, ' Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the

comfort of the Holy Ghost.' But then faith is the mf^ans : Kom. xv.

13, ' Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and [)eace in believing ; '

1 Peter i. 8, ' Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now

ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full

of glory.' So that it is a fruit of faith as well as a work of the Holy

Ghost. Faith joined with love will bring much love into the heart of

a believer, and will cause it to be deeply affected with Christ's grace.

[3.] The nature of this joy and gladness. Here we must dis-

tinguish —

(1.) There is a superstitious joy which ariseth from knowing Christ

after the flesh : 2 Cor. v. 16, ' Wherefore henceforth know we no man

after the flesh ; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet

now henceforth know we him no more; ' which is seen in this, it prize th

Christ's name but neglects his office, pretends a fond esteem of his

memory but despises his benefits. As the Jews would fly iu the face

of any that would not count them Abraham's children, yet would not

do the works of Abraham, so is the nominal christian's joy. This joy

venteth itself in a carnal way, by outward theatrical pomp and cere-

monial observ^ances, but not in real affection to Christ ; yea, they are

rather enemies to his spiritual kingdom and cause and servants, and

express their rejoicing rather as votaries of Bacchus than as disciples

of Christ, in a gross and carnal way. This joy is a rejoicing in Christ

for a day, but we are to make it our daily work, a holy festival that

lasteth our whole lives : Phil. iv. 4, ' Rejoice in the Lord always, and

again I say, Rejoice.' This is a different thing from Abraham's rejoic-

ing. He had a prospect of Christ's day, and was exceeding glad ; but

this is a carnal owning of the god of the country, and no more.

(2.) There is a holy rejoicing which may be considered — (1.) As to

the lively acts ; (2.) Or solid effects.

(1st.) As to the lively acts, in solemn duties, as the word, and medi-

tation, and Lord's supper, it doth your hearts good to think of Christ :

Cant. i. 4, ' We will be glad and rejoice in thee ; we will remember

thy love more than wine ; ' Ps. xxii. 26, ' The meek shall eat, and be

satisfied ; they shall praise the Lord that seek him : your lieart shall

live for ever ; ' Heb. xi. 13, ' All these died in faith, not having received

the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of

them, and embraced them ; ' that is, when they thought of it ; the time

of the gospel was a sweet time to them, and so it is to all other believers.

A man cannot think of his pelf or any petty interest in the world

without comfort ; and can a believer think of the promises and not be

affected with them ? In solemn meditation and other duties is faith

and joy acted.

(2d) As to its solid effects,

(1st.) It is such a joy as doth enlarge our hearts in duty, and

strengthen us in the way of God : Neh. viii. 10, ' For the joy of the

Lord is your strength ; ' Ps. cxix. 14, ' I have rejoiced in the way of

thy testimonies as much as in all riches.' The hardest services are

pleasant to one that delighteth in Christ. This joy is the very life of

obedience : a christian cannot be without it.

SERBION UPON JOHN VIII. 2C. 177

{2d.) It sweeleneth our calamities and crosses. (1.) Common afllic-

tions. It can never be so sad with us in the world but we have cause

of rejoicing in Christ: Hab. iii. 17, 18, ' Though the fig-tree do not

blossom, &c., yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my

salvation ; ' for we have better tilings in him than any natural comfort

which can be taken from us. This should not diminish the solid satis-

faction of our souls. (2.) The afflictions of the gospel : Luke vi. 23,

' Rejoice ye in that day. and leap for joy : for your reward is great in

heaven ; for in like manner did their fathers unto the prophets ; ' Heb. x.

34, 'And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves

that in heaven ye have a better and enduring substance.' They are fit

occasions to show how much we value Christ above all our own interests,

how near and dear soever they be to us.

(3d.) It draweth us off from the vain delights of the flesh. Every

man must have some oblectatiou ; for love and delight cannot lie idle

in the soul ; either it is taken up with the joys of sense or with the

joys of faith. And it is good for every man to observe what it is that

puts gladness into his heart, where his solid contentment and pleasure

is. A brutish heart fetcheth all its solaces from the world, but a

gracious heart from Christ ; the one loves pleasures more than God, but

to the other Christ and his benefits are matter of joy and comfort;

this is that they are cheered with, as they get more of Christ into their

hearts : Ps. iv. 7, ' Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in

the time that their corn and their wine increased ; ' as David calleth

God his 'exceeding joy,' Ps. xliii. 4. They need not the carnal mirth,

without which others cannot live : Ps. iv. 6, ' Who will show us any

good ? '

Use. Well, then, you see faith is not only a sight, but a taste, or a

feeding on the promises with delight : Ps. cxix. Ill, ' Thy testimonies

I have taken for an heritage for ever ; for they are the rejoicing of my

heart.' And such a delight as draweth off our hearts from other

things, as the man that hath found the true treasure. Mat. xiii. 44,

' For joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that

field.'

I observe a double joy in Abraham —

1. In desiring, ' He rejoiced to see my day.' The spiritual desires

of God's people after Christ are full of joy. There is a joy that accom-

panieth seeking before we attain what we seek after : Ps. cv. 3, ' Let

the hearts of them rejoice that seek the Lord.' Before complacential

joy there is a seeking joy. Better be a seeker than a wanderer, and

delight in Christ keepeth up this seeking.

2. There is a joy after faith hath given some satisfaction. First,

■^yaWLaaaro, 'he rejoiced ; ' and then, ex^P/^, ' he was glad.' A man

sick of a mortal disease, when he heareth of a famous physician, he

desires to see him ; it is some contentment to a sick man to see him ;

but when his cure is wrought, he much more rejoiceth. So when we

feel the benefit in our own souls, it causes joy: Eom. v. 11, 'And not

only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by

whom we have now received the atonement.'

VOL. XVII. M

SERMON UPON ROMANS IV. 18-21.

Wlio against hope helieved in hope, that he might become the father of

many nations, according to that lohich was spoken, So shall thy

seed be. And being not iveah in faith, he considered not his oion

body now dead, lohen he was about an hundred years old, neither

yet the deadness of Sarah's ivomb : he staggered not at the pro-

mise of God through unbelief ; but loas strong in faith, giving

glory to God ; and being fully persuaded that lohat he had

promised he loas able also to perform. — Rom. iv. 18-21.

We are now come to. handle the other branch of Abraham's faith.

A believer hath but two works to do — to open the eye of faith, and to

shut that of sense. I shall speak of this latter now. This instance

deserveth to be considered by us — (1.) Because he is called once and

again, 'The father of the faithful,' ver. 11, 16, meaning thereby that

his faith is the pattern according to which our faith is to be cut out,

or the copy to be transcribed by us ; or, as the apostle's expression is,

ver. 12, 'That we should walk in the steps of the faith of our father

Abraham.' (2.) Because this was great and grown faith. It is nega-

tively expressed, ver. 19, ' He was not weak in faith ; ' and affirmatively,

ver. 20, ' That he was strong in faith, giving glory to God.'

Now in Abraham's faith we shall consider three things —

First, The ground of it.

Secondly, The excellency and strength of it, set forth by four expres-

sions —

1. That ' he believed in hope against hope,' ver. 18.

2. That he considered not the difficulties, ver. 19, ' He considered

not his own body now dead, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.'

3. That ' he staggered not at the promise through unbelief,' ver. 20.

4. That he had a full persuasion of God's power, ' Being fully per-

suaded that what God had promised he was able to perform,' ver. 21.

Thirdly, The fruit and effect of it, an exact, ready, and self-denying

obedience to God, not spoken of in the text, but to be supplied from

other scriptures, especially in those two eminent acts of self-denial, his

leaving his country, and offering his son. Thus was Abraham's faith

tried, by promises of things strange and incredible, and by commands

of the hardest duties.

First, The ground of his faith was the promise of God, as is often

implied in the text ; for it is said, ver. 18, \* That he might become the

ISO SERMON UPON ROMANS IV. 18-21.

father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall

thy seed be ; ' and ver. 20, ' He staggered not at the promise of Grod ; '

and ver. 21, ' Being fully persuaded that what he had promised,' &c.

There were many promises made to Abraham, but those to which the

apostle alludeth are contained in Gen. xv., as appeareth by his dispute

all along, and the comparing the two chapters. Now the promise was

either general or particular.

1. The general promise : Gen. xv. 1, ' I am thy shield, and thy

exceeding great reward.' That God would take him into his pro-

tection, and abundantly reward his obedience. The like promise is

made to all the faithful : Ps. Ixxxiv. 11, ' The Lord God is a sun and a

shield ; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he

withhold from them that walk uprightly.' The only one and true

God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, will exercise all his wisdom, power,

and goodness to protect us, and deliver us from all evil, and to give us

all those blessings which are necessarily required to make us fully and

eternally happy. He will be a shield to save us and protect us, either

by way of prevention or removal of all evil, both temporal and spiri-

tual, and he will be a reward to give us all good things, yea, ' a great

reward,' yea, again ' an exceeding great reward,' which cannot come

short of heaven's glory and eternal happiness, which is the aggregation

of all blessings. It is implied also in the metaphor of being a sun to

us. Here he is as a sun at its first rising, shining upon us with his

morning beams of favour and compassion, which are very cherishing

and comfortable ; but then our sun shall be in its meridian, when he

shall directly, fully, and for ever shine upon the saints.

2. The other promise was particular, and thus occasioned : When

God had told Abraham that he would be his shield and exceeding

great reward, he replied, ' Lord what wilt thou give me, seeing I go

childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus ? '

and again, ' Behold thou hast given to me no seed ; and lo, one born

in my house is mine heir,' Gen. xv. 2, 3. These words of Abraham

imply some diffidence, or conflict with unbelief, or a weakness of faith

at least ; though they also may be conceived to represent his condition

to God, and revive the remembrance of an old promise made to him

some time before : Gen. xii. 3, \* In thee shall all the families of the

earth be blessed.' And they in effect speak to this sense: Lord, how

can I take comfort in the promised rewaid, since I do not see the ful-

filling of thy promise touching my seed ? But now mark the Lord's

reply : ver. 4, \* This shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come

forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir ; ' that is, thou shalt

have posterity, the promised seed shall at length come of thy loins.

And then God led him forth : ver. 5, ' And he brought him forth abroad,

and said. Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able

to number them.' Ocular demonstration leaveth a stronger impression

upon the mind : ' And he said uiito him. So shall thy seed be ; ' upon

this \* Abraham believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for

righteousness,' ver. 6 ; that is, upon this he began to grow stronger in

the faith, more and more overcoming the doubts of tlie flesh, and

embracing the great promises which God had made him. He was a

believer before, but now he commenceth a strong believer; this is

SLIiMON UPON ROMANS IV. lS-21. 181

tlint which is said, ver. 18, ' He believed in hope against hope, that he

might become the father of many nations, according to that which

was spoken, So shall thy seed be.'

Secondly, The excellency of his faith, in four expressions —

I. ' He believed in hope against hope.' Abraham was still childless,

and so remained for some yeais after this assurance from God, and in

the course of nature he had little reason to expect a child ; but he

hoped in the word of God, when according to the order of nature all

hope of issue was cut off. We learn, then, that spiritual hope can

take place when natural hope faileth ; as Abraham had a strong iiope

in God when all appearances seemed to forbid hope. Most mens faith

is borne up by outward likelihoods and probabilities, and when they

fail, their faith faileth ; they can trust God no further than they can

see him ; but true faith dependeth upon him when his way is in the

dark, and there is little appearance of the things we wait for ; as Paul

could assure them not a man should be lost, when all hope that any

should be saved was taken away. Acts xxvii. 20-22. I prove this —

1. From the genius and nature of faith. There must be some

difficulty in the thing to be believed, or else it is not an object of

faith : Eom. viii. 24, ' But hope that is seen is not hope ; for what a

man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? ' The nature of faith and hope

is so that it is not of things presently enjoyed ; for vision and posses-

sion exclude hope, and what is easy and next at hand, it is as if it

were already enjoyed ; therefore it is no trial of your faith to wait for

probable things, and such as are within the view of sense or reason ;

but to hope against hope, when God disappointeth our confidence, and

seemeth to beat us off from believing, yet to adhere to him, this is the

disposition of faith.

2. From the warrant of faith, which is the word of God. Now we

must believe God upon his bare word, though we know not what time

or way he will take, or by what means the things promised may be

accomplished. In things future and invisible, we believe against

sense. To say with Thomas, ' Except I see, I will not believe,' John

XX. 25, this maketh way for atheism. In things incredible we believe

against reason : Heb. xi. 1, ' Faith is eXeyx^f '^(^v fiy fSXeirofMevcov, the

evidence of things not seen ; ' provided they be revealed by God. We

must not be false prophets to ourselves, and make promises which God

never made ; that is to interest his glory in our vain conceits : Jer. iv.

10, 'Ah, Lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and

Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace ; ' meaning the false prophets

using his name. And it is a snare to ourselves ; we dream of deliver-

ance when God intendeth a further trial: 1 Thes. v. 3, 'For when

they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon

ihem, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.'

Butwhen the promise is clear, then we must believe in hope against hope.

Sense, nature, and human reason must not be heard against faith :

Ps. xxvii. 3. ' Though war should rise against me, in this I will be con-

fident ; ' whatever the danger was, for he had a particular promise of

coming to the throne. It must not be, saith sense : It cannot be, saitli

natural reason : It both can and will be, saith faith. Though what

God had promised to do, do far exceed the power of natme, his word is

enough to faith.

182 SERMON UPON ROMANS IV. lS-21.

But if we have no express promise, may we not believe in hope against

hope ?

Ans. If believing be meant only of a confidence in God's power, not

determining the certainty of the event. Many times we are cast upon

God's providence, all human refuge and help faileth, thei'e is no pos-

sibility of escape ; yet God forbiddeth despair, and thus driveth us to

himself : 2 Coi'. i. 9, \* But we had the sentence of death in ourselves,

that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the

dead.' He means, when the furious multitude at Ephesus was let

loose upon him for his adherence to his way : Ps. xliv. 19, 20, ' Though

thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covei-ed us with

the shadow of death, we have not forgotten the name of our God.' We

have sometimes that which is equivalent to a promise, even the usual

practice of God : Deut. xxxii. 36, ' For the Lord will judge his people,

and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth their power is gone,

and there is none shut up or left ; ' Gen. xxii. 14, ' In the mount of the

Lord it shall be seen.'

3. The object of faith, God all-sufficient. We must neither measure

his goodness nor power by our scantling and module. Not his good-

ness : Isa. Iv. 8, 9, ' For my thoughts, are not your thoughts, neither

are your ways my ways, saith the Lord ; but as the heavens are higher

than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts

than your thoughts ; ' Hosea xi. 9, ' I will not execute the fierceness

of mine anger, I will not return to destory Bphraim ; for I am God and

not man.' We sin as men, but he pardoneth like a God. Nor his

power : Zech. viii. 6, ' If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant

of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes ?

saith the Lord of hosts.' The promises then made seemed impossible

or improbable to be performed ; for the Jews were a despicable remnant,

and the times full of dangers and fears. Keason and probability is not

our support, but ftiith, which looketh to God, to whom nothing is

impossible. Nothing can be laid in opposition to his power, or can

overbalance his promises. We are at a loss many times, but God

is never at a loss. You would think that man ridiculous that should

say an horse cannot carry him upon his back because a fly can-

not. It is more ridiculous to confine God to human likelihoods and

])robabilities. We cannot do this, therefore God cannot : Ps. Ixxviii.

41, ' They limited the Holy One of Israel ; ' that is, straitened his

])Ower, as if their wants were so great God was not able to supply them ;

or their miseries so grievous, that he were not able to remove them ; or

their enemies so strong, that he were not able to vanquish them. If

there be any difficulty in the case, it is the fitter for an almighty power.

Certainly we have no strong faith, if any faitli, when we cannot see the

truth of God's promises, unless we see the possiblity of their accomplish-

ment by natural means. If it pass the power of the creature, we say.

How can these things be? Alas! you do not know God's infinite

power. Can you say. Thus far God can go and no further ; this much

God can do, and no more ?

II, He considered not the difficulties : ver, 19, ' And being not weak

in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about

an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.' Here

SERMON UPON ROMANS IV, 18-21. 183

-we learn that we must not oppose natural impediments to the power

and truth of God. Unbelief will stir up many objections, great reason-

ings within ourselves against the promise. To hearken to these is to

tempt ourselves, and choke our own faith. As in other sins, to pore

upon the temptation is to parley with the devil, and suffer the evil to

fasten itself upon our spirits ; so, in point of believing, Abraham con-

sidered not how dead and unmeet he and his wife were as to pro-

iification.

First, I shall examine how we are, or are not to consider diflficulties.

1. In some sense it is our duty to consider them, that we may not

go about the most serious work hand-over-head. Christ bids us sit

down and count the charges : Luke xiv. 28, ' For which of you,

intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the

<}ost, whether he have sufi&cient to finish it ? ' The saints are w'ont to

put hard cases to themselves : Ps. iii. 6, \* I will not be afraid of ten

thousand of people that have set themselves against me round about ; '

and Ps. xxiii. 4, ' Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow

of death, I will fear no evil'

2. Therefore the ends must be observed. We must consider them

to prevent slightness, and to weaken our securit}', but not to weaken

our confidence in the promise. When they are urged against the

promise, they impeach the truth of God ; but when we consider them

to prevent slightness, it is good. The difficulties of salvation must be

sufficiently understood, otherwise we think to do the work of an age in

a breath : Luke xiii. 24, \* Strive to enter in at the strait gate ; for many

I say unto you will seek to enter in, and shall not be able ; ' Josh. xxiv.

19, ' And Joshua said unto the people^ Ye cannot serve the Lord, for

he is a holy God.' It is not so easy a matter as you take it to be.

3. Difficulties must be thought on to quicken faith, not to weaken

it. If they be pleaded against the promise, they weaken faith ; if they

be pleaded to drive us to the promise, they quicken faith. What

greater arguments are there to press us to dependence than to consider

our impotency, the looseness of our hearts, and the strength of tempta-

tions ? 2 Chron. xx. 12, ' For we have no might against this great

company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do, but our

eyes are unto thee.' But to plead against the promise is to consult

with the wisdom of the flesh, and it hath ever fared ill with the saints :

Luke i. 18, ' And Zacharias said unto the angel. Whereby shall I know

this ? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.'

Therefore for a while he was struck dumb. So Moses : Num. xx. 12,

\* Hear now, ye rebels ; must we fetch you water out of the rock ? ' God

had bidden him smite the rock, and assured him the water should flow ;

but he pleadeth the natural impossibility, therefore he was shut out of

Canaan. So that nobleman, 2 Kings vii. 2, ' Then a lord on whose

hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if

the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And

he said, Behold thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat

thereof.' But he that will not believe the truth of a promise, shall not

partake of the benefit of it. Well, then, as Abraliam regarded not

the great difficulties that might be pleaded to his faith from his own

-and his wife's age, so must not we.

184 SERMON UPON ROMANS IV. 18-21.

Secondly, I shall show you the inconveniences of this sinful con-

sidering the difficulties in all the parts of faith, assent, consent, and

affiance.

1. As to assent. There are many difficulties which may be objected

against the truths propounded in the word ; but it is enough to a

believer that God liath revealed them in his word, and propounded

them to his faith. Eeason is apt to reply, as Nicodemus, when Christ

spake to him of regeneration : John iii. 9, ' How can these things be ? '

Carnal reason keepeth men from simple believing, or resting on what

is revealed, till they see a reason for everything. Now we see a i-eason

why we do believe, and that is the word of God or divine revelation,

though we do not see a reason of everytliing which we do believe, for

many things are mysteries. In such cases we must receive truths as

we do pills, not chew, but swallow them, take them upon the credit of

the revealer. To chew produceth a loathsome ejection ; to swallow a

wholesome remedy. Believing in the common notion of it is a receiving

of truths upon trust from another, so it differeth from knowing ; and

divine faith is a receiving such things as God hath revealed, because

he hath revealed them. Therefore our first inquiry is, whether these

things be so or no ? Not, how they can be so ? There we begin at

the wrong end. In many cases, constat de re ; the thing is evident in

scripture whereby it is revealed, but how it can be is beyond our reach ;

the modus is not certain. Now, when we should believe, we dispute,

and so cavil rather than inquire. If it be not plainly revealed by God,

you may reject it without sin and danger ; but if it be, you must not

contradict all that you cannot comprehend, otherwise dangerous mis-

chiefs will ensue. The true God will be no God to you, because you

cannot comprehend the trinity of persons in the unity of the divine

essence. Christ will be no Christ, because you cannot comprehend how

a virgin should conceive, or how a God should become man. It is

sufficient that it is revealed in scripture, which carrieth its own evidence

in its forehead, shining by its own light, hath the seal and stamp of God

upon it ; and moreover is confirmed by miracles, and handed and

brought down to us by the universal tradition of the church through

the successions of all ages, in whose experience God hath blessed it to the

converting, comforting, and sanctifying of many souls. In short, to see

a thing in its evidence is not to believe, but to receive it on the credit

of the testifier. If you will not credit it unless the thing be evident

in itself without his word, you do not believe Christ, but your own

reason ; and instead of being thankful for the revelation, you quarrel

with his truth, because it is in some things above your capacity. You

should be satisfied with the bare word of God, and captivate your

understandings to the obedience of it.

2. As to consent and acceptance. There are many things may be

objected against entering into covenant with Christ, as our unworthi-

ness, the fickleness and looseness of our hearts ; how unable we are to

keep covenant with him ; but these things must not be alleged against

our duty and the free offers of the Lord's grace.

[1.] Our great unworthiness. This is one reason why the instance

of Abraham is produced by Paul as a pattern of faith to the gentiles.

As Abraham considered not his natural incapacity to have children,

SERMON UPON ROMANS IV. 18-21. 185

60 they not their unworthiness to be adopted into God's covenant.

The gentiles were not a people unto God, but were overlooked in the

dispensations of his grace ; but, Hosea ii. 23, \* I will have mercy

upon her that had not obtained mercy ; and I will say unto them that

were not my people, Thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art

my God.' Our condition is not so desperate that the mercy of the new

covenant cannot reach us and recover us. So for particular christians,

they exclude and repel comfort, because they are so vile and unworthy

and such sinners. If you be such a sinner, the more need of a saviour.

Ton would laugh at him that would argue thus: I am too cold to go

to the fire, too sick to send for the physician, too poor to take alms, too

filthy to go to the water to be washed. You must not consider what

)'ou have been, but what you would be. Christ doth not invite us

because we are holy, bnt that we may be holy. The objection were of

weight if we did only advise you to be eased of your smart, but not to

be rid of your burden ; if this consent were only a claim of privileges,

and not an obligation to duties, or a submission to Christ's healing

methods. Celsus objected against Christianity, that it was a sanctuary

for naughty persons and men of a licentious life. Origen answereth him

that it was not a sanctuary to shelter them only, but an hospital to cure

them. It is not the worthy are invited, but the thirsty and the needy ;

you are unworthy to the very last, but are you hungry ? You tire un-

worthy to receive Christ, but God is worthy to be obeyed. It is not a

matter of privilege only, but duty.

[2.] Your hearts are so loose and changeable, you are afraid to bind

yourselves to God. The truth is, this consent implieth a delivery over

of yourselves to Christ, to seek happiness in the way that he hath ap-

pointed ; it is the first egress of the soul towards the execution of the

duty of a christian, our entry into the practice of the holy life, and an

entry withal into a resolved war with the devil, the world, and the flesh,

who will resist us herein ; and you must consider difficulties so as to

fortify your resolution : Mat. xvi. 24, ' If any man will come after me,

let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' He will

surprise no man : Mat. xx. 22, 'Are ye able to drink of the cup that I

drink of ? and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized

with ? ' And not to consider is to discourage your consent.

Object. You will say you cannot do it by your own strength, and you

are uncertain of God's assistance.

Ans. Do not foretell the event, but charge yourselves with your duty.

It is your duty to engage your hearts to God, though you cannot lay

wagers upon your own strength. You must resolve, but continually

depend upon Christ for the performing of your resolutions. He will

maintain you in your way to heaven : 2 Tim. i. 12, 'For I know in

whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that

which I have committed unto him against that day.' In a sense of

your own insufiiciency and deceitfulness of heart, you must still rely

upon his grace and spirit, who hath made many promises to support

and to keep you by his power, through faith unto salvation.

3. For affiance in the great promise of the gospel, or offer of pardon

and life by Christ. There seemeth to be an impossibility to sense and

reason from first to last. If the difficulties of salvation were snrfi-

186 SERMON UPON ROMANS IV. 18-21.

ciently understood, we should see, from the beginning to the end, from

the first step to its last period in everlasting glory, it is the mere

grace and power of God that carrieth it on, in despite of men and devils ;

and therefore it is said, Eph. i. 19, ' And what is the exceeding great-

ness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of

his mighty power ? ' As for instance, the reconciling of a guilty soul

to God : Eph. ii. 3, \* Among whom also we had our conversation in

time past, in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and

of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as others.' The

changing of a naughty and obstinate heart : Jer. xvii. 9, ' The heart is

deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked : who can know it ? '

And the giving us an holy nature and life : Job xiv. 4, ' Who can

bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? not one.' Or to quicken us

that were dead in trespasses and sins : Eph. ii. 1, ' You also hath he

quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.' To strengthen a

feeble and weak creature : 2 Cor. iii. 5, ' Not that we are sufficient of

ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of

God.' That things meet with so much opposition by the way : Eph.

vi. 12, ' For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against princi-

palities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world,

against spiritual wickedness in high places.' What can maintain us in

the midst of so many temptations ? We at length die and rot in the

grave as others do ; now the raising of our bodies after it is eaten by

worms and turned to dust is a thing incredible, and to flesh and blood

wholly impossible ; it is wholly within the reach of God's power. Now

since we have ground to hope for all this from the word of God, even

to pardon our many sins : Isa. Iv. 7, ' Let the wicked forsake his way,

and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the

Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will

abundantly pardon ; ' to change this sinful nature, that we may become

an holy people to God : Titus iii. 5, ' Not by works of righteousness

which we have done, but according to his mercy he sriveth us, by the

washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ; ' to over-

come our obstinacy, perverseness in evil, fickleness in good ; to main-

tain grace in the midst of temptations : Jude 24, ' To him that is able

to keep you from falling ; ' and finally to raise us up out of the grave,

we must not consider and plead the difficulties to damp faith, but to

quicken it, going on with our duty, and wait for his salvation.

III. ' He staggered not at the promise through unbelief.'' Strong

faith is so satisfied with God's promise, that it leaveth no place for con-

siderable doubtings ; as Abraham here admitted no doubts or ques-

tionings touching the promise of God, but, without disputing or argu-

ing to the contrary, depended fully upon the Lord, being persuaded he

could do what he had promised. There are two reasons hereof — the

immutability of his nature : Heb. vi. 18, ' That by two immutable

things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong-

consolation ; ' and his tenderness of his word : Ps. cxxxviii. 2, ' For

thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.' Both these 'breed

this assured persuasion of God's faithfulness and steadfastness, and

make his promise the great prop and support of faith. Now this

staggering or not staggering at the promise, and so the weakness and

strength of our faith, may refer to three acts or parts of faith —

SERMON UPON ROMANS IV, 18-21. 187

1. A strong assent or clear sight of the evidence of the truth. If

we have the word and promise of God, we should believe anything as

surely as if we had the greatest evidence in the world. Thus some of

the disciples doubted of the truth of Christ's resurrection : Mat. xxviii.

27, ' And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted ; '

Luke xxiv. 21, ' But we trusted that it had been he which should have

redeemed Israel.' This argueth a weak faith, not vigorous and active ;

but faith is strong as it overcomes our speculative doubts, and so doth

settle and establish our souls in the truth : Acts ii. 36, ' Let all the

house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus,

whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.'

2. There is a doubting or staggering, as faith is a consent ; when

the consent is weak and wavering, faith is weak : Heb. x. 23, ' Let us

hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faith-

ful that promised.' But such a confirmed resolution as leaveth no room

for wavering and looking back argueth a strong faith: Acts xxi. 13,

' Then Paul answered. What ! mean ye to weep and to break my heart ?

for I am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the

name of the Lord Jesus.'

3. As faith implieth a dependence and trust : James i. 6-8, ' But

let him ask in faith, nothing wavering ; for he that wavereth is like a

wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed ; for let not that man

think that he shall receive anything of the Lord : a double-minded

man is unstable in all his ways.' Divided between God and other con-

fidences : 1 Tim. ii. 8, ' I will therefore that men pray everywhere,

lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting ; ' Mat. xiv. 31, ' O

thou of little faith ! why didst thou doubt ? ' Well, then, it is a strong

faith that causeth such a fortitude, that we pass through all difficulties

and trials without distrust or anxiety of mind. It is opposite to faint-

ing : Ps. xxvii. 13, ' I had fainted unless I had believed to see the good-

ness of the Lord in the land of the living.' To fears and troubles :

Mat. viii. 26, ' Why are ye fearful ? ye of little faith ! ' Strength of

assent doth exclude speculative doubts and errors ; strength of resolu-

tion doth fortify us against worldly temptations, which beget uncer-

tainty ; temptations of profit, pleasure, or vainglory, if the heart be

secretly biassed with these, it is opposite to faith : John v. 44, \* How

can ye believe, which receive honour one of another ? ' And strength

of confidence doth exclude those doubts which arise from fears of dan-

ger and terrors of sense ; in such cases we dispute away the comfort of

the promises.

IV. ' He was fully persuaded that what God had promised he was

able also to perform.' A strong, steady, and full persuasion of the power

of God argueth a great faith.

1. There is no doubt of his will when we have his promise ; but the

ability of the promiser is that which is usually questioned. Unbelief

stumbleth at his can : ' Can God furnish a table in the wilderness ? '

Ps. Ixxviii. 19 ; and, ' How can these things be ? ' Luke i. 34. So 2

Kings vii. 2, \* If the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this

thing be ? ' Nay ; and the children of God themselves. Sarah was

rebuked when she laughed : Gen. xviii. 12-14, ' Therefore Sarah,

laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have

pleasure, my lord being old also ? And the Lord said unto Abraham,

188 SEKMON UPON ROMANS IV. 18-21.

Wherefore did Sarali laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child,

which am old ? Is anything too hard for the Lord ? ' Her laughter

was not the laughter of exultation, but dubitation. Moses : Num. xi.

13, ' Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people ? for they

weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh that we may eat.' The case is

clear ; we doubt not but in case of danger, then we are full of fears and

suspicions ; if of his will, it is because we are so vile and unworthy ;

but we are vile and unworthy out of danger as well as in danger, there-

fore it is of his power.

2. God's power and all-suflSciency is to the saints the great support

of faith in their greatest extremities. They are relieved by fixing

their eye on God's almightiness ; as Abraham here. So Heb. xi. 19,

\oycad/j,evo^, ' Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from

the dead.' So for perseverance : Jude 24, ' Now unto him that is

able to keep you from falling.' And for the resurrection : Phil. iii. 21,

' Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto

his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to sub-

due all things to himself.' His power reacheth to the grave and beyond

the grave. So for the calling the Jews : Kom. xi. 23, ' And they also,

if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in ; for God is able

to graft them in again.' In short, to question his power is to put him

out of the throne, to deny him to be God, as if he were not able to help

his friends, and to be a terror to his enemies. Well, then, in matters

absolutely promised we have nothing to do but to exalt his power ;

therefore you may reason thus : He will do it, for he is able to do it :

Kom. ii. 23, ' They shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them

in again.' In matters conditionally promised we must magnify his

power, and refer the event to his will : Mat. viii. 2, ' Lord, if thou wilt,

thou canst make me clean.'

3. There are two things enlarge our thoughts and apprehensions

about the power of God ; they are mentioned ver. 17, ' Whom he

believed, even God who quickeneth the dend, and calleth those things

that be not as though they were.' We have to do with a God that

can say to the dead, Live. God's power can bring life out of death,

something out of nothing ; resurrection and creation are easy to him.

He that can quicken the dead can quicken those that are dead in tres-

passes and sins. By the word of his power he maketh all things to be

that are not ; ' Let there be light,' and there was light ; ' Lazarus, come

forth,' and he came forth. He causeth things to appear and exist that

had no being before.

Thirdly, The fruit and effect of his faith ; an exact and constant

obedience : Isa. xli. 2, ' Who raised up the righteous man from the

east, and called him to his foot.' The righteous man is supposed to be

Abraham, often designed by that character; and he was called to his

foot, to go to and fro at God's command ; as the centurion said. Mat.

viii. 9, ' I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I

say to this man, Go, and he goeth ; and to another. Come, and he

Cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.' There are two

great instances of Abraham's obedience —

1. His self-denial in leaving his country: Heb. xi. 8, 'By faith

Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should

SERMON UPON ROBIANS IV. 18-21 189

after receive for an inlieritance, obeyed, and lie went out not knowing

whither he went.' It was a sore trial to forsake kindred, friends, lands,

father's house and inheritance, and to seek an abode he knew not where.

Such a total resignation there must be of ourselves to tlie will of God.

This was done by him, and must be done by all that will be saved.

We know where the land of promise is, and the way to it, but it lieth

in an unknown world.

2. Another trial was, Heb. xi. 17, 18, ' By faith Abraham, when he

was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promise

offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac

shall thy seed be called.' Because God would make Abraham an

example of faith to all future generations, therefore he puts him to

this trial, to see whether he loved his Isaac more than God, Now

Abraham gave him up wholly to God's disposal, even Isaac, on whom

the promise was settled ; being assured of God power, he made all

things ready for the sacrifice.

Use. Let us get such a faith, even such a sincere, hearty, giving up

ourselves to Christ, firmly to rely upon the promises, and faithfully to

obey all his commands delivered in the gospel. The gospel is a sum-

mary of what we are to believe and do: Ps. cxix. 166, 'I have hoped

for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.' Stick to this what-

ever trial is made of you, and you have the faith of Abraham.

SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5.

SERMON I.,

And Jesus looked round about on them with anger, being grieved f(yr

the hardness of their hearts. — Mark iii. 5.

In the first verse of this chapter we read that ' there was a man which

had a withered hand,' who came to Jesus for relief on the sabbath-day.

Here was a fair occasion offered to the pharisees to display their malice.

The sabbath was of high esteem and veneration among the Jews, and

therefore now they thought by this means to blast the repute of Christ

among the people. In case he should heal on the sabbath-day, their

noise and clamour against him might seem to be justified ; therefore

it is said, \* They watched him whether he would heal on the sabbath-

day,' ver. 2. But Christ is not daunted ; he goeth on with his work

for all their prejudices ; nay, to make the miracle more manifest, he

biddeth him ' stand forth,' ver. 3. However, to satisfy tlie people, he

disputeth with them ; they themselves would do more to a beast than

he was requested to do to the man with a withered hand : ver. 4, ' He

saith unto them. Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath-day, or to do

evil ? to save life, or to kill ? ' In Mat. xii. 10, it is said they pro-

pounded the question to him ; and in the 11th verse, by way of answer,

he maketh use of an argument from a beast fallen into a pit : ' He said

unto them, What man shall there be among you that shall have one

sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath-day, will he not lay hold

on it and lift it out ? But they held their peace.' They could reply

nothing by way of answer and sufficient confutation, and they would

reply nothing by way of approbation and consent. At their malicious

silence Christ is both angered and grieved. There is an excellent temper

and mixture in his afiections. In Christ's anger there is more of com-

passion than of passion ; he knew how to distinguish between the man

and the sin, and to manifest his displeasure and grief at the same time.

The cause of both is assigned in the text, ' for the hardness of their

hearts,' eVl t^ iraypcaaet Tr]<i KapSlas avrwv. He was softened for their

hardness.

The point which I mean to handle is the grievousness of the sin of

hardness of heart. Christ was grieved with it in the pharisees, and

there is not a greater cause of offence to his Spirit.

192 SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5.

Doct. That hardness of heart is a grievous sin, very offensive and

provoliing to Jesus Christ.

I shall — (1.) Open the terms ; (2.) Show you the nature of this evil

frame of heart ; (3.) The kinds of it ; (4.) The causes of it ; (5.) The

heinousness of it ; (6.) Some observations concerning this spiritual

malady.

I. For the terms by which it is expressed, they are two, ' Heart,' and

' Hardness.'

1. 'Heart.' This hardness is sometimes ascribed to the neck; as

Prov. xxix. 1, ' He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall

suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.' And then it is a

metaphor taken from refractory oxen, that will not endure the yoke ;

and so it noteth disobedience. Sometimes to the face ; as Jer, iii. 5,

' They have made their faces harder than a rock ; ' and so it notetli

impudence ; they can no more blush than a rock or stone. But most

usually it is ascribed to the heart, as in the text. So Ezek. iii. 7, ' The

house of Israel will not hearken to thee, for they will not hearken to

me ; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted ; ' and

so it noteth obstinacy. All go together, an hard heart, an hard neck,

and an hard face. Men are first disobedient, then obstinate, then

impudent. But it is the heart that we are to consider, which naturally,

and in its first sense, signifieth a piece of flesh in the body, which is the

chief seat and shop of life ; but morally and metaphorically it signifieth

the soul : 1 Sam. xii. 20, ' Serve the Lord with all your heart ; ' that

is, with all your soul. Now in the soul there are many faculties — the

mind, the conscience, the memory, the will and affections ; and they are

all expressed by this term \* Heart.' The mind is called heart : Kom.

i. 21, 'Their foolish heart was darkened;' that is, their mind. The

conscience : 1 Sam. xxiv, 5, ' David's heart smote him ; ' that is, his

conscience. The memory : Phil. i. 7, ' I have you in my heart ; '

that is, I am mindful of you. But usually it signifieth the will and

affections ; as Mat. xxii. 37, ' Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with

all thy heart.' And this is the faculty in which this disease is seated.

Blindness is incident to the mind, searedness and benumbedness to

the conscience, slipperiness to the memory, deadness to the affections ;

but hardness is incident to the will, that part of the soul by which we

choose and refuse good or evil.

2. \* Hardness.' It is expressed by different terms in scripture ;

sometimes by Trcopwcrt? t?}? Kaphia<i, as in the text, and Bph. iv. 18,

which noteth a callous, brawny, insensible hardness, such as is in the

labourer's hand or the traveller's heel ; sometimes by o-KkripoKaphia,

or aKkT)pw>r7]^ tt}? KapSia<;, so it is a metaphor taken from dry bodies,

when the parts are more condensed, and so more impenetrable. Duri-

ties est qualitas, densas et hene compactas liahens 2M7^tes, difficidter

cedens tactui. It doth not easily yield to any impressions from with-

out. So it is set forth by the hardness of the adamant : Zecli. vii. 12,

\* They made their hearts as an adamant stone/ They can no more be

wrought upon to receive any impression of grace and reformation than

the diamond or flint or hardest rock can be engraved or fashioned to

any form by the tool of the artificer.

II. I must open the nature of it. The hardness of heart discovereth

SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5. 193

itself by two properties : it is Ktjp avaiaOrjrov koX uklvtjtov, an insensible

heart, and an inflexible heart.

1. An insensible heart, as a brawny snbstance or callous piece of

flesh, like the labourer's hand and traveller's heel. This the apostle

intimateth, Eph. iv. 18, 19, 'Having the understanding darkened,

being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in

them, because of the blindness of their heart : who being past feeling,'

kc. In one verse he chargeth them with hardness of heart, and in

the first words of the next verse with loss of feeling. Feeling, of all

senses, though it be not the most noble, yet it is the most necessary ;

there is no life without it ; it is diffused throughout the whole body ;

and in what member soever it is lost, there is no more intercourse of

vital and animal spirits ; and where it is totally lost, there is no more

life. There may be life when other senses are wanting ; a man may

be deaf and yet live, blind and yet live ; but if he utterly lose his

feeling, he cannot live. Such a dead senseless heart is the hard heart,

as appeareth in the wicked by that great security, ease, and quiet

•which they naturally have, though lying under the guilt of many and

grievous sins ; and though they be obnoxious to the wrath of God, yet

they are never troubled nor affected with any sense of their condition ;

they can sin freely in thought, foully in act, without any remorse and

shame. Ah assiietis 7ion Jit passio. Men are not moved by such

things as they -are much used to. As they that live by the fall of

great waters sleep quietly because they are accustomed to the noise, so

men that are accustomed to sin can swear, and be drunk, and commit

filthiness, or go on in some other trade of wickedr.jss, and are never

troubled. Mithridates through the custom of drinking poison made

it so familiar to him that he drank it without dangei." Elementa non

gravitant in suis locis — Elements weigh not in their proper place, A

fish in the water feeleth no weight ; sin is not burdensome to wicked

men, it is in its own place. This insensibleness is the greater where men

-will not be awakened out of their lethargic fit by all the means which

God useth to them, by the threatenings of his word, or the judgments

of his providence. There is a method in God's dispensations ; he

threateneth that he may not punish, and punisheth now that he may

not punish for ever. Now the children of God are startled at the

thi-eatenings, and tremble when they see a storm in the clouds before

it falleth ; as Josiah had a tender heart, and melted at the thi-eatening,

2 Chron. xxxiv. 27. And they are said to ' tremble at the word,' Isa.

Ixvi. 2, and Ezra ix. 4. But wicked men think this is a vain scare-

crow ; and though they are most obnoxious to the judgment and wrath

of God, yet they have no sense and tender feeling of it ; therefore God

goeth on to his second dispensation ; he punisheth now that he may

not punish for ever. As Absalom set Joab's barley-field on fire that

he might draw him to come and speak with him, so God seeketh to

make men serious, to bring them to the throne of grace, and sue out

their pardon, by many temporal judgments. But still wicked men start

aside, and will not turn to him that smiteth them : Jer. v. 3, ' Thou

hast stricken them, but they have not grieved ; thou hast consumed

them, but they have refused to receive correction.' As the anvil is

smoothed into hardness by many blows and strokes, so are men more

VOL. xvn. N

194 SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5.

insensible of their condition, and will not regard the meaning of Grod's

providences. Well, then, a hard heart is insensible of what they have

done against God, or what God hath or may do to them. And so far

as we lose our sense and tenderness, so far is the heart hardened.

2. It is an inflexible heart ; it is not easily bent to God's purpose ;

say he what he will, men are as light, as vain, as mindless of heavenly

things, as basely wedded to the delights of the flesh as ever, and obstin-

ately, and against all means to the contrary, refuse the counsel of God

for their good. Though God hath the highest reasons on his side, and

great variety of powerful and alluring motives to gain souls to his

obedience, and these represented not only to the ear by his messengers,

but to the heart by his Spirit, yet men are so addicted to their own

wills and lusts, that they will not suffer themselves to be persuaded by

him to accept of his offers and rich mercies in Christ; they will not

obey the sweet directions of his word, nor regard the motions and

strivings of his Spirit, to let their beloved lusts go, and comply with

the will of God.

[1.] They are inflexible to the counsels of his word, where God

interposeth in the way of the highest authority, straitly charging and

commanding us under pain of his displeasure, and reasonetli with us

in the most potent and strong way of argumentation, from the excel-

lency of his commands, and their suitableness to us as we are reasonable

creatures ; from his great love in Christ, whom he hath given to die for

us ; from the danger if we refuse him, which is no less than everlasting

torment ; from the benefit and happiness of complying with his motions,

which is no less tiihn eternal and complete blessedness both for our

bodies and souls ; and all is bound upon us by a strict impartial

day of accounts, when we are to answer for our neglects, or else to

receive the reward of our diligence. But alas ! the hard heart de-

feateth the end of this whole contrivance. Neither the awe of God's

authority, nor the rensonableness of his commands, nor the wonderful

love of Christ, nor tiie joys of heaven, nor the horrors of everlasting

darkness, nor the strictness of the last day's account, will work man to

a sense of his duty, or gain him to make serious preparation for his

own happiness and everlasting salvation. Out of what rock was the

heart of man hewn ? What will work upon you if this doctrine, upon

which God hath laid out all the riches of his wisdom and grace, will

not work upon you ? Hath God another Son to die for you ? a better

heaven to bestow upon you ? or an hotter hell to scare you withal ?

Would you have the day of judgment more exact and severe ? or

greater obligations to all holiness and godliness of conversation than

those already propounded ? or more charms and persuasiveness added

to the gospel ? Oh, no ! that cannot be. Infinite wisdom hath already

stated these things. Or would you have God save you against your

wills ? or thrust these things upon you without your consent ? Surely

it is obstinacy, plain obstinacy and hardness of heart, that maketh you

stand out against God: Ps. Iviii. 4, 5, ' They are like the deaf adder

that stoppeth her ear, which Avill not hearken to the voice of charmers,

charming never so wisely.' So Mat. xi. 17, ' We have piped unto you

and ye have not danced ; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not

lamented.' The sweetest strains of grace move not the obstinate sinner.

SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5. 195

If an angel come from heaven, he cannot bring you better arguments,

for the gospel is ' the wisdom of God/ 1 Cor. i. 24. If one came from

the dead, he cannot present you with more powerful motives : Luke

xvi. 31, 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be

persuaded though one rose from the dead.' Oh ! why will you not be

persuaded ? You do in effect say. Let God do or say what he will,

he shall not have my heart. Well, then, this unteachableness and

unper.suadableness is another property of hardness of heart ; and slow-

ness of heart and backwardness to God's work is a degree to it.

r2.] It is inflexible to the motions of God's Spirit. God doth not

only invite sinners by the word, but knocketh at their hearts by

the pressing motions and impulsions of his grace, and yet they do

not open to him to give him entrance. How often have we eluded the

importunity of many warm convictions, and baffled many pangs and

checks of conscience ! Acts vii. 51, ' Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised

in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.' Their ears are

said to be uncircumcised, as they do resist the counsels of the word ;

and their hearts, as they do resist the motions of the Spirit, who enforceth

truths with a clearer light and conviction upon their hearts. There are

many importunate motions and convictions which they slight and oppose.

An hard heart goeth to hell with violence ; the word standeth in the

way, and the Spirit standeth in the way ; but still they break through,

and so their condemnation is more just; as the prophet said, Isa. vii.

13, 'Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but ye will weary my

God also ? ' Wicked men do not only grieve God's ministers and

messengers, but his Spirit, in refusing to accept his gracious offers.

The crime would be less if the counsel of the messengers were not

enforced by the motions and inspirations of the Holy Ghost. God is

not behindhand with a sinner. If the words of men offer occasion of

suspicion and prejudice, yet these inward checks and excitements in

their own bosoms to be more serious and diligent carry their own

evidence with them ; and upon such a close application we should be

ashamed to give God the denial. But they resist all inward and out-

ward means of reformation ; they resist the Spirit as well as despise

the minister. But can the Spirit be resisted ? Certainly no, when he

worketh according to an eternal purpose of grace ; for God never made

a creature too hard for himself. Yea, it is said even of wicked men,

Acts vi. 10, ' They were not able to resist the wisdom and Spirit by

which he spake.' The meaning is, they could not hinder his workings,

though they thwarted his motions ; the light was so clear that they

could not hinder the shining of it, nor contradict it, but out of obstinate

malice. But how are they said to resist the Holy Ghost ? We had

need to vindicate the place, because it is usually urged against the

efficacy of divine grace. The operation of the Spirit is not irresistible,

say they, for the Jews did always resist it. We may grant the whole.

Wicked men of an hard heart may resist the common operations of the

Spirit, his light and his motions, but the opposition of the elect is over-

powered by the efficacy of grace. -There is a spirit of resistance in us,

but the stronger operation of the Holy Ghost maketh it to give place ;

we may kick against the pricks till the soul be awakened, and tiien

God hath us at his own beck. Though the grace of conversion be not

196 SEliMONS UPON MARK III. 5.

common to elect and reprobate, yet the grace that tendetli to conversion

is common, and this may be resisted. God may knock at the heart

that is never opened to him ; they may have excitements, but alas !

ihey are as the rock or adamant to the tool. There is no impression

left upon them. Object. But if God will use a fainter opei-ation, why

are they to blame ? I answer — God is not bound, but they are bound

to prepare their hearts to receive his motions ; let them prove God a

debtor, and they may excuse themselves for their disobedience.

III. Tlie kinds of hardne.ss. These will be known by tliese dis-

tinctions —

1. The fii-st distinction is, that hardness of heart is either — (1.)

Natnral ; or (2.) Voluntary and acquired; or (3.) Penal and judicial.

[1.] Natural hardness of heart is a part of inbred corruption, which

remaineth wilh us till God take it away by grace : Ezek. xi. 19, ' I

will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them

an heart of flesh.' The stone in the heart is a disease that all Adam's

posterity are subject unto ; it runs in the blood. It is not incident to

Nabals only, or such as he was, men of a churlish and crabbed temper.

No ; all men are sick, and most men die of this disease. We brought

with us into the world a strong bent to carnal things, and by con-

SL'quence an averseness from God ; and it is a mighty work of grace if

we do not carry it with us out of the world. When Nabal died, his

heart was as a stone, and so might yours.

[2.] Acquired and voluntary, when men do wittingly and willingly

reject the counsel of God, and strengthen themselves in their natural

disobedience and obstinacy ; or being invited to faith and repentance

by God, out of love to sin resist God's call, and put away the word

from them, and refuse to obey : Ps. xcv. 8, ' Harden not your hearts.'

It is our own act. And 2 Kings xvii. 14, ' They would not hear, but

hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers.' This increaseth

our natural liardness, and maketh it grow more and more, till it be

stiffened and settled in an aversion to God ; as a crooked stick or twig

by growing becometh more difficult to be made straight. By eveiy

act of sin we lessen our awe of God ; and having ventured once, grow

more bold to sin a second time. Men when they first put forth to sea

are very fearful, but afterwards laugh at storms; so when a man

cometh ofl' safe from sin, he will venture again. By every act of

disobedience our incapacity to receive grace is increased, and our

inclination to carnal vanities is strengthened ; by frequent acts we are

confirmed in the habit. But nothing increaseth this voluntary hard-

ness so much as refusing grace ; as no water is so apt to freeze as that

that hath been once heated. God is provoked when we refuse his grace

upon a closer application, and the heart is encouraged to continue in

sin. So that by their carelessness and delay men are hardening by

degrees. Every call defeated addeth one degree of hardness more;

and so God is more apt to desert us and forsake us.

[3.] Penal and judicial hardness. This adds to voluntary hardness,

as voluntary hardness implies something above natural. Man, as

naturally hardened, doth not turn to God ; as judicially hardened, he

cannot. There is a great impossibility he should. This is God's act ;

he hardenetli as a just judge, not by infusing evil, but withdrawing

SERMONS UPON JIARK III. 5. 197

grace. In scripture God is said to harden two ways — (1.) By leaving

some in their natural hardness : Rom. ix. 18,' Therefore hath he mercy

on whom he will have mercy ; and whom he will, he hardeneth.' So

it is an act of dominion ; he passeth them by. He may do it justly ;

he is Lord of his own grace, and is not bound to save sinners. This

is not an act of justice, but dominion. God doth not act as a judge,

but as a Lord ; it is matter of favour to soften, not right. (2.) By

giving up others to a reprobate sense, whicli is a penal and judiciary

act : Acts xxviii. 26, 27, \* Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not under-

stand ; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive : for the heart of

this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their

eyes have they closed,' &c. There is consideration had of man's sin

niid foregoing provocations. God punisheth them by their own sin.

Men first harden themselves ; they go heiore peccando, by sinning ; then

God Cometh aitev jucUcando, by inflicting this judgment of hardness of

heart on them. They harden themselves, and God leaveth them under

their hardness. As Jeroboam stretcheth out his arm against the

prophet and then God layeth a judgment upon him, that he could not;

})nll it in again to him, 1 Kings xiii. 4, so men hardening themselves,

(^od layeth this judgment upon them, that they shall not return to any

softness.

2. The next distinction is, that hardness of heart is either total or

partial. Some are in the state of hardness, others complain of it as

their present frame. There is a difference between hardness of heart

and an hard heart. Some hardness of heart is in God's children :

Mark vi. 52, ' They considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their

lieart was hardened ; ' and Mark xvi. 14, ' He upbraided them for

their unbelief and hardness of heart.^ Original hardness of heart is

not altogether taken away by grace. Much of the heart of stone, or old

nverseness from God and holy things, remaineth with God's children ;

l)ut yet they are not wholly insensible, and wholly inflexible to God's

jiurpose ; their hearts are bent to his testimonies, though ever and

anon they are apt to fall back to the old bias. Therefore David

prayeth, Ps. cxix. 36, ' Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not

to covetousness.' The children of God do often complain of deadness

and un aptness for holy things ; yet there is not in them that obstinacy,

impenitency, and hardness of heart, that is in the wicked : Rom. ii. 5,

\* But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thy-

self wrath against the day of wrath.' In the one it is bemoaned, in

the other not; in the one it arisethfrom negligence and drowsiness, in

the other from flat disobedience and enmity to God. When God's

children give too free a contentment and license to the flesh, they have

not that sense, that liveliness in prayer, that readiness to obey, that

delight in the word, as at other times ; but the other are contemptuou.s

and scornful, and do not set their hearts this way, to please God or

enjoy his favour. In the wicked there is a careless security, no sense

of their eternal condition ; they banish it out of their thoughts : Amos

vi. 3, ' Ye put far away the evil day.' If it intrude upon them, they

look upon it as a melancholy interruption ; they seek to put ofi" what

they do not put away ; yea, there is a plain reluctancy and opposition

to good things, and a contempt of God's messages. But in the other

198 SKUMONS UPON MARK III. 5.

there may be some Imnging off from God, for original sin is not quite

(lone away, especially under a distemper occasioned by carnal liberty:

Luke xxi. 34, ' Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be

overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life ;

and so that day come upon you unawares.' A christian is a compound

creature ; he hath hardness as well as softness. When their hardness

prevaileth, for the present they mourn less for sin, and do not tremble

at tlie word, and are not affected with providences, slight the warnings

and motions of the Holy Spirit, are more dead in duty, find not alike

savour in the promises, and duties seem more irksome to them. An

liard heart maketh their work seem hard and tedious.

3. The next distinction is, that hardness of heart is either felt or

unfelt.

[1.] Felt, as by men under a preparative work, and in God's children

for hardness there may be in them ; yea, it is their condition as long

as they are in the world. Grief for hardness is a good sign that there

are some tender parts left. An heart judicially hardened can never

feel that hardness, nor grieve for it ; but the children of God fear it as

the greatest evil, and complain of it as the greatest burden, and so

accordingly strive against it. Thus Ephraim bemoaned himself, and

his obstinacy and inflexibleness : Jer. xxxi. 18, ' I have surely heard

Ephraim bemoaning himself thus : Thou hast chastised me, and I was

chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke : turn thou me, and

I shall be turned ; for thou art the Lord my God.' There is hope of

cure when they are sensible of the disease : they fear it in themselves

and others as the greatest evil : Heb. iii. 12, 13, ' Take heed, brethren

lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from

the living God: but exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day,

lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' Of all

judgments, the judgment of the hard heart is worst. They com-

plain of it as the greatest burden : Isa. Ixiii. 17, ' Lord why hast

thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy

fear? They find much deadness and dulness of spirit ; they are not

affected with God's presence in duties, nor with his providences in the

world. This is their complaint and burden. Lord 1 have a stiff neck,

that will not easily be brought under the strict duties of religion, to

meditate and to pray in private ; I have a proud stubborn heart, too

hard for me to take down. Thus do they complain of these things,

and strive against it. As a man that hath a stone in the bladder, he

useth good means to soften it, and is careful of his diet, so are God's

children sensible, and therefore fearful and careful, often bemoaning

themselves,

[2.] Unfelt ; so it is in wicked men, who never consider the frame

of their hearts, or bemoan themselves because of spiritual evils. The

heart of stone is not sensible of itself; and so God's children for a

while may be under great desertions and the guilt of heinous sins, and

be insensible ; after gross falls they may lie in hardness for a while, till

God rouse them up again. Great falls are like a blow upon the Kead,

that stuns us and amazes us for a while, and it is some good while ere

we recover again. David's conscience was not presently awakened.

Spiritual lethargies are long fits. David lay ten months from the con-

SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5. 199

■ception to the birth of his child, and yet all this while did formall\' use

Ood's ordinances and public service. Nathan comes to him after the

child was born : 2 Sam. xii. 14, ' The child that is born unto thee shall

surely die.' And he never relented till Nathan came to him, as

appeareth by the title of the 51st psalm, ' A Psalm of David, when

Nathan the prophet came to him after he had gone into Bathsheba.'

All this while grace was not dead, but in a deep sleep. The least sin

maketh way for hardness of heart, much more sins against conscience ;

there is a more long sequestration then. God will not let you enjoy

the comforts and effectual presence of his spirit. These blows and

wounds will leave you for dead for a long while.

SERMON IL

And Jesus looked round about on them xoiiJi anger ^ being grieved

for the hardness of their hearts. — Mark iii. 5.

IV. The causes of hardness of heart.

1. Ignorance. The blind mind and the hard heart always go together :

John xii. 40, ' He hath blinded their minds, and hardened their hearts,

that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their

hearts.' Men are first unteachable, then unpliable. Obstinacy be-

ginneth at sottishness of conceit. He that knoweth not what he ought

to do careth not much what he doth. The children of God never feel

hardness in their hearts but when the light in their minds is unactive

or obscured ; there is a kind of darkness for that time. We see that

the most carnal wretches, when they come to die, are sensible ; when

the mind is cleared from the fogs of lust, and conscience is awakened,

then they feel a great weight of sin upon them. Light always begets

tenderness, as in a clear vessel the dregs do soon appear. Well, then,

either they are ignorant, or have but a naked theory, not the lively

light of the Spirit ; and hence it is that their hearts are hardened.

2. Unbelief ; for it is faith that maketh all truths active and lively.

The great motives and arguments of religion are mainly fetched from

things to come. Now it is not enough to know the things of the world

to come, but there must be an hearty assent to them, as if we did see

them before our eyes. Things that are at a distance are as nothing to

us, as the stars appear as so many spangles, they lose much of their

greatness. Men sin, and no evil cometh of it, therefore they grow bold

and senseless in sin : Eccles. viii. 11, ' Because sentence against an evil

work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is

fully set in them to do eviL' They grow remiss and slack in their

duty. The reward is not by and by : Mai. iii. 14, \* Ye have said. It is

in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordin-

ances, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts ? '

We are for a present good. Now, ' Faith is the substance of things

hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen/ Heb. xi. 1. It maketh

200 SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5.

things present as if we did see them with our eyes, as if the judgment-

seat were set and the books were opened. Those that hardened their

hearts did not beheve what God said was true, Heb. iii. 7-18. If

men did believe there were an heaven, and hell, and judgment to come,

they would not lie in their sins, they could not be unpliable to God's

motions. All disrespect of promises and threatenings cometh from un-

belief. Christ did chide his disciples for their unbelief and hardness

of heart, Mark xvi. 14. What is the reason that though we preach

the law and the judgment of God so much to you, and beseech you to

come in and receive Christ, and you shall be saved, and this time after

time, and day after day, and yet the word hath no effect upon you,

you are as ignorant and careless as ever ? The reason is you do not

believe. Certainly the word would work otherwise than it doth if you

did believe it. If one should tell a man that such an earthly potentate,

if he would but come to him and visit him, would raise him to great

honour, it would be the first thing he would do. Truly so, if you did

believe that coming to Christ were the only way to happiness, you would

mind it more seriously than you do. Again, if you did believe that

the word of God is true, that God is a just God ; if the drunkard did

believe that drunkards should be damned ; or the adulterer did believe

that no adulterer shall inherit the kingdom of God ; or if the vain per-

son or the gamester did believe that they must give an account of their

misspent time, and idle words, and vain communication, they would

not sport themselves in their sins as they do. If men did believe that

God calleth when and whom he listeth, they would not defer their

repentance and put off the motions of the Spirit, but would strike while

the iron is hot, and let out the sails when the wind bloweth. But men

do not believe, and therefore go on in their sins as they do. Tell men

of earthly things, of a commodity which, if they would but buy, it

would yield an hundred for one, surely they would not neglect the

market. We press men to renounce but a little ease and carnal

pleasures, and to use diligence to get Christ into their hearts, and they

shall have a hundred for one ; but men want faith, therefore Christ

lieth by as a refuse coumiodity. There is nothing breedeth hardness

of heart so much as unbelief of what God can and will do.

3. Custom in sinning. As an highway is trodden hard by long

travelling in it, so the heart by long custom groweth more obstinate

every day. In sin there is not only a fault, guilt, but a blot, a stronger

inclination to the practice of the same sin again ; as a brand that has

been once in the fire is more apt to burn again. Every new oath is as

oil to the tongue, to make it more glib and fleet in the repetition of

that oath or vain speech. There is a natural tenderness in men whilst

young, at least, a lesser degree of hardness, wliich will get strength by

use and age if not in time cured : Jer. xiii. '23, ' How can ye do good

that are accustomed to do evil ? ' Water when it first freezeth will

not bear the weight of a pin, but afterwards by continual freezing it

cometh to bear a cart-load.

4. Hypocrisy. Take it for dissembling, whereby we deceive others ;

or formality, whereby we deceive ourselves. For dissembling : the

pharisees were a dissembling generation, and they are the famous

instances of hardness of heart in the first gospel days. Hypocrisy is a

SERilONS UPON MAEK III. o. 201

constant lie, and every lie is a sin against light. When men take a

religion out of design, their pretences condemn them. Men sin, and

are secured against the stroke of the word and checks of conscience by

their fame and plausible appearance. Then for formal performing of

good duties : Prov. vii. 14, ' I have peace-offerings with me ; this day

have I paid my vows.' I do this and that, I read so many chapters a

day, and keep to my church. Men think they have done enough

though they have done never so little. Hardness of heart is often occa •

sioned by the ordinances. Now how do ordinances harden ? They may

harden partly as they irritate corruption, but chiefly as they are trusted

in. Duties soundly done humble men, as new wine rendeth and break-

eth old bottles all to pieces. But when formal duties are used as a

sleepy sop to stop the mouth of conscience, the heart is insensibly

hardened. Every man must have a religion to lean to. Conscience,

like the stomach when it hath no solid food, draweth wind.

5. Pride and stubborness against God. Men scorn to be controlled :

Exod. V. 2, ' And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey

his voice to let Israel go ? I know not the Lord, neither will I let

Israel go ; ' Neh. ix. 29, ' They dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto

thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, and withdrew

the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear ; ' Jer. xiii.

15, 'Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken.'

Men scorn to submit to ordinances, to be checked by God's messengers,

and say, What have we to do with them ? In this light of Christianity

the contempt is cast upon the messenger, though indeed the heart

riseth against the authority of God himself. One great cure of hard-

ness of heart is seriously to meditate on God's power : Deut. x. 16, 17,

' Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-

necked ; for the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, a

great God, a miglity, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor

ttiketh reward.' Do you know what God is? Will you contend with

him ? You will fail in the enterprise ; you cannot be hard-hearted if

you would, in the issue of the combat. Pride is the root of all sin.

What is the reason men dare sin ? They think they shall carry it out

well enough for all God, and so suffer their lusts to perk above the

commandment.

6. The deceitfalness of sin : Heb. iii. 15. ' Lest any of you be

hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' Now, how doth sin deceive

us, and so harden the heart ?

[1.] By general invectives. We all cry out of sin, and complain of

sin, and yet all this while regard it in our hearts. We make sin a

notion, and so defy it in the general, when in particulars we love it all

the while ; as many ignorant people defy the devil but hold the crown

upon his head, for he is the ruler of the darkness of this world. The

devil careth not for ill words so he can keep possession of the heart.

We make sin the common packhorse to bear all our burdens. Men

content themselves with empty declamations or forms of satire and

invective, yet the heart liketh it well enough, and so is insensibly

hardened ; they are not serious and particular. Men look upon

matters of religion as abstracted ideas and matters of fancy. Oh I

take heed of this.

202 SKRMONS UPON MARK III. 5.

[2.] By delaying : Acts xxiv. 25, ' Go thy way for this time ; when

I have a convenient season I will call for thee.' Cliristian, it is but a

deceit ; take heed thy heart be not hardened by it. What reason hast

thou to presume of that which God can only give ? If Cassar had

read the letters overnight to prevent the conspiracy, he had been safe.

What security have you, either of time or grace, but your own pre-

sumptions ? and he that is security to himself is a fool. It is true all

may be redressed by repentance, but this is not in thy power, and thy

hardness by delaying increaseth every day.

[3.] It Cometh lapped up in carnal baits of profit and pleasure, to

gratify our lusts and interests. Sin pretends great advantage; but

be not deceived, it will harden thy heart, and destroy thee ; it cannot

profit thee.

[4,] It hath many colours wherewith to beguile a man. It presents

itself in another dress than its own ; and therefore we have need to

have our eyes about us : Prov. xxviii. 14, ' Happy is the man that

feareth always : but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.'

Many sins lie secret, unrepented of, and so the heart is hardened.

[5.] It will increase upon thee ; it groweth to a custom by degrees ;

it is of a bewitching nature, and soaketh into a man insensibly, from

thought to consent, then to action, then to reiteration, then to custom.

First men excuse sin, then justify it, then glory in it, and in time they

grow senseless and confirmed in a habit of sin, and are loath to quit it.

At first temptations seemed horrible ; the first committing of sin much

perplexed the soul ; but in time it is not so burdensome, 5'ea, it is

become pleasing and delightful. Be not deceived and hardened by

saying, It is a little one, and my soul shall live ; unless we take it

betimes, as Peter went out immediately and wept bitterly, it cannot

easily be subdued. Sampson knew that Delilah had purposed to betray

him into the Philistines' hands, and yet he could not leave her. Though

sin cost men temporal and eternal life, yet they cannot give it over.

[6.] That God will be merciful ; this is another thing whereby we

are deceived, a presumption of impunity: Ps. 1. 21, ' These things hast

thou done, and I kept silence ; thou thoughtest that I was altogether

such an one as thyself ; but I will reprove thee, and set them iu order

before thine eyes.' So Deut. xxix. 19, 20, ' And it came to pass, when

he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart,

saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine

heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.' Be not deceived ; mark what

follows: 'The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the

Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses

that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall

blot out his name from under heaven.' Take heed of the deceitfuluess

of sin. These are the causes of hardness of heart.

V. The heinousness of it.

1. It is a contending with God, Oeo/na-^la, a fighting with God. The

hard heart is the greatest enemy God hath on this side hell. That

there is a contest between God and a hard heart who shall have the

better, the instance of Pharaoh showeth, God sendeth a message to

him, and meeteth with a repulse. His message to Pharaoh was, Exod.

V. 1. ' Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go.' And

SERMONS UPON »IAUK III. 5. 203

this proud creature hatli the boldness to deny him : ver. . 2, ' And

Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let

Israel go ? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.' And he

standeth it out after many warnings and foregoing judgments. And

he doth not stand alone, bat hath more fellows in the world; Neh. ix.

29, ' They dealt proudly, and hearkened not to thy commandments,

but sinned against thy judgments, and withdrew the shoulder, and

hardened their neck, and would not hear.' Every command of Grod,

every offer of grace, is a message from God : ' To you is the word of

this salvation sent,' Acts xiii, 26 ; and it should be respected with as

much reverence as if an angel himself were the messenger. Only here

is the difference ; God saith to Pharaoh, ' Let my people go ; ' to us

he saith, ' Let sin go.' It is pity he should have the repulse. Sin will

be as bad an inmate to the soul as the Israelites were a snare to Egypt ;

they were fain to thrust them out at length, and were glad they could

be so rid of them. I say, this is the contest between God and his

creatures, whether sin shall go or tarry, whether Christ shall be accepted

or no ? He sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh ; and he hath sent

prophets, apostles, pastors, and teachers to us. Let idols, images, and

false worship go ; swearing, sabbath-breaking, adultery, murder, dis-

obedience to parents, lying, covetousness, let it all go ; there should not

be a hoof left. This is God's message. Now, if you will try it out,

you shall see ' whose word shall stand, God's or yours ? ' Jer. xliv. 28 ;

his threalenings, or your vain and delusive imaginations ? If you put

it to the trial, you have more boldness than an angel: Jude 9, 'Yet

Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil (he disputed

about the body of Moses), durst not bring against him a railing accusa-

tion.' An angel durst not use one passionate word, and will you dare

to set up other gods, to profane the sabbath, to swear, lie, or be drunk,

and to say, We will not let these things go, let God say or do what he

will to the contrary ? The contest on God's part is managed for a

long time in a mild condescending way. He beseecheth his own

creatures: Jer. xiii. 15, 16, ' Hear ye, and give ear ; be not proud, for

the Lord hath spoken : give glory to the Lord your God, before he

cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains ;

and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and

make it gross darkness.' Be not obstinate ; it is better that you should

take down the stoutness of your hearts than that I should pull it down.

Let me have the glory of this conquest voluntarily ; I shall carry it at

length. You dream of happiness and pleasure ; alas! you cannot enjoy

these vain delights long. Come, leave them, and I will make you as

happy as heart can wish, but if not, take that that followeth ; you will

stumble into the dungeon of hell, and then be as miserable as almighti-

ness can make you : Job ix. 4, ' He is wise in heart, and mighty in

strength ; whoever hardened himself agciinst God and prospered ? '

You will never get the day of God; if you contend with him, there is

nothing to be expected but blows. You may indeed overcome him,

but it is not by resisting, but stooping ; a tender heart overcometh him :

Jer. xxxi. 20, ' Is Ephraim my dear son ? is he a pleasant child? for

since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still ; therefore

my bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him,

204 SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5.

saith the Lord ; ' andlsa. Ivii. 18, ' I have seen his ways, and will heal

him ; I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him, and to his

mourners.' But an hard heart is no match for God ; it is ever foiled in

the enterprise: if they yield not to his mercy, they are consumed by his

wrath. Pharaoh would contend with God, but found his maker too

hard for him at last; so Julian the apostate. Ezek. xxii. 14, ' Can thy

heart endure, or can thy hands be strong in the days that I shall deal

with thee ? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it ; ' and 1 Cor. x.

22, ' Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy ? are we stronger than he? '

It is a foolish contest ; it ever endeth with our destruction.

2. It is in itself the sorest of all judgments. When other means are

urged in vain, God giveth them up to hardness of heart ; it is one of

the chains of darkness, in which captive souls are held unto eternal

judgment. A stormy conscience, that lietli under the power of perplex-

ing despairing fears, is not so bad as an hard heart. They are both

chains of darkness, despair, and obstinacy, as in the devils ; but in men,

despair may make way for repentance. God hath them in the briers ;

many are brought to heaven by the gates of hell, God hath began

with them, but left these. Again, it will end in despair. The heart

that is not sensible now will then be sensible enough. We read of

' the worm that never dieth, and the fire that shall never be quenched,'

Mark ix. 44. In hell men will remember how every sabbath God did

stretch out the arms of his mercy to embrace them, and they would

not ; how Clirist offered a plaster of his own heart's blood to cure them,

but they refused it, and made light of it ; how the Holy Ghost put

many good motions into their hearts, but they rejected these thoughts,

and would not be interrupted in their ease and false peace. Oh ! the

deep wounds and stings these thoughts will occasion when it is too'

late !

3. It never goeth alone, but bringeth other judgments along with it.

Pharaoh had plague upon plague : Zech. vii. 12, ' They made their

hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words

which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his Spirit, by the former prophets ;

therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts ; ' more than

ordinary displeasure. So Prov. xxix. 1, ' He that, being often reproved,

hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without

remedy.' They shall be destroyed, not afflicted only, and that without

remedy ; there shall be none to help. And Kom. ii. 5, ' After thy hard-

ness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against

the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.'

God will harden his heart against you, shut up his bowels against you

in your greatest straits ; when his patience is quite spent, God will

retaliate: Zech. vii. 12, 13, 'They made their hearts as an adamant

stone, lest they should hear the law, &c. Therefore it is come to pass,

that, as he cried and they would not hear, so they cried and I would

not hear, saith the Lord of hosts.' There is a time when the stoutest-

hearted sinner, who careth least for God, shall stand in need of his help,

and would give the whole world for one favourable look from God.

But, oh, no ! not a glimpse, not the least answer. God's children meet

with sad suspensions sometimes : Cant. v. 6, ' I sought him, but I could

not find him ; I called him, but he gave me no answer.' He seemeth

SERMONS UPON MARK III, 5. 205

not to hear their prayers when they are dead to his counsels ; he will

make them sensible of their unkind, ungracious treating of him.

4. It is the great hindrance in the spiritual life ; it deprivcth you of

grace. The Spirit of God will not animate a stony heart ; a body of

flesh is only fit to be animated with a living soul ; so the heart of flesh,

or tender heart, by the Spirit of God: Ezek. xi. 19, 20, 'I will give

them one heart, and I will put a new Spirit within you, and I will take

the stony heart out of their flesh, and Avill give them an heart of flesh,

that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances, and do them ;

and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.' So Isa. Ivii. 15,

' Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose UEmie

is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a

contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to

revive the heart of the contrite ones.' There is God present with his

graces, God hath two places of special residence — the highest heaven,

and the humblest heart. In the one is the presence of his glory, in

the other of his grace. When the spirit is humbled and softened, it

is a fit pillow for God to rest on ; the hard heart hindereth us in duty,

it is an hard heart that maketh our work hard. If once the will were

gained, all things would be easy in religion : Eom. viii. 7, ' The carnal

mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God,

neither indeed can be.' It is not subject to God, but averse from him.

VI, The observations concerning this spiritual malady.

1. With spiritual hardness of heart there may be a natural and

sinful tenderness. Some men have a natural softness and sweetness of

spirit as to commerce with men, yea, rather a faulty easiness, yet they

are very hard-hearted as to God ; as Zedekiah : Jer. xxxviii. 5, \* The

king'is not he that can do anything against you.' He was easily drawn

by company and evil counsel. Usually it is so ; an hard heart is like

wax to the devil, but as a stone to God, hardened against goodness, but

€xorable and easy to be entreated by sin and Satan. If the devil do

but whist, they find an irresistible power in his temptations. If carnal

men do but hold up the finger, it is a strong cord to draw them to

excess. The looks and speeches of the harlot are enough to cause them

to follow, though it be like an ox to the slaughter: Prov. vii. 21, 22,

\* With much fair speech she caused him to yield ; with the flattering

of her lips she forced him : he goeth after her straightway as an ox to

the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks.' God may

I)lead and tell us of grace and glory, but we mind it not. A diamond

is not wrought U})on but by its own dust. On the contrary, men may

have a stout heart in dangers that are very yielding and trembling in

point of sins : Prov, xxviii, 14, ' Happy is the man that feareth always ;

but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief,' David could

encounter lions, bears, and giants, yet in what a weeping humble pos-

ture is he when he hath to do with God ! It is good to be a coward

in sin, puling and weak-hearted as to any contest with God,

2, Small sins harden as well as great sins; it is hard to say which most.

It is confessed for the present little sins do not deaden and harden the

heart so much as great ; as a prick of a pin maketh a man start, but

an heavy blow stunneth him, and leaveth him dead for a while. David,

when he cut off the lap of Saul's garment, and had some revengeful

206 SERMONS UPON MARK IIL 5.

intention against his soveriegn, he quickly perceived his error : ' Hi3

heart smote him/ 1 Sara. xxiv. 5. But when he committed the foul

8in of adultery, he lay insensible for a long space of time. But on the

other side, little sins do by degrees harden. Great sins are apparent

and liable to the judgment of conscience, but we neglect small sins, and

so a custom groweth upon us, and we are insensibly hardened by our

carelessness and constant neglect of our souls. A surfeit or violent

distemper maketh us run to the physician, but when a disease groweth

upon us by degrees, it proveth mortal ere we regard it ; therefore we

should make conscience of daily failings : Heb. iii. 13, ' Exhort one

another daih% while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened

through the deceitful ness of sin.' Great falls, as they astonish us for

the present, so they awaken conscience afterwards, and so we regard

that and other sins ; as when a great sound hath awakened us out of a

deep sleep, we easily hear lesser sounds ; but men slide into a carnal

frame of heart unawares. Qui nunquam delirat, semper erit fatiius.

We would never grow wise but for some notable acts of folly. Chryso-

stom saith that we should be more watchful of small sins than of great.

Nature abhorreth these, but the other slide into us. A little leak

imespied drowneth the ship as well as a great breach. If we would

look more to small things, so many great mischiefs would not ensue.

3. Sins of omission harden as well as sins of commission, yea, some-

times more ; a neglect of duties as well as the practice of gross sins ;

because they use not the means whereby the heart may be kept soft

and in a due remembrance of God and their duty to him. An instru-

ment never so well in tune, if it lie by, it soon groweth out of kilter.

In every sin of commission there is a sin of omission, but not the con-

trary. A man may be civilly harmless, inoffensive, and yet have a

very hard heart, if he hold no communion with God, and neglect the

means whereby the heart may be kept tender. The neglect of good

duties is a more general means of destruction than the commission of

evil. Men are estranged from God by the neglect of the word and

praj^er : Ps. xiv. 4, \* They call not upon the Lord ; ' attend not upon

the means of grace with that life and seriousness they ought to do.

4. None ai-e so confident of the goodness of their hearts as those that

have an hard heart ; for the more any spiritual disease increaseth upon

us, the less it is felt. There is hope, whilst there is some complaining

of sin, that there is some tenderness left. The hardest heart must needs

be the most confident, because they use no recollection and reflection

upon themselves : Jer. viii. 6, ' No man repented him of his wickedness,,

saying, What have I done ? ' What am I, what have I done ? Yea,

they slight their danger, take up every vain pretence and allegation to

maintain their carnal peace and quiet : Deut. xxix. 19, ' And it come to

pass, when he hearetli the words of this curse, that he bless himself in

his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination

of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst : the Lord will not spare him,'

&c. Broken-hearted christians are sensible of the holiness of God,

and what an hard matter it is to hold communion with him, and observe

their own weakness and unworthiness ; and therefore they complain of

the badness of their hearts, that there is no greater bent towards God,

and are always suspicious of their spiritual condition.

SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5. 207

5. Hardness of heart is most apt to creep upon us in times of ease

and prosperity. Solomon saith, Prov. i. 32, ' The prosperity of fools

shall destroy them ; ' and Kom. ii. 4, 5, ' Despisest thou the riches of

his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering ; not knowing that

the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ? but after thy hard-

ness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against

the day of wrath.' .Usually in the times of God's goodness and patience,

men are besotted with the pleasures of the flesh, and then lose their

feeling. Nothing bringeth a brawn upon the heart so much as sen-

suality and an inordinate use of the creatures ; it taketh away the

heart ; and usually in a prosperous condition men grow sensual and

careless. Pharaoh himself, when under the rod, could speak as good

words as another ; but when he was well at ease, then his hardness

returned upon him ; as metal in the furnace is very yielding and melt-

ing, capable of any impression, but out of the furnace it returneth to

its wonted firmness and consistency. The greatest plague was upon

his heart when he wanted other plagues. Men do well in their wicked-

ness, enjoy themselves with comfort, and then fear nothing. We see

in the brute creatures, when they are in good plight, they grow

more fierce ; so doth man that aboundeth in ease and pleasure ; his

worldly happiness maketh the heart gross and senseless. We had need

to take heed of an hard heart at all times, but especially when we

are like to be corrupted with ease and pleasure. A sensual heart will

be senseless.

6. Hardness of heart is a grievous sin at all times, but then most

sinful when most unseasonable ; for time is an aggravating circum-

stance in all things, so in this. Now when is it unseasonable ? In

times of judgment and times of gospel grace.

[1.] In times of judgment : 2 Cliron. xxviii. 22, ' In the time of hi&

distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is that king

Ahaz.' There is a brand set on him. Certainly the times we live in

are extraordinary times. We have seen many changes and great

effects of God's anger for sin ; we have now many spiritual judgments

upon us, error and blasphemy, great divisions and breaches among

God's people, and scandals of them that profess the gospel. An hard

heart now is most unsuitable ; it is like a garland of rosebuds in a

day of mourning. Clearly upon some the strokes of God's providence

have lighted very sore ; if they shall add hardness of heart to their

other plagues, who will pity them? When all the corrections of an

angry God cannot draw any sensible and serious thoughts from them,

how sad is this ! I tell you, christians, it looketli like hell to continue

sinning under suffering, and to be obstinate against God and the coun-

sels of his grace for your salvation ; it speaketh much of a spiritual

plague added to temporal judgments. If we did persuade you to a

party only, it were more excusable ; but when we press you to come to

Christ, and you still remain obstinate and hard-hearted, this is sad.

If the ministry were only used as a state engine to engage you in such

a faction and design, you might have something to plead for yourselves.

Pardon me for dealing thus freely with you ; we are debtors to all,

Bom. i. 14. Would you be troubled if the base should rise against

the honourable ? It were a judgment certainly ; but what are you to

208 SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5.

God ? Poor base worms ! will you contend with your maker ? You

would complain of it as an heavy burden, and strange inversion of all

states and conditions, if men of mean and low fortunes should be at

the top, and have power and domination over the ancient gentry and

nobility of the land. Be it so; but I would have you to consider iu

the mean time what an horrible presumption it is, and how God may

take it, that you stout it out against the fear of God. Alas ! there is

a greater distance between you and him than between you and your

fellow-creatures. For you to contest it with God, to swagger it and

outbrave his ordinances, to contend with his Spirit ! how may God

complain of this, if it be so grievous to you to be outbraved by your

fellow-creatures !

[2.] Times of light and great gospel grace. An hard heart in

gospel days is the very reproach of ordinances. Many think the

ministry and ordinances useless things. Why ? Because there is so

little success. You make them useless, and then there will not want

those that decry them apace: 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2, 'We then, as workers

together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of

God in vain ; for he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and

in the day of salvation have I succoured thee : behold now is the

accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.' An hard heart

should be a thing now quite out of fashion. In a time of ignorance, or

a time of restraint of preaching, when visions are not open, or under a

dead sleepy ministry, God might dispense with what he will not under

a clear discovery of his will. But now, when the doctrine of the gospel is

so clearly opened, and Christ so freely tendered, now to be estranged

from the fear of God is as unsuitable as if we should revert to the

fashions of barbarism, or those kind of clothes or dresses which our an-

cestors wore before they were reduced to this pitch of civility where-

unto we are now arrived. You would laugh at garments of an antique

fashion, and if the gallants of the age should put on the dress of Adam,

or be clothed with skins newly taken from the beasts offered in sacri-

fice ; a blind mind and a sottish obstinate heart is more uncomely in

the eye of God. Will you be strangers in Israel, and lose the bless-

ings of the times by refusing the stricter ways of God ?

7. Hardness of heart groweth and increaseth on us more and more,

if we let it alone : Zech. vii. 11, 12, ' But they refused to hearken, and

pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not

hear ; yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they

should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent

in his Spirit by the former prophets.' There are so many degrees men-

tioned ; first they grow slight and careless, and do not care to hear

what you say ; then they refuse to obey what they have heard ; then

they grow sermon-proof; they can hear, and have no benefit by it.

As long as the word doth any way affect a sinner, there is some hope ;

but within a while conscience smiteth not, and men have gotten the

victory over their fears and scruples ; and thus they go on from natural

to voluntary, and from voluntary to judicial hardness of heart, and so

are a ready prey for the devil.

8. Dilatory excuses are the last refuge of an hard heart. When

they can no longer withstand a conviction, they adjourn and put off

SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5. 209

the compliance with Gods will, and so elude the importunity of the

present conviction. Felix his heart boggled : Acts xxiv. 25, and as

he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,

Felix trembled, and said, Go thy way for this time ; when I have a

convenient season I will call for thee/ Mind the })resent season, when

God is affording opportunities of getting grace : Heb. iii. 7, 8, ' To-day,

if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts ; ' Ps. cxix. 60, ' I

made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.' Zaccheus,

Luke xix. 6, ' He made haste, and came down, and received him joy-

fully.' Peter and Andrew, Mark iv. 20, ' They straightway left their

nets and followed him : Paul, Gal. i. 16, ' Immediately I conferred not

with flesh and blood.' If God hath given you any will and inclination

for the present, it is an advantage. Sin, the longer it continueth, the

stronger it groweth. He that doth not go over at the fountain-head

will not be able to go over when the stream groweth broader ; and the

farther he goes downward, the broader still he findeth it. Ev-ery day's

impeniteucy bringeth on a new degree of hardness. Would a man

that is to drink that which to his knowledge is poisoned put the more

into his cup, and then take it oflF, out of a presumption that at length

he shall find an antidote ? Alas ! thou mayest be poisoned and dead

before the antidote comes.

SERMON III.

And Jesus looked round about on them luith anget', being grieved for

the hardness of their hearts. — Mark iii. 5.

Use 1. Of trial Is this'our state ? Take the two properties to judge

by — insensibleness and inflexibleness.

First, A hard heart is insensible ; insensible of providences, of the

word, and of the state of the soul.

1, Insensible of providences.

[1.] Of mercies : either of the author of mercies ; they never look

np to the God of their mercies : Hosea ii. 8, ' She did not know that I

gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold;\*

as swine, that feed upon the acorns, but never look up to the tree from

whence they fall : Cant. iv. 1, ' Behold thou art fair, my love ; behold

thou art fair ; thou hast doves' eyes.' As doves peck, and look upwards.

It is a sign of a tender heart to see God in every mercy. A drowsy

and inattentive soul never heedeth it, is wholly swallowed up in present

enjoyments, and looketh no further. It is our privilege above the beasts

to know the first cause ; other creatures live upon God, but they are

not capable of knowing God ; they glorify God in their kind, but we

may know him. Idolatry and sottishness had never crept into the

world if men had owned the first cause ; or of the end of mercies, which

is to draw in our hearts to God : therefore they are called cords of a

VOL. SVIL O

210 SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5.

man : Hosea xi. 4, ' I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of

love ; ' Esther vi. 3, ' What honour and dignity hath been done to

Mordecai for this ? ' 2 Sam. vii. 2, ' Then the king said unto Nathan

the prophet, See now I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God

dwelleth within curtains.' When the heart is urging to duty upon

this score, God hath been good to me, he hath given me food and

raiment ; what have I done for God ? Now the heart is hard when

we are not sensible of his daily providence and gracious supplies in this

kind : 2 Sam. xii. 7-9, \* Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed

thee king over Israel, and delivered thee out of the hand of Saul ; and

I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom,

and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah ; and if that had been

too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil

in his sight ? ' David had lost his awe of God, because he had not a

thankful sense of the mercies of God.

[2.] Of corrective providences. The body is a tender part with

wicked men ; when they are straitened for bodily conveniences, they will

complain ; yet the hard heart is still insensible of judgments. They

are insensible of the author or deserving cause ; they do not look

upward nor inward ; and though doctrinally right in these things, yet

they do not seriously consider it, and recall it to mind. Opinion is one

thing, and consideration is another. Wicked men may take up good

opinions, but they do not consider the force and consequence of them.

(1.) They do not see the hand of God in them : Isa. xxvi. 11, ' Lord,

when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see.' They look on these

things but as a chance : 1 Sam. vi. 9, ' And see, if it goeth up by the

way of his own coasts to Bethshemesh, then he hath done us this great

evil ; but if not, then we shall know that it was not his hand that smote

us, it was a chance that happened to us.' If men own God's hand,

they should take up the matter with him ; but they own it doctrinally,

though not practically. A godly man hath explicit thoughts of God.

Job doth not say, The Sabeans and the Chaldeans, but, ' The Lord

gave, and the Lord hath taken away,' Job i. 21. They do not com-

plain, when they are crossed, of chance, but the Lord is angry ; and

when they are stricken, they consult with him, and humble themselves

before him. Wicked men are sensible of the smart of the rod, but not

of the hand that holds it.

(2.) They do not see the deserving cause of them, which is sin :

Lam. iii. 39, 40, ' Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for

the punishment of his sins ? Let us search and try our ways, and turn

again to the Lord.' If sickness cometh, if a relation be taken away, if

an estate be blasted, a waking conscience looks to the cause ; they would

see the mind of God in the rod. When Israel fell before the men of

Ai, Joshua looketh out for the troubler ; so do God's children.

2. Insensible of the power of the word ; they have no taste, no feel-

ing of the powers of the world to come : Jer. xxiii. 29, ' Is not my word

like a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock

in pieces ? ' There is a breaking and a melting power in the word.

[1.] What law-work hath been wrought on you ? what shakings of

heart, and feeling of the powers of the world to come ? Have you

SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5. 211

been roused and startled out of 3'our natural condition ? Many will

assent to this truth, that all are miserable by nature ; but wast thou

ever sensible that this was thy case, and accordingly affected ? Wert

thou ever feelingly convinced of thy misery ? Otherwise we do but

learn these things as a parrot learneth them, by rote. What feeling

have you of your cursed estate by nature ? Have you had any expei--

ience of the terrors of the Lord ? You know the misery of man by

nature, but have you ever felt it ?

[2.] What gospel-work hath been wrought on you ? what taste have

you had of the good word of God ? what experience of the efficacy of

the Spirit ? 1 Peter ii. 3, ' If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is

gracious.'

3. Insensible of the state of the soul ; they never look after it. If

the body feel but the scratch of a pin, or want but a night's sleep, we

complain presently ; but the poor soul, though oppressed with lusts

and unfit for duties, is never minded nor regarded, and they have no

heart to pray for a release out of that spiritual judgment. To own the

plague of our own hearts argueth tenderness : 1 Kings viii. 38, ' Which

shall know every man the plague of his own heart.' When we complain

of lusts more than fevers, and indisposition of soul more than weakness

of body, the languishing of grace more than outward consumption, the

stone in the heart more than the stone in the bladder and kidneys.

W^e find Ephraim bemoaning himself, being ill at ease for an untoward

heart : Jer. xxxi. 18, ' I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning him-

self thus : Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock

unaccustomed to the yoke.' Did you ever complain of the hardness of

your heart, and lay it before God ? Do you not bemoan your spiritual

distempers when lazy and backward ? Where is your relish for the

word ? your delight in spiritual things ? Isa. Ixiii. 17, ' Lord, why

hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from

thy fear ? '

Secondly, A hard heart is inflexible. That will be known where it

is more gross.

1. By a refusal of the word, when men will not give God the hearing :

Zech. vii. 11, 12, ' But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the

shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear ; yea, they

made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law,

and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the

former prophets,' They refused to hear, either to vouchsafe their pre-

sence or attention : Acts xiii. 46, ' Ye put it from you, and judge yom--

selves unworthy of eternal life.' The case is clear in these, whereas to

others it is doubtful ; what needeth more dispute in the matter ?

2. By an unteachableness, so as not to apprehendought that is spiritual.

To be ignorant is one thing, to be unteachable is another : Ezek. xii.

2, \* Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which

have eyes to see, and see not ; they have ears to hear, and hear not :

for they are a rebellious house ; ' Acts xxviii. 26, ' Go unto this people,

and say. Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand ; and seeing

ye shall see, and shall not perceive.' They do not see what they do

see ; they have no spiritual discerning, though a grammatical know-

ledge : Job V. 14, ' They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope

212 SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5.

in the noonday as in the night.' They ave simple in the midst of

rational advantages ; as the disciples : Luke xxiv. 16, ' Their eyes were

holden, that they should not know him. They see the general truth,

but make no application. When a man is shown a thing, and he

minds it not, but his mind is on another object, that man may be said

to see and not to see, because he doth not regard it. Or a man that

hath a matter come before him, he heareth it, but his mind being

otherwise employed, he regardeth it not ; in which sense he may be

said to hear and not to hear. Not to apply is not to regard ; in seeing

rationally and literally, he doth not see spiritually, with any life and

power. There is a literal knowledge, and there is a spiritual know-

ledge ; the literal knowledge is that which the hard heart may have.

It is said, 2 Cor. iii. 3, ' Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle

of Christ, ministered by us ; written not with ink, but with the Spirit

of the living God ; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of

the heart.' It is an allusion to the law of Moses, Consider it in the

letter, as separated from the Spirit, and only as a law written in stone,

wherein there is a naked direction of life, but no power ; so a stony

heart may see, but in seeing they see not. But the Spirit of Christ

writeth it on the mind and heart, and maketh the heart docile and

tractable: Kom. vii. 6, ' That we should serve in newness of spirit, and

not in the oldness of the letter.' The letter of the law only manifested

duty, but gave no power to perform it ; it discovered corruption, but

gave no strength to subdue it ; it was written in tables of stone, to

show the hardness of man's heart. But now the law, when it cometh

in upon us with a spiritual light, softeneth and strengtheneth the heart,

and maketh it docile and pliable to God's counsel.

3. By an unwillingness to be admonished in public or private : if in

public, the greater the evil. Private admonition is a kind of charge,

a closer application. To storm against private admonition argueth an

ill spirit, when men are loath to be disturbed in the ways of sin. But

much more against public admonition, where the application ariseth

not so much from a personal charge as from their own consciences.

When men cannot endure sound doctrine, it is a dangerous crisis, that

which the prophet Jeremiah speaketh of, chap. vi. 10, ' To whom shall

I speak and give warning, that they may hear ? Behold, their ear is

nncircumcised, and they cannot hearken ; behold, the word of the Lord

is unto them a reproach, they have no delight in it' Surely men

delight in Satan's arms when they are loath to be plucked from thence.

Satan hath made his nest there, and is loath to be disturbed : 2 Sam.

xxiii, 6, 7, ' But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust

away, because they cannot be taken with hands ; but the man that

shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear.'

The sons of Belial are compared to thorns that cannot be touched with

hands, but rend and tear those that meddle with them. Men are angry

that they cannot quietly enjoy their lusts. Plausible strains are very

suitable to a carnal heart, or tame lectures of contemplative divinity ;

but sound doctrine, that rendeth and teareth the conscience, is not

endured.

4. By scoflfing at the word. The chair of the scorner is a prefer-

ment in sin : Ps. i. 1, 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the

counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth

SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5. 213

in the seat of the scornful ; ' Jer. xxiii. 34-36, ' And as for the prophet,

and the priest, and the people that shall say, The burden of the Lord,

I will even punish that man and his house. Thus shall ye say every

one to his neighbour, and every one to his brother, What hath the

Lord answered ? and what hath the Lord spoken ? And the burden

of the Lord shall ye mention no more ; for every man's word shall be

his burden; for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the

Lord of hosts our God,' &c. The prophets used to begin their pro-

phecies with \* The burden of the Lord ; ' and they would in mockery

demand, What burden they had from the Lord for them ? Now shall

we hear again of the burden of the Lord. Saith God, ' Every man's

word shall be his burden ; ' that is, you shall dearly pay for this

scoffing language ; yoiu' words shall be your burden. But these marks

may not be close enough, let me propound other things.

[1.] Did you ever lay down the buckler before God, and say, I have

done foolishly ; I will do so no more ? Were you ever feelingly con-

vinced, and your lusts powerfully subdued ? Did you ever say, as

Paul, Acts ix. 6, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ? ' Every man

carrieth on his opposition against God till he be brought to yield by a

mighty Spirit breaking in upon him. When were the wings broken

that you could fly no longer ? the will subdued, that you said. Lord I

have too long stouted it out against thee, so that you were willing to

be at peace with God ? Isa. xxvii. 5, ' Let him take hold of my strength

that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me.'

Were you ever forced to cry quarter ? Didst thou ever apprehend God

ready to smite and give fire upon thee, and then in a submissive

posture did entreat him to stay his hand ?

[2.] What effect hath the word upon you ? Isa. Ixvi. 2, ' To this

man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and

trembleth at my word.' It is a great part of sensibleness to tremble at

the word. What meltings and yieldings of heart do you express?

Doth it put you upon recourse to God ? 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27, ' Because

thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God when

thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants

thereof, and humbledst thyself before me,. and didst rend thy clothes

and weep before me, I have even heard thee, saith the Lord.' Didst

thou ever humble thyself before the Lord, to clear up matters between

God and thy soul, and to get thy doubts resolved, and thy lusts

mortified ?

[3 ] What pliableness has there been in thee to the Holy Ghost's

motions ? A man that hath a tender heart yieldeth to the motions of

the Holy Spirit : Ps. xxvii. 8, ' When thou saidst, Seek ye my face ;

my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' There is a

quick echo to God's voice : Isa. vi. 8, ' I heard the voice of the Lord

saying. Whom shall I send ? and who will go for us ? Then said I,

Here I am ; send me.^ There is not only a readiness to obey, but he

offers himself to the work. When we grow lazy and backward in holy

things, and hang off, it is a high degree of hardness of heart.

Use 2. Exhortation.

1. To press us to beware of hardness of heart ; it is a grievous sin,

I shall use three arguments —

[1.] It depriveth you of grace. (See before, p. 205.)

214 SERMONS UPON MAUK HI. 5. ,

[2.] It imfitteth you for duty while we are under the power of it.

An hard heart is forced and superstitious. With what coldness and

formality did David pray during the suspension of God's grace ! We

come into God's presence with great backwardness and. reluctancy while

we are under the power of a liard heart.

[3.] It fitteth for judgment. The heart growetli harder and harder,

and the mind blinder and blinder, till it be cast into an utter indis-

position and impossibility of repentance. Hardness of heart turns a

man into a beast, nay, into a devil ; and according to our sin so is

God's wrath : Rom. iii. 5, 'After thy hardness and impenitent heart,

thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and

revelation of the righteous judgment of God.'

2. To press us to come out of this evil frame of spirit. Argu-

ments —

[1.] As long as the lieart is hard you are very remote from the com-

forts of the gospel. Christ came ' to heal the broken-hearted,' Luke,

iv. 18. So Mat. ix. 12, 13, ' They that be whole need not the physician,

but they that are sick : I came not to call the righteous, but sinners

to repentance.' You are full of sin, but not sick ; as a toad is full of

poison, but the toad is not sick, because it is natural to him. Will a

physician go about to cure a toad ? Men lie under a great weight of

sin, yet they sleep, and eat, and drink, and trade, and look as well as

ever, feel no pain, nor anything to trouble them. These men have no

need and will to be cured, and, of all men, are most properly said to

be dead in trespasses and sins ; they neither break an hour's sleep, nor

abate one drachm of their carnal delights, but are heart-whole. The

physician hath no desire to meddle with them that will not take what

he prescribeth, as carnal men will not submit themselves to God's

directions.

[2.] You are very remote from the work of the gospel. As God

maketh a way for his anger, so he maketh a way for his mercy and

grace. The heart is fitted and prepared for the Spirit's residence. It

is softened before it is quickened : Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, ' I will take

away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of

flesh ; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in

my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.' The

vital spirit is not infused till the body be organised and formed. God

made Adam out of the dust of the ground, and then breathed into him

the breath of life. The Spirit of grace coming into the tender heart

maketh way for itself.

Now for the cure of it, I will recommend unto you two means, two

graces, and two ordinances.

First, Two means, light and love.

1. Light : Jer. xxxi. 19, ' Surely after that I turned I repented ;

and after that I was instructed I smote upon my thigh ; I was ashamed,

yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.'

Men that know not the nature and danger of sin are little troubled

about it. Where there is no knowledge there is little conscience.

When the troops of Syria were smitten with blindness, they were easily

led into the midst of their enemies, 2 Kings vi. 18, 19 ; and when they

thousrht themselves at Dothan thev were in Samaria. Ignorance,

SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5. 215

because it is not always accompanied with gross acts, is little thought

of ; but it is a bloody sin. If men did know God and themselves more,

they could not be satisfied with their condition. Ignorance is the

greatest cause of hardening.

2. Love. I do not consider it as a grace, but as an argument to

melt the soid. It is a forcible argument and a kindly argument,

[1.] It is a forcible argument. Saul relented when David had an

advantage against him, and spared him in the cave : 1 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17,

' Saul lift up his voice and wept ; and he said to David, Thou art more

righteous than I ; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have

rewarded thee evil.' To make the heart relent, it is good to study

God's kindness, not only how he hath spared us, but how he hath

blessed us.

(1.) For temporal mercies, creation and providence. For the

mercies of creation : We all condemn the rebellion of Absalom for

rising against his father. God made us out of nothing ; none so much

^x father as God, and yet we rebel against him. If we had lost a limb,

an eye, a tooth, or an arm, would we injure him that could restore us

these things ? God gave them to us at first ; how should the thoughts

of this soften our hearts ! Then for the mercies of providence :

Xathan mentions God's mercies to David to humble him : 2 Sam.

xii. 7-9, ' I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee

out of the hand of Saul ; and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy

master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and

of Judah ; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given

unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the

commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight ? ' It is God that

feedeth and maintaineth you, and preserveth you. Men stand upon

their honour in the world, to be true to their interest, not to be unthank-

ful to their preservers. Now God giveth us life and breath and all

things. You value these things when they are given you by men,

much more should you when they are given you by God. Is water the

worse because it cometli from the fountain and not from the cistern ?

Water is purer in the fountain. We have more reason to value mercies

when they come from God, that so great a majesty should look after

you : Ps. cxiii. 6, ' Who humbleth himself to behold the things that

are in heaven and in the earth ; ' that God that standeth not in need

of you, as man doth of the meanest ; that God whom you have ofiended,

■whose favour you are so much concerned about. In a small gift from

a king, the favour is valued : we are continually fed and maintained

at the expense and care of his providence.

(2.) For spiritual mercies ; they melt the heart. What great love

Christ showed in the business of our salvation, what he left, what he

suffered, what he purchased !

(Ist.) What he left. That love that is accompanied with self-denial is

accounted the highest. How many degrees did the sun of righteous-

ness go back ! eKevcoaiv kavrov; Phil. ii. 8, 'He humbled, or emptied

himself.' There was a veil upon his godhead : when ' he was ricli, for

our sakes he became poor,' 2 Cor. viii. 9. In the fulness of the God-

head he abstained from the use of it. Did Christ leave heaven, and

wilt not thou leave thy lusts ? Was he made the Son of man, and wilt

216 SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5.

not thou be made the son of God H It was his abasement, but it is

our advancement.

{2d.) What he suffered. We are more affected with what men

suffer for us tlian with what they do for us. Cuhitum sine manu.

To sliow the stump of the arm where the liand was lost was an effec-

tual plea : Zech. xii. 10, ' They shall look upon me whom they have

pierced ; and they shall mourn for him, as one mournetli for his only

son, and be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his

first-born.' Sin doth most affect the heart when we consider the wrong

done to Christ by it. Amor doloris causa — The more a man loveth

another, or apprehends that he is loved of him, the more he is grieved

that he hath any way injured him. Your sins strike at Christ, and

have pierced him ; shall not your hearts be pierced when his head was

pierced with thorns, his hands and feet with nails, his heart with

sorrows ? Can you look upon Golgotha with dry eyes and a careless

stupid heart ? Think that you heard Christ say. Behold, is any sorrow

like to my sorrow ? Will you still go on in your rebellion against

me ? Is all nothing, all that I have done and suffered for you ?

(Sd) What hath he purchased for us ? He gave himself a ransom

and price, a ransom to free us from death and hell. We would love a

man that should get a pardon for our lives when we are condemned to

die: 1 Thes. i. 10, ' Even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to

come.' There was never any such wrath past or present ; it is a thing

to come, when we shall stir up all his wrath. And a price to purchase

for us the favour of God, and our eternal abode with him in heaven.

Heaven is called ' the purchased possession,' Eph. i. 14. If we were

to be annihilated, or to spend our time in some obscure place, it were

mercy ; but to be for ever with the Lord, and to be filled up with God,

who can express the greatness of this mercy ? And all this is freely

offered to you in the gospel. Things that concern us affect us; and

therefore surely this should melt the heart : Kom. xii. 1, ' I beseech

you therefore, brethren by the mercies of God.' What ! shall not

mercy prevail ? Joel ii. 13, ' And rend your heart, and not your

garments, and turn unto the Lord your God ; for he is gracious and

merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of

the evil.' Surely God's graciousness and readiness to receive returning

sinners should work upon us. An hammer will easily break an hard

stone against a soft bed ; but if it be laid on an hard solid body, that

will not give way underneath, strike as hard as you will, it is kept from

breaking ; so smite thy soul on the gospel, hell and damnation may be

the hammer ; but then lay thy soul upon the gospel and gospel con-

siderations, then it breaketh all to shatters. Strike thy soul with the

blows of God's wrath against the law, and it resists still ; all doth but

make us desperate ; but now remember the mercies of the Lord, how

freely he inviteth returning sinners, and tliis breaks the heart to

pieces.

[2.] It is a kindly argument ; the heart is not till then kindly

humbled for sin as sin. An apprehension of wrath is one thing, godly

sorrow is another thing ; the former is necessary, but not enough : 2

Kings xxii. 19, ' Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast

humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake

SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5. 217

against this place, and a^i^ainst tlie inhabitants thereof, that they should

become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept

before me, I also have heard thee, saith the Lord.' Threatenings may

terrify, but this melts the heart, and begets a serious remorse for sin,

as offensive, displeasing, and grievous unto God : 2 Cor. vii. 10, ' For

godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of ;

but the sorrow of the world worketh death ; ' Ezek. vi. 9, ' And they

that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they

shall be carried captives ; because I am broken with their whorish

heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a

whoring after their idols ; and they shall loath themselves for the evils

which they have committed in all their abominations.' Not only for

the evils which they have suffered, but which they have committed ;

for the evil that is in sin, not for the evil that is after sin : 2 Chron.

xxxii. 26, Hezekiah, ' humbled himself for the pride of his heart.' Not

only for the inconvenience and mischief done thereby, but because God

was offended. That christian Niobe wept much 'because she loved

much,' Luke vii. 47.

Secondly, There are two graces — faith and fear.

1. Faith. As reason maketh a difference between a man and a beast,

so doth faith between a man and a man. It is faith bringeth us under

the power of a truth, and maketh light active. Three times Christ re-

proached his disciples for hardness of heart, and still the cause given

is unbelief : Mark vi. 52, ' They considered not the miracle of the

loaves for their hearts were hardened ; ' Mark viii. 17, ' Why reason ye

because ye have no bread ? Perceive ye not yet, neither understand ?

have ye your heart yet hardened ? ' Mark xvi. 14, \* Afterwards he

appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them

because of their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed

not them which had seen h'im after he was risen.' A man is dull,

stupid, and senseless till faith maketh light break in upon the heart

with power ; till then he will not make use of his eyes, ears, or memory.

All affections follow persuasion. Faith persuadeth of death, and hell,

and judgment to come. We would not trifle away the day of grace

if we did believe the goodness of God offering favour and life eternal

in Christ. Hcec audiunt quasi somniantes — Men entertain these things

as a dream, and are only a little troubled for the present, till they

thoroughly believe them.

2. Fear. It is always made a preservative against hardness of heart:

Isa. Ixiii. 17, ' Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and

hardened our heart from thy fear ? ' Fear argueth a constant sense of

God's presence, and a deep respect to him, so as that we are loath to

offend him ; it makes the soul to walk as in God's company, and there-

fore it is kept humble : Prov. xxviii. 14, \* Happy is the man that fear-

eth alway ; but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.'

It will make us tender of offending God, and yielding to our own cor-

ruptions, though never so secret. Who is the man that is opposed to

him that hardeneth his heart ? ' He that feareth alway.' Careless-

ness breedeth senselessness ; but now, when we are continually watchful,

and say, Shall I thus and thus offend God ? the heart is kept in a good

frame.

218 SERMONS UPON MARK III. 5.

Tliirdly, There are two ordinances — the word and prayer ; for

water, if never so scalding, will return to its natural coldness.

1, The word : 2 Chron. xxxiv. 19, ' It came to pass, when the king

had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes ; ' and ver. 27,

' Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before

God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the

inhabitants thereof, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me, I

have even heard thee also, saith the Lord ; ' Heb. iii. 7, 8, ' To-day, if

3'e will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.' A conscionable hear-

ing the word will prevent hardness of heart : Jer. xxiii. 29, ' Is not my

word like a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the

rock in pieces ? ' There is the double work of the word — legal and

evangelical ; the breaking and the melting power of it. There is a

great deal of difference between breaking the ice with a staff, and thaw-

ing or melting it : break it in one place, and it f reezeth in another ;

melting is more universal. There are legal breakings and gospel melt-

ings ; there sin is discovered, here it is subdued. But then you must

use the word as an ordinance, receive it in faith and obedience ; use it

in obedience, when you are discouraged in point of faith: Luke v. 5,

' Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing ; never-

theless at thy word I will let down the net.' But use it not only in

obedience, but in faith ; you must hear the word, not only as a moral

lecture or legal discourse, or as a means of literal instruction, but evan-

gelically, Avaiting for the power and presence of God.

2. Prayer. God will be specially owned in this work. No creature

in the world can soften and turn the heart, but only God. He that

made the heart can only change it : Ezek. xi. 1 9, ' And I will give them

one heart, and I will put a new spirit within j'ou ; and I will take the

stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh.' It

is God only that gives a teachable mind, a pliable will, and ready aflfec-

tions. Go, then, and practise this duty ; beg of God to give you a

heart more pliable to the work of grace, more capable to be renewed,

more soft and ready to receive the impressions of grace, and be earnest

with him for this.

I shall now give you some further advice.

1. In the first place, begin with conversion to God ; look for a

change of state. Eepentance in particular cases is neither right nor

acceptable, as long as men do not mind conversion to God, and a change

of state by regeneration. When the tree is good, then the fruits are

answerable. Get the heart of stone taken away, and then labour to

preserve a tender frame. It is a fruitless course to look after a good

frame, till we are brought into a good estate. Natural hardness is the

cause of habitual hardness ; till that be taken away by regeneration all

Cometh to nothing.

2. Be tender how you use your light. Men wax bold by sinning

against light, and seem to get a victory over tlieir consciences. When

the candle is put out, lust will be stirring. Light and reason is God's

bridle on man to keep him in awe. Well, then, use your light ten-

derly. If it be bat an half light, search further ; if it be a full light,

walk by it. If you are children of the light, you will have no fellow-

ship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

SERMONS UPON MARK lU. 5. 219

3. After you have sinned, take up betimes ; as Peter went out, and

wept bitterly ; for sin will fret, and soak in more and more.

4. Use frequent recollection and commuumg with your hearts. Man

hath reason, and can talk with himself. God, that cannot err, surveyed

every day's work, and found it good. Cast up your account at the foot

of every page. He that runneth in debt, and never casteth up his

accounts, will sink at last. A man is insensibly hardened for want of

searching and ransacking his conscience ; there is no serious repentance

without it : Lam. iii. 40, ' Let us search and try our ways, and turn

again to the Lord.' Grod will search you if you leave the work to

him.

5. Improve afflictions. It is a means God hath appointed to shake

us out of our security. We are apt to be lulled asleep with the delights

and pleasures of sin till we feel the sharp rod of afflictions : 2 Chron.

xxviii. 22. ' And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more

against the Lord : this is that King Ahaz.' They are monsters of

nature and hopeless wretches that are not reclaimed by afflictions. God

sets a brand on Ahaz, like a dogged servant that will not stir, beat him

never so much. Unprofitableness under the rod is an ill presage. In

hell sinners are always suffering and always sinning.

6. Beware of those things which are both steps unto, and causes of,

hardness of heart ; for one degree is the cause of another ; as when sin

is committed witlwut remorse, and swallowed without grief.

7. Beware of extenuating sin, of having less thoughts of it, and being

less troubled about it. At first it seemed a horrible thing, a burden too

heavy for us ; but afterwards it grows less light, and the heart more

insensible, and sin more delightful. The burden of sin increaseth in

the children of God as light and acquaintance with God increaseth.

That which they made nothing of at first groweth very heavy.

8. Keep grace in a constant exercise. Let the fire be kept always in

that came down from heaven, 2 Tim. i. 6, ' Wherefore I put thee in

remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God that is in thee.'

9. Frequent the society of God's people. Want of care of our com-

pany is a great fault ; for company hardeneth in sin or humbleth. The

very example of God's people will be a great help to you ; how tender

they are, how watchful, what meltings of heart they have in prayer, how

they make conscience of the least sin, how they complain of themselves,

Oh ! what a hard heart have I ! Coals lying together keep fire. This

is a means to keep us tender : Heb. iii. 13, " But exhort one another

daily while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the

deceitfulness of sin.'

SERMONS UPON EXODUS IV. 21.

SERMON I.

I will harden his heart, that he shall not let my people go. —

ExoD. iv. 21.

I E[AVE spoken of hardness of heart as it is proper to man. I shall now

speak of that judicial hardness which is inflicted by God ; a notable

instance whereof we have in Pharaoh, that was raised up that Grod

might in him make his power known ; that is, he was born into the

world, and advanced to royal dignity, that the world may know what

God can do against an obstinate contradicting creature. And accord-

ingly it is applied by the apostle : Eom. ix. 17, ' For the scripture

saith unto Pharoah, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up,

that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be

declared throughout all the earth.' Therefore it is an instance worth

the viewing.

In this place God acquainteth Moses of it aforehand, to fortify him

against all discouragements. He was to deal with an obstinate crea-

ture, but it was that which God had foreseen and foredecreed : ' I will

harden his heart, that he shall not let my people go.'

The point or head of doctrine is, God s hardening of sinners. You

may take it in the form of a proposition, for the help of the weakest.

Doct. God himself hath a hand in the hardening of obstinate sinners.

About fourteen times is the hardness of Pharaoh's heart spoken of ;

and thi'ice it is said, ' He hardened his own heart : ' Exod. viii. 15,

\* When Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart,

and hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said.' So ver. 32,

' And Pharaoh hardened his heart at that time also, neither would he

let the people go ; ' and again, chap. ix. 34, ' And when Pharaoh saw

that the rain, and the hail, and the thunders were ceased, he sinned

yet more, and hardened his heart, he and all his servants.' In all the

other places it is ascribed to God himself. Man hardeneth, and then

God hardeneth. When God blindetli a man, he first closeth his own

eyes ; and when God hardeneth a man, he first contracteth a brawn

and stifluess upon his own heart. Pharaoh in hardening himself is

charged with two things — slighting of the judgment: cliap. vii. 23,

' And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his

222 SERMONS UPON EXODUS IV. 21.

heart to this also.' And contempt of the threatening : chap. viii. 15

' He hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them, as the Lord'

had said.' And the very same thing also is said to be of God: chap,

vii. 13, 'He hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto

them, as the Lord had said.'

For the clearing of this, I shall — (1.) Give you some observations

from the story ; (2.) Show you how God hardeneth ; (3.) The causes

of it.

I. I shall give you some general observations from the story ; for in

the story of Pharaoh we have the exact platform of an hard heart.

1. Between the hard heart and God there is an actual contest who

shall have the better. The parties contesting are God and Pharaoh.

(See the first Sermon on Mark iii. 5.)

2. The sin that hardened Pharaoli. and put him upon this contest,

was covetousness and interest of state. Jacob's seventy souls that ho

brought down to Egypt were grown to six hundred thousand fighting

men, besides children ; and to let such a company of men go, whom

they used as slaves, besides the prey of their herds and flocks, seemed

hard to Pharaoh. Which is not only an item to magistrates, to re-

tain nothing which God hateth out of interest and reason of state,

but also to private christians. Whatever of gain and advantage we

may fancy in sin, it will at length prove a certain loss. If God send a

message for our right eye, we must pluck it out ; or for our right hand,

we must cut it of. It is dangerous to deny God anything. If he

demand Israel, and all the flocks and herds, let them go ; the sweetest

interests, the dearest pleasures, the most gainful employments, if they

are unlawful, let them go. There is an usual contest between interest

and duty, between pleasure and obedience, between profit and the

command ; but it is better our own faith should give the command,

the victory, than God's power : 1 John v. 4, ' This is the victory

that overcomes the world, even our faith.' He had before spoken

of keeping the commandments, ver. 3, and presently he speaketh of

\* victory over the world.' The world is the great enemy of the com-

mandments ; and till it be overcome, a christian can have no comfort,

l)ut still be contesting with God, as Pharaoh was, and slighting every

message.

3. This contest on Pharaoh's part is managed with slightings and

contempt of God ; on God's part, with mercy and condescension. On

Pharaoh's part with slightings and contempt of God : Exod. v. 2,

' And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to

let Israel do ? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.'

Words of profane contempt. ' Who is the Lord ? ' as if he should

say, Am not I king of Egypt ? who is my peer, much less my supe-

rior and my lord ? ' I know not the Lord.' Ere God hath done

with Pharaoh he shall know him to the purpose. Mark the words, ' I

know not ; ' and then, ' I will not.' Hardness is the usual effect of

blindness. Errors of mind go on to errors of heart. I will not know,

I will not hear of it ; I care not for such a duty, nor will I weigh or

consider what is God's will concerning me. The eye affecteth the

heart. Pharaoh did not consider what it was to deal with God, and

then doubleth the burdens of the Israelites. But now, on God's part

SEEMONS UPON EXODUS IV, 21. 223

it is managed with sweetness and kindness. God from the beginning

foreknew the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, and therefore miglit have

swept him away of a sudden, hut he giveth him frequent warnings and

convictions. He would have men convinced ere they are punished.

Foregoing mercy showeth the righteousness of ensuing wrath. In all

the progress of the story the first miracles were before him, the next

upon him. And every judgment is threatened before it be executed ;

God telleth what he would do to warn Pharaoh. In one plague it is

notable that God doth not only threaten the judgment, but sendeth a

gracious warning to bid him take his cattle out of the fields : Exod. ix.

l9, \* Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast

in the field ; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in

the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down

upon them, and they shall die.' To show that God delighteth not in

the ruin and destruction of the creature, and to make Pharaoh the more

liable to condemnation, and to spare such among the Egyptians as had

some fear of God remaining in them, but chiefly to harden Pharaoh

the more: Exod. x. 1, 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto

Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants,

that 1 might show these my signs before him.' Moses might say, Lord,

therefore let me never go to Pharaoh ; but saith God, ' Go in unto

him, for I have hardened his heart.' God continueth the means,

though he denieth grace ; and the wicked nmst be admonished, though

they will not be reformed. In the hardening of sinners, God usually

observeth this course : by mercies and the means of grace they are

convinced and hardened at the same time ; there is still new matter of

glorifying God, and hardening the creature.

4. The first plague on Pharaoh's heart is delusion. Moses worketh

miracles, turneth Aaron's rod into a serpent, rivers into blood, bringeth

frogs, and the magicians still do the same ; God permitteth these

magical impostures, to leave Pharaoh in his wilful error. It is pro-

bable that what the magicians did was not real, but a mere delusion of

the senses ; but the Lord doth not discover the cheat, because his pre-

sent aim was not to shame Satan, but to harden Pharaoh ; therefore

he suffered the devil to imitate the true miracles without discovery.

It is sad when men choose false teachers to themselves, and God suffer-

eth them to be blinded : Hosea iv. 17, ' Ephraim is joined to idols ; let

him alone.' They may have some parts, plausible elocution, gifts of

prayer ; there may be common effects wrought by them ; these things

blind men, and their hearts are set upon familism and antinomianism ;

let them alone : Exod. vii. 22, ' The magicians of Egypt did so with

their enchantments, and Pharaoh's heart was hardened.' This was one

means of hardening his heart, the magicians wrought the same miracles

that Moses and Aaron did. God suffereth men to be hardened by their

own choice.

5. God was not wanting to give Pharaoh sufficient means of convic-

tion. The magicians turned their rods into serpents, but ' Aaron's rod

swallowed up their rods,' Exod. vii, 12 ; which showeth God's super-

eminent power. They could not deliver him from the frogs, though

they could bring frogs. God may suffer the devil to add to the judg-

ment, but to relieve them is an act of mercy : the magicians could add

224 SERMONS UPON EXODUS IV. 21.

to the plagues, but they could not deliver him fi'om them ; the devil

can sooner bring a plague than remove it. This was warning enough ;

there was difficulty enough to harden them, and light enough to con-

vince them. Again, the magicians were nonplussed in their art :

Exod. viii. 18, ' And the magicians did so with their enchantments to

bring forth lice, but they could not.' They sought to bring forth lice,

and could not, being hindered by God's will. They that could bring

forth frogs could not bring forth lice ; the greater the possibility, the

more are the magicians abashed ; this was an eas}' miracle. All colour

of excuse is taken away from Pharaoh ; they confess, ' This is the finger

of God,' E.Kod. viii. 19 ; and yet Pharaoh's heart was hardened ; as

many will not be won to the truth by the confession of those that led

them into the mistake. Nay, afterwards the magicians themselves

were smitten with boils : Exod. ix. 11, 12, 'And the magicians could

not stand before Moses because of the boils ; for the boil was upon the

magicians, and upon all the Egyptians. And the Lord hardened the

heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them.' If the hard heart

go to hell, it is not for want of light, but grace. We may wonder as

much at the success as at the plagues. To what a height of obstinacy

will man come if he be let alone to plagues ! for all this while

Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

6. Observe, in one of the plagues Israel might have stolen away,

whether Pharaoh would or no: Exod. x. 22, 23, 'And Moses stretched

forth his hand towards heaven, and there was a thick darkness in all

the land of Egypt three days ; they saw not one another, neither rose

any from his place for three days ; but all the children of Israel had

light in their dwellings.' They were not only deprived of the light of

heaven, but of candles and torches ; the air was condensed with thick

clouds, and the mists and vapours so thick, that they would easily have

damped them, and put them out again. Now whilst they were under

the power of three days' darkness, the Israelites might have stolen

away, and have gone three days' journey in the wilderness before they

could have made any pursuit ; but God had more miracles to be done.

When he hath to do with a hard heart, he will not steal out of the

field, but go away with honour and triumph. This was to be a public

instance, and for intimation to the world : 1 Sam. vi. 6, ' Wherefore

then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened

their hearts ? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they

not let the people go, and they departed ? ' The Philistines took

warning by it, and it will be our condemnation if we do not.

7. In all these plagues I observe that Pharaoh now and then had

his devout pangs. In an hard heart there may be some relentings,

but no true repentance. We have him confessing, Exod. ix. 27, \* I

have sinned this time : the Lord is righteous ; and I and my people

are wicked ; ' and chap. x. 16, 17, ' I have sinned against the Lord

your God, and against you : now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin

only this once, and entreat the Lord your God, that he may take away

from me this death only.' So chap. xii. 32, ' Be gone, and bless me

also.' Hardened sinners may have their gripes and sensible touches,

and so some faint purposes of reformation. But that which was defec-

tive, and showeth it was not true repentance, was —

SERMONS UPON EXODUS IV. 21. 225

[1.] Because it was only extorted by present horror : Job xxvii. 10,

\* Will he always call upon God ? ' A still will send forth water as well

a fountain, but it is by drops, and by force: Prov. v. 11-13, 'And

thou mourn at last, when thy jflesh and thy body are consumed ; and

say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof ?

and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to

them that instructed me ? ' The lecher hath his penitent moods. A

malefactor on the rack will confess freely. Vows of men are very fre-

quent. Oh ! that men would be such when they are well as they pro-

mised to be when they were sick !

[2.] Because the aim of all was ease and safety. Pharaoh's cry is

not, Take away iniquity, but, Take away this plague. Offers of nature

after ease are found in hypocrites. Esau sought the privileges of the

birthright with tears, quia perdiderat, non quia vendidtrat ; not be-

cause he sold it, but because he had lost it. Nature may be sensible

of present evil.

[3.] Because it was vanishing. The good motions of an hard heart

are of no long continuance ; they pass through, and are gone like a

flash of lightning. Pharaoh's remorse for the frogs and grasshoppers

was as a cloud soon blown over. Till there be sound repentance, re-

morse must needs be short, for it is an unpleasing penance. Water

heated is the colder afterwards, because it is rarefied ; after it hath

thawed a little, it will freeze the harder. Pharaoh after every respite

was hardened anew ; it is the temper of those that are doomed to de-

struction.

[4.] Because his purposes came so short and lame of what God ex-

pected. An hard heart, when it cannot prevail against God, would

fain compound with him. First he gave leave : Exod. viii. 25, ' Go ye,

sacrifice to God in the land ; ' then ver. 28, ' I will let ye go, that ye

may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness, only ye shall not

go very far away;' then chap. x. 11, 'Go now, ye that are men, and

serve the Lord.' Their children were to remain for hostages. Then,

ver. 24, ' Go ye, serve the Lord, only let your flocks and your herds be

stayed ; let your little ones also go with you.' Their cattle were to

remain for a pawn, and their flocks and their herds for a forfeiture if

they returned not, and a recompense for the damage of Egypt. But

God would not abate him a hoof. An hard heart yieldeth to God by

halves. Pharaoh hucketh with him ; first they might sacrifice in the

land ; then go a little way, three days' journey ; then he would keej)

their children, then their flocks and herds. An hard heart never

yieldeth to God his whole demand ; the devil is loath to let go his

hold. How do men buck with God in duties contrary to their affec-

tions or prejudicial to their interests ? 2 Kings v. 18, ' In this thing

the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the

house of Riinmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I

bow myself in the house of Kimmon ; when I bow myself in the house

of Kimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing.' They have

their reservations, and in this and that thing they will be excused.

These are but deceitful pangs. Pharaoh doth often eat his words, and

retract every grant.

8. In process of time his hardness is improved into rage and downright

VOL. XVII. p

226 SERMONS UPON EXODUS IV. 21.

malice: Exod. x. 28, ' Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my

face no more ; for in the day thou seest my face thou shalt die/

Vessels, when they come to the lees, they grow sour and tart; so

Pharaoh began to rim dregs. Or as beasts by long baiting grow mad

and furious, so it was with Pharaoh. Men first slight the truth, and,

then are hardened against it, and then come to persecute it. A river,

when it hath been long kept up, swelleth and bearetli down the bank

and ram])ire ; so do wicked men rage when tiieir consciences cannot

withstand the. light, and their hearts will not yield to it.

9. At length Pharaoh is willing to let them go. After much ado

God may get something from a hard heart ; but it is no sooner given,

but reti-acted ; like fire struck out of a flint, it is hardly got, and

quickly gone : Hosea vi. 4, ' Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and

as the early dew it goeth away.' Many may have some show of good-

ness, at least at some times, who yet are little the better, and their

condition nothing the better ; it proveth a great snare and neck-break

to them ; its unsoundness is presently seen in its inconstancy.

10. The last news that we hear of hardening Pliaraoh's heart was a

little before his destruction : Exod. xiv. 8, \* And the Lord hardened

the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the childrea

of Israel,' Pharaoh begrudgeth his own grant, as if he had yielded too

far. Hardness of heart will not leave us till it hatli wrought our full

and final destruction. God always besotteth when he meaneth to de-

stroy. Never any were hardened but to their own ruin. As God, that

loveth his own, loveth them to the end, so God, that hateth those that

are hardened, hateth them to the end. Pharaoh is first plagued and

then destroyed. This is the upshot of all: Job ix. 4, ' Who hath

hardened himself against him, and prospered?' The beginning is

imposture and delusion, the middle obstinacy, and the end ruin.

11. How God hardeneth. It is a point that needeth explication.

God is not and cannot be the author of sin ; if God should cause it,

man should sin of necessity, and then his punishment would not be

just, he being under force. God hath not brought upon any necessity

of sinning ; and God, that is good, cannot be the cause of evil. If God

were the immediate author, it would be no sin, for whatever God doth

is good.

How then doth he harden the heart ? I answer— (1.) Negatively ;

(2.) Affirmatively.

1. Negatively. In the explication of this matter we must avoid both

extremes ; some say too much of it, others too little.

[1.] We must not say too much, lest we leave a stain and blemish

upon the divine glory.

(1.) God infuseth no hardness and sin as he infuseth grace. All

influences from heaven are sweet and good, not sour. Evil cannot

come from the Father of lights. God enforceth no man to do evil.

(2.) God doth not excite the inward propension to sin ; that is

Satan's work. He persuadeth it not ; it hath neither command, nor

approbation, nor influence, nor impulse from heaven. In all these

ways we must look upon man's sin. All sin is a child begotten by

that incubus of hell on the corrupt soul of man ; it is poured out as-

milk into the womb of their hearts, and there it is curdled as cheese.

SERMONS UPON EXODUS IV. 21. 227

[2.] We mnst not give it too little. God doth not harden by bare

prescience, because God foreseeth other sins, and yet they are not

ascribed to God ; he is not said to kill, or to steal, or to do wrong, as

he is to harden. There is a difference between God's concurrence to

this sin and others. It is not only by way of manifestation, that is, by

his plagues and judgments he declareth how hard it is. God hardened

Pharaoh, say some, that is, by frequency of judgments showed how hard

his heart was. The prayer by which we deprecate this evil showeth the

meaning of it. We would not say, Lord, show not how hard I am by

thy many judgments upon me; but. Lord harden not my heart, lead

me not into temptation, incline not my heart to any evil thing. And

it doth not hold good in other instances : Deut. ii. 30, ' Sihon king of

Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for the Lord thy God hardened

his spirit, and made his heart obstinate.' There was no such long

process to make it evident they had hard hearts. So Josh, xi 20,

' For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should not

come against Israel in battle.' So that there is somewhat besides an

evident manifestation to the world by continued judgments that it is

hard. Nor is it by a mere idle permission (for there is besides that

his decree,, and a judicial action of providence), as if God were like the

heathen's Jupiter, who was feasting in Ethiopia while things were out

of order in Greece. Or at least such think God hath no more to do

than a man that standeth on the shore and seeth a ship ready to be

di'owned when he might have helped it ; there is somewhat more than

so. Nor is it merely by desertion and suspension of grace. It is true

this is a part, but not all ; as a captain leaving his soldiers in the

midst of a battle, may be said to leave them in the enemies' hands.

God concurreth not only by way of permission and patience, but by

way of action and power ; not making hardness, but doing and willing

the things whereby the sinner is hardened. Besides his decrees, there

is his judicial sentence, and an active providence in order thereunto.

Many things concur to the hardening of the heart, all which God willeth

and intendeth, but justly. The wicked take these occasions of their own

accord ; Satan tempteth out of his own malice ; but all this cannot be

done without the will of God ; there is at least a permissive intention.

If there were not God's overruling it, then he were not God omnipotent ;

there is a supreme power overruling and ordering everything that is

done in the world. It was God's will that Pharaoh should be hardened,

that he might dispose of it to the ends of his providence : Exod. ix. 16,

' And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in

ihee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the

earth.' If there were only a naked idle permission, then it may be said

that he suffereth the heart to be hardened rather than hardeneth it,

which is the phrase used.

2. Affirmatively, how God doth harden- The inward way is won-

derful ; as God's drawing sinners is secret, so is his hardening. But

if you ask me by what means it is accomplished ? I answer —

[1.] By desertion, by taking away the restraints of grace, whereby

he letteth them loose to their own hearts : Ps. Lxxxi. 12, ' So I gave

them up unto their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own

counsels.' Man in regard of his inclinations to sin is like a greyhound

228 SERMONS UPON EXODUS IV. 21.

held by a slip or collar ; when the hare is in sight, take away the slip,

and the greyhound runneth violently after the hare, according to his

inbred disposition. Men are held in by the restraints of grace, which,

when removed, they are left to their own swing, and run into all excess

of riot. Thus God took away his good Spirit from Saul : 1 Sam. xvi.

14, ' But the Spirit of the Lord departed from him, and an evil spirit

from the Lord troubled him.' Take away the pillar that sustaineth the

house, and then the house falleth of itself, God taketh away his grace,

and then all runneth to ruin ; as darkness ensueth upon the withdraw-

ing of light. Now herein God is not to be blamed.

(1.) Because he is debtor to none. He may give his grace to whom

he pleaseth, and withhold it as he will ; he is not bound to give or con-

tinue, but is free to bestow or withhold. Man sinneth when he doth

not hinder sin, because he is bound to hinder it all that he can : Neh.

xiii. 17, ' Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto

them. What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath-

day ? ' When the people profaned the sabbath, and they did not

restrain them.

(2.) He knoweth how to make the best of any evil, to turn the

greatest evil into the greatest good, which man cannot do, and ought

not, being under a rule. We must not do evil that good may come of

it: Rom. iii. 8, ' And not rather, as we be slanderously reported, and

as some affirm that we say, Let us do evil, that good may come ; whose

damnation is just.'

(3.) There is an actual forfeiture. God is so far from being bound

to continue grace, that he is bound in justice to withdraw what is

given. When men stop their ears, God may shut them. But —

[2.] By tradition. He delivereth them up to the power of Satan,

who worketh upon the corrupt nature of man, and hardeneth it ; he

stirreth him up as the executioner of God's curse ; as the evil spirit

had leave to seduce Ahab : 1 Kings xxii. 21, 22, ' And there came

forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him.

And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith ? And he said, I will go

forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.

And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also ; go forth and

do so.' There is a permissive intention, not an effective ; Satan is the

efficient and instrument, God is the judge ; he permitteth Satan to

excite and stir up their evil natures : they grieve his Spirit, and then

God withdraweth, and leaveth them to an evil spirit ; as in Saul :

1 Sam. xvi.- 14, 'But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and

an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.' The light of the Spirit of

the Lord is gone, and then Satan filled him with rage and fury and

cruelty. It is said, ' An evil spirit from the Lord,' because he was

sent from God to punish him for his sins.

[3.] There is an active providence, which disposeth and propoundeth

such objects as, meeting with a wicked heart, maketh it more hard.

God maketh the best things the wicked enjoy to turn to the fall and

destruction of those that have them. Sometimes natural comforts:

Jer. vi. 21, 'Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will lay stum-

bling-blocks before this people ; and the father and the sons together

shall fall upon them, the neighbour and his friend shall perish.' Their

SERMOKS UPON EXODUS IV. 21. 229

table is made a snare, and an occasion and preparation and means to

ruin them. They harden themselves by despising the goodness and

patience of God : Eom. ii. 4, ' Or despisest thou the riches of his good-

ness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the good-

ness of God leadeth thee to repentance ? ' Sometimes corrections and

chastisements ; these produce nothing but a greater contumacy ; as a

resty horse, the more he is spurred forward, the more he goeth back-

ward ; or as a fierce bull or bear groweth mad with baiting. In what

a sad case are wicked men left by God ! JMercies corrupt them, and

corrections enrage them ; as unsavoury herbs, the more they are

pounded, the more they stink. Sometimes by spiritual ordinances and

advantages ; the most spiritual means do them no good : Isa. vi. 10,

' Make the heart of this people tat, and make their ears heavy, and

shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears.

and convert and be healed.' He that bringeth in the light blindeth

the owl. Water poured on lime maketh it burn the more ; so do the

means of grace hurt wicked men, irritating their corruptions, or they

resting in them. Sometimes by withdrawing the word and means of

grace and prayers of his people : Acts xix. 9, \* When divers were

hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the

multitude, he departed from them ;' Jer. vii. 16, 'Pray not thou for

this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make inter-

cession to me, for I will not hear thee." Do not any longer strive

between me and them. Sometimes by disposing and ordering the

deceits of false teachers : 2 Thes. ii. 10, H, ' They received not the love

of the truth, that they might be saved : and for this cause God gave

them up to strong delusions, that they should believe a lie ; ' Job xii.

16, ' The deceived and the deceiver are his.' This doth not fall out

without a providence. The water runneth its own course, but the

miller maketh use of it to drive his engine. As all things work to-

gether for good to them that love God, so all things work for the worst

to the wicked and impenitent. Providences and ordinances ; we read

of them' that wrest the scriptures to their own destruction, 2 Peter iii.

16. Some are condemned to worldly happiness ; by ease and abund-

ance of prosperity they are entangled : Prov. i. 32, ' The prosperity of

fools shall destroy them ; ' as brute creatures, when in good plight,

grow fierce and man-keen. If we will find the sin, God will find the

occasion. I shall instance in Judas ; Christ had reproved him for be-

grudging Mary's bounty, and ye read, Markxxvi. 16, ' From that time

he sought opportunity to betray him.' He was offended with Christ's

reproof. Judas was hurried on with wrath and avarice ; and when

men are resolved, God in his providence suffereth them to have a fit

opportunity. The priests, alarmed with the miracle of raising Lazarus

from the dead, by which many wei'e drawn to believe in him, were

thinking how to seize on him, and Judas comes in the nick, and

asketh them, What will ye give me, and I will betray him to you ?

Use. Let us take warning by Pharaoh's example, that this great

judgment light not upon us. The Philistines, that were otherwise a

blind and stupid people, yet were aftected with it. Dagon was broken

in pieces, and they were smitten with emrods once and again, and

they begin to consult what to do. Their diviners told tliem, 1 Sam.

230 SERMONS UPON EXODUS IV. 2i.

vi. G, ' Wherefore do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and

Pharaoh hardened tlieir hearts? when he had Avrouglit wonderfully

among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed ? '

(lod delighteth not in judgment, and therefore lie hath made a pre-

cedent once for all ; here is Pharaoh set up, that all succeeding ages

may stand in fear. God would not have us learn to our bitter cost,

but take example by others. Qici alieno malo non sapit, gravius

punitur — He that will not take warning by others shall be more

grievously punished. In judgments it is better to take example than

to become examples. If thy life should be nothing else but Pharaoh's

story acted over again (for certainly there is an exact parallel between

this case and the course of every obstinate sinner), how great will thy

doom be ! God was angry with Belshazzar because he was not warned

by Nebuchadnezzar's example : Dan. v. 22, ' And thou his son, Bel-

shazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this.'

You have known and heard of the way of God with Pharaoh ; God

hath a quarrel with some of you for your lusts and vanities; do you

think to bear it up against warnings with peace and quiet ? Your

lusts may not bring you to present ruin, that 5'ou may be the more

hardened in them ; but be sure that God will have the best at last ;

and then I leave you to judge what will be your condition when you

fall under the weight of his displeasure. Have you not some qualms

of conscience sometimes about your eternal condition ? doth not con-

science say, Surely I am not so careful to make my peace with God as

I should be ? Upon every such stirring you are the more estranged

from God if you do not improve it. Conscience will repeat over these

warnings to you when you lie upon your death-beds ; and then you will

sadly howl over your neglects, and wish your magicians and old cora-

2)anions far from you ; then you will send for Moses and Aaron, and

it may be too late. When God is showing mercy, the last mercies are

the best, and the farther he goeth the sweeter he is ; and when God is

punishing, the last punishments are the sorest, and the farther he goeth

the more bitter.

I will propound two considerations —

1. From the evil of an hard heart.

[1.] It is a contest with God, not only with his greatness and power,

but also with his goodness and mercy, and therefore it must needs

succeed ill with us. Before God breaketh out with fury he treateth

with us in a mild condescending way ; he beseecheth his own creatiu-e :

Jer. xiii. 15, 16, ' Hear ye, and give ear ; be not proud, for the Lord hath

spoken : give glory to God before he cause darkness, and before your

feet stumble upon the dark mountains ; and while ye look for light, he

turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.'

[2.] An hard heart makes us rebels to God and slaves to everything

else ; for we are wedded to some inferior thing ; we are our own

Pharaohs, and will not let ourselves go : 2 Tim. iii. 4, \* Lovers of

pleasures more than lovers of God.'

[3.] It is in itself the sorest of all judgments.

[4.] It never goes alone, but brings other judgments along with it.

[5.] It is the great hindrance of the spiritual life. (See Sermon on

Mark iii. 5.)

SEBMONS aPON EXODUS IV. 21. 231

2. From the parties whom it may befall, not only the open wicked,

tut in some measure God's own children ; for God may harden two

ways — as a judge, and as a father ; by way of punishment, and by way

of correction. By way of punishment again two ways— totally and

finally. Some are totally hardened, and have nothing of a soft heart

in them, and yet not finally; the dreadful sentence of obduration

is not yet passed upon them, as it may be upon others, and that dur-

ing life, when God leaveth them to their own hearts' counsels, with-

out any check or restraint of providence, or purpose to reclaim them.

These three kinds I must then speak of — God's hardening the wicked

in general, his final hardening, and his hardening in part his own

children.

SERMON II.

I will harden his heart, thai he shall not let my people go. —

ExoD. iv. 21.

First, Of God's hardening wicked men in general as a judge. The causes

of it are — ■

1. Ignorance ; for light and love make the heart tender. Light is

that which we are now to take notice of. Light begets tenderness, as

it discerneth sin, and maketh us sensible of it, especially the lively light

of the Spirit : Eom. vii. 9, ' I was alive without the law once ; but

when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died,' Sense of guilt

and punishment soon flashed in his face ; as in a dungeon the worms

crawl as soon as light is brought in: Jer. xxxi. 19, 'After I was

instructed, I smote upon my thigh ; I was ashamed, yea, even con-

founded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.' Instruction

breedeth remorse, and awakeneth men out of their stupid security ; but

while men continue in their ignorance they are stupid and senseless. Now

thus men may be for a long time, and yet afterwards God may make

the scales fall ofi" from their eyes, and ' open their eyes, and turn them

from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,' Acts

xxvi. 18. However, affected and vinceable ignorance, when men are

willingly ignorant and err in their hearts, that is, when men have

powerful and enlightening motives and yet remain ignorant, this is

very dangerous. And for the present, that ignorance is one cause of

their hardening is evident, because the worst usually when they come to

die are sensible ; their mind is then cleared from the fogs and steams of

lust, and conscience being awakened, they then feel their load, and a

great weight of sin lying upon them, and most wish they had lived in

a more strict and ready obedience to God's will,

2. Unbelief There is an hardness of the heart against the light and

offers of the gospel, when Christ is tendered, but not received, and

the cause of that is ignorance, affected ignorance ; and there is an

hardening of the heart against the truth once received, out of love of

232 SERMONS UPON EXODUS IV. 21.

their temporal peace, liberty, and safety of life and estate ; this cometli

from unbelief, and want of a sufficient sense and sight of the world ta

come ; which hardness is caused by the veiglement and importunities

of the flesh, craving its satisfections in the present world, and denying

or disbelieving the blessedness to come. If men did believe heaven

and hell, they would be more pliable to God's motions, and more deaf

to the importunities of the flesh ; but that this is a cause of hardening

appeareth by Christ's chiding his disciples for their unbelief and hard-

ness of heart : Mark xvi. 14, ' Afterward he appeared unto the eleven

as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hard-

ness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after

he was risen/

3. Sinning against light, either by way of omission or commission.

This provoketh God to give us over to more hardness of heart. By

way of commision is easily granted, but it is also by way of omission :

James iv. 17, ' To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to

him it is sin.' Tliey will flnd it to be sin in the sad effects of it. (See

Sermon on Mark iii. 5.)

4. Custom in sinning. (See Sermon on Mark iii. 6.)

5. Small sins may occasion this judgment, and harden the heart as

well as great sins. It is not easy to say which doth most ; indeed great

sins get into the throne presently, but small sins insensibly and by

degrees : Ps. xix. 13, ' Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous

sins ; let them not have dominion over me,' A small sin may get the

upperhand of a sinner, and bring him under in time ; and after that,

it is habituated by constant custom, so that he cannot easily shake off

the yoke, and redeem himself from the tyranny thereof, as if a man be

addicted to any vanity and foolish delight. These do not exercise

dominion over the enslaved soul till they have gotten strength by many

and multiplied acts. But presumptuous sins by one single act weaken

the Spirit, and give a mighty advantage to the flesh, even almost to

a complete conquest. So that for the present little sins do not harden

the heart so much as greater. (See Sermon on Mark iii. 5.)

Now all these causes concur to the hardening of the heart, and

making it as a stone, but yet out of these stones God can raise up

children to Abraham.

Secondly, Of God's final hardening, when God leaveth men to perish^

and will no more treat with them. Now here I shall show — (1.) That

there is such a dispensation ; (2.) The causes of it.

1. That there is such a dispensation.

[1.] It is an usual dispensation for God to leave men to perish in their

sins, and that irreversibly, even before death, and will be entreated no

more for them. It appears by many places of scripture : Kev. xxii. 11,

'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still ; and he which is filthy, let

him be filthy still.' Those which remain obstinate after many warnings

and calls, it is usual with God to give them over to their lusts, that

they may be ripe for hell : Ezek. iii. 27, ' He that heareth, let him

liear ; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear ; for they are a rebellious

house.' As if God should say, Let them now do what they will, I am

at a point. Now sometimes their condition is irreversible, which is

clear, because when God hath given them over, how shall they repent,

SERMONS UPON EXOLUS IV. 21. 233

and break off their sin ? God's oath is passed : Ps. csv. 11, ' Unto whom

I sware in my wrath, that they should not enter into my re.st.' God

standeth sworn to condemn and destroy them. If they should have any

anguish of conscience and remorse stirred up in them, God will have

no regard to it ■ Prov. i. 26, 27, ' I also will laugh at your calamity, I

will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation,

and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish

cometh upon you ; ' Hosea v. 6, ' They shall go with their flocks and

with their herds to seek the Lord, but they shall not find him, he hath

withdrawn himself from them.' "When men have neglected God's

seasons, and begin to be surprised with death, then they would fain

have comfort and pardon ; but instead thereof the Lord puts them off.

No ; you would have none of me : Ps. Ixxxi. 11, 12, ' But my people

would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me : so I

gave them up unto their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their

own counsels.' Instead of compassion they are mocked, and turned

over to their evil courses and carnal company : John viii. 21, ' I go my

way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins.' That this may

be before death appeareth because grace is confined to a season : Isa. Iv.

6, ' Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while

lie is near.' And that season is not always as long as life : Luke xix.

42, \* If thou hadst knowTi, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things

which belong to thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes.'

The day of grace is bright but short. We may mourn over many thus ;

when the measure of their iniquities is filled up, God giveth over call-

ing and expecting and waiting for their repentance. It is true the

time is not to be known by any man of himself, nor by others concern-

ing him ; we cannot state the number of calls, because circumstances

are diverse, and light breaketh in with warnings in a different degree.

There is a great deal of variety in the Lord's dispensations, therefore

all must use the means, and warn we must to the last. We can only

say in the general, that after God hath done with them, and expects

no good from them, he may let them live for the glory of his justice ;

as after God had hardened Pharaoh's heart, yet he continued his life,

that he might show his power in. him: Exod. ix. 16, 'And in very

deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power,

and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.' You

may survive your final hardness, as a monument of God's justice in the

world.

[2] It is a just dispensation. It is just with God to take the refusal

and be gone, and to cease to deal with your hearts any more, when, after

all the melting entreaties of his grace, you cast him off; he commands,

and you will not obey ; he is willing, and you are not willing ; he entreats,

and you will not hearken ; he wishes : Deut. v. 29, ' that there were

such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my com-

mandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their

children for ever ! ' he laments : Ps. Ixxxi. 13, ' that my people had

hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways ! ' and you

will not join with him. He is grieved that his offer of grace is not

received, and j^ou will not lament. It is but just that a man should

be left to his own choice, that a man should miss of that salvation which

234 SERMONS UPON EXODUS IV. 21.

he cared not for ; that if, after warnings, convictions, and entreaties,

he will be filthy, he should be filthy still. In hell conscience will

acquit God ; 670) eyttot rov toov alria, I have been the cause of all this to

myself.

[3.] It is a merciful dispensation to the rest of the world. We are

told of these things beforehand, not that we may despair, that is an ill

consequence ; but that, as we love our souls, we should take heed of

resisting grace, and turning our backs upon our own mercies. It is a

merciful and fatherly warning to strike in betimes, and own the God

of our mercies. Delay is that that undoeth all the world. Now this

is the best cure of delay.

2. The causes of it.

[1.] Sinning away the light of nature. By nature men have some

knowledge of good and evil. There are Kolvai evvoiai, some connnon

principles, as that God is, and must be worshipped, that we must do

wrong to none, nor pollute ourselves with promiscuous lusts. The heart

of a pagan would rise against it : Kom. ii. 14, 15, ' For when the gentiles,

which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law,

these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the

work of the law written in their hearts.' Now, when men hold the light

of nature ' in unrighteousness,' Rom. i. 18, when they hold poor truth

fettered and bound that it cannot break out into an holy conversation,

this provoketh God to give them up to hardness. There are many sins

which nature discovereth, and may be avoided upon such reasons and

considerations as nature suggesteth. Now, when men put the finger

into nature's eye, or will not suffer reason to exercise any dominion,

but let loose the reins to lust, God leaveth them to a carnal and sottish

heart. Though by the light of nature men cannot convert to God,

yet by the light of nature men may practise many duties and avoid

many sins. The gentiles were left to an unsound injudicious mind.

When men fall into foul sins against the light of nature, conscience

loseth its feeling and tenderness : Eph. iv. 19, ' Who being past feeling,

have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness

with greediness.' Hearts prejudiced against the things of God may

grow to very stones.

[2.] Refusing God's many calls: Prov. xxix. 1, 'He that, being

often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and

that without remedy.' God may bear with us a while after one or two

or more reproofs, but when we are often reproved and often convinced,

and yet will not be reclaimed, God may give us over. The exact date

of Christ's patience, or the number of his calls ere the fatal period of

final induration cometh, we know not ; but when it is often, you are in

danger. Take heed of forfeiting your own mercies by refusing the

most earnest motions of the word and Spirit. When God importuneth

to be heard and obeyed, his Spirit being thus resisted and refused, God

will be at length wearied, and will not give as much grace as before :

Isa. Ixiii. 10, ' But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit ; therefore

he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.' Scevit

infelix amor. Gen. vi. 3, ' My Spirit shall not always strive with man,

for that he also is flesh.\* The heathens did acknowlege that the

roTTLKoi 6eo\ the gods of cities and nations, did for the provocation of

SERMONS UPON EXODUS IV. 21. 235

the inliabitfints forsake tlunr altars and tcniples. The more calls and

convictions we resist in this kind, the more difficult and improbable is

the reducing a sinner to God ; every day he groweth more wicked and

profane. To resist the clamours of conscience is sad, but to weary and

grieve the Spirit is dreadful : Ezek. xxiv. 13, ' In thy wickedness is

lewdness ; because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou

shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my

fury to rest upon thee.' God sets them over the fire till their hearts

begin to be warmed, and then lets the sun remain on them.

[3.] Gross hypocrisy. This is a constant lie, a contempt of God, an

habitual and customary stifling and smothering of checks of conscience;

for their form and profession showeth what they should be, and if they

were what they seem to be, all would be well. Men have light enough

to take on the form of religion, and sin enough to resist the power of it.

And therefore their judgment is the greater ; for their whole life being

a constant rebelling against the light, they are left to perish by their

own deceivings: 2 Thes. ii. 10, 11, 'Because they received not the

love of the truth, that they might be saved, for this cause God shall

send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie.' The car-

nal christian being not brought to true faith and sincere repentance,

God giveth them up that they may be deceived by every vain pre-

tence.

[4.] Apostasy from grace received. Men are not only warmed, but

begin to have a taste. They that take up with some profession of the

things of God, but afterwards fall away again to looseness and vanity

and worldliness, they are more left by God than others : Heb. vi. 4-6,

' For it is impossible for them who were once enlightened, and have

tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to

come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance. ' For

they dishonour him more, and bring an evil report upon God, The

devil hath more power over them ; as a prisoner that hath made his

escape, if he be taken afterwards, hath more chains put upon him :

2 Peter ii. 21, 22, ' For it had been better for them not to have known

the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from

the holy commandment delivered unto them : for it is happened unto

them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit

again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.'

They themselves are made more incapable of ever owning the ways of

God again ; it is impossible they should renew themselves, it groweth

up into wilful malice : Heb. x. 26, ' For if we sin wilfully after we have

received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice

for sins.' Grace will not pardon them, the Mediator will not intercede

for them. Apostates sunt maximi osores sui ordinis — Apostates hate

the ways they have professed : Hosea v. 2, ' The revolters are pro-

found to make slaughter.' None so cross and malicious and perverse

in their cause.

[5.] Sottish despair (there is a raging despair, and a sottish despair ;

the one is when conscience is terrified, the other when it is stupefied),

when to custom in sinning there is added a passionate will : Jer. ii.

25, ' Thou sayest, There is no hope ; no, for I have loved strangers,

236 SERMONS UPON EXODUS IV. 21.

and after them will I go ; ' Jer. xviii. 11, 'And they said, There is no

hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will everj' one do

the imagination of his evil heart.' 11 podipr}cn<; ovk iarlv dBwdroyv,

men do not use to consult about things that are impossible. It is said

of the Israelites, Exod. vi. 9, 'They hearkened not unto Moses for

anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage.' Lust is so deeply rooted that

they cannot help it ; the case is desperate, they are at a point ; as we

use to say, Past cure, past care; they grow out of heart, and so lie

down under the power of their lusts ; they resolve to persist in their

sins, to live as they list, and it is to no purpose to speak to them.

Tliirdhj, Of God's hardening as a father, in a way of the highest

fatherly anger and displeasure. This may be so : Isa. Ixiii. 17, \* O

Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our

heart from tliy fear ? ' This is a partial hardness. There may be

desertion in point of grace, though some tenderness left in the under-

standing, that discerneth good and evil ; in the conscience, that is

dissatisfied in its present state ; in the will, that owneth the ways of

God ; so that there is a general purpose to please him in all things.

Yet the heart groweth dead and stupid ; there is an inaptness for

holy things ; they are less sensible of the evil of sin ; they have not

such delight in the word, nor rejoicing in hope, nor freedom for prayer,

nor patience under afflictions, nor complacency in communion with

God. And it is sad when it is so, when to sense there is little differ-

ence between them and the wicked ; there is hardness in a stone, and

hardness in a piece of wax. I will show the causes of this, and the

means to cure it.

1. The causes of this are —

[1.] Sinning against conscience. There are sins of daily incursion

and sudden surreption ; and there are sins of presumption, into which

God's children may in some rare cases fall, but then they make great

waste and havoc in their souls ; as David's great sin, by which he lost

that free spirit, and was forced to beg a new creation, as if all were to

begin again : Ps. li. 10-12, ' Create in me a clean heart, God, and

renew a right spirit within me ; cast me not away from thy presence,

and take not thy Holy Spirit from me ; restore unto me the joy of thy

salvation, and uphold me by thy free Spirit.' Many are the mischiefs

which come by such sins. Partly God's love is obstructed, that he is

not so ready to do them good : Isa. lix. 2, ' Your iniquities have separ-

ated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from

you, that he will not hear ; ' that is, the good-will and favour of God

is, as it were, bound up, and hindered from showing itself in all those

gracious effects which otherwise it would put forth for our comfort and

peace. He doth not actually pardon their sins, nor make them par-

takers of spiritual benefit sin so ample and full a measure as otherwise

he would ; but holds his hand, and cuts you short in spiritual blessings,

which otherwise he would plentifully dispense unto his people. Partly

they exceedingly weaken the work of giace which is wrought upon

their hearts. Their faith is more dead, their love is more cold than it

was, hope is languid, the spiritual life is interrupted, and at a stand ;

though the seed of God remains, yet it cannot put forth itself with

such vigour and efficacy. Yea, they may never recover such a portion

SERMONS UPON EXODUS IV. 21. 237

of the Spirit as they had before : 2 Chron. xvii. 3, ' Jehoshaph.it walked

in the first waj's of his father David,' as liaving some note of blemish

n his latter ways. These sins, in short, as a wound in the body, let

ut our blood and strength. As a prodigal, that hath once broken

after he hath been set up, is not trusted with a like stock again, so

God's children may not recover that largeness of spirit and fulness of

inward strength and comfort which they had before ; as many after a

great disease do not regain that pitch of health which formerly they

had. but may carry the fruits of their disease with them to their graves.

Partly because acts are intermitted. When the soul is distempered, it

is unfit for action. Either duties are omitted, or else done in such an

overly manner as doth increase our distemper, and harden us the more.

In what a sorry fashion did David worship till God awakened his con-

science by Nathan ! Prayer is interrupted: 1 Peter iii. 7, 'As heirs

together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered.'

[2.] Grieving the Spirit: Eph. iv. 30, 'And grieve not the Holy

Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. All.

sin is a grief to the Spirit, especially filthiness and bitterness. Com-

pare this with ver. 29, 31, ' Let no corrupt communication proceed out

of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that

it may minister grace unto the hearers. Let all bitterness, and wrath,

and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with

all malice.' Now the grieving of the Spirit makes a great breach in

our grace and comfort, as the Spirit is our sanctifier and comforter.

To speak only of the last : When the Spirit is grieved, we have not

f<uch a sense of God's love : ' For the love of God is shed abroad in our

liearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us,' Rom. v. 5. We

have not that liberty and confidence in prayer we once had : 1 John

iii. 21, ' Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence

towards God.' Nor those lively hopes of glory and final redemption,

in that text, Eph. iv. 30, ' Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby

je are sealed unto the day of redemption.' Nor that comfort in re-

proaches, nor courage in afilictions, nor strength to resist sin, nor that

readiness and cheerfulness in obedience that once they had. So that a

christian is like Sampson when his locks are gone ; all delightful com-

munion with God is suspended, and a christian doth not act like a ser-

vant that is in his master's favour.

[3.] Carnal liberty. When a man giveth too much contentment to

the flesh, the spirit or better part is in bonds : Ps. cxix. 37, ' Turn

away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy

way.' A man that lets loose the reins to worldly vanity will soon find

hardness coming on his heart, and see a need to ask quickening grace :

Luke xxi. 34, ' Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be

overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life.'

Worldly comforts over-afi'ected or immoderately used clog and enslave

the heart, and so we are more unpersuadable and disobedient to the

motions of his Spirit, and the counsels of his grace. Therefore, if we

will take heed that our hearts be not hardened, let them not out too

freely to worldly things, lest they be withdrawn from God ; but rejoice

here as if you rejoiced not, that you may keep up your liberty to

God.

238 SERMONS UPON EXODUS IV. 21.

[4.] Pride and self-sufficiency : 2 Chron. xxxii. 31, ' Howbeit in the

business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto

him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him

to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.' Paul was

permitted to be buffeted, that he might be kept humble : 2 Cor. xii. 7,

'And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance

of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the mes-

senger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.'

W lien you trust to yourselves, God leavethyou to yourselves ; and then

we are as a glass without a bottom, broken as soon as out of hand :

James iv. 6, ' God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.'

It is not so much understood of a moral humility, or a lowly carriage

towards men, as of an evangelical humility, which consists in broken-

ness of heart, or a sense of our unworthiness and weakness ; these are

influenced by grace, but others are left to fall and miscarry by their

own presumptuous confidence. And therefore, if we would not incur

any degree of this judgment, we must take heed of pride and spiritual

secui'ity. Those that feel the daily and hourly necessity of grace have

more of the supplies of the Spirit, they are of tener waiting upon God :

Ps. XXV. 5, \* On thee do I wait all the day.' Christ hath taught us to

beg daily bread, daily pardon, and daily strength against temptations^

that he might engage us to be often with God, and keep in a constant

dependence on him, that the heart might be kept more awful, tender,

and serious.

[5.] Carelessness and spiritual sloth. When we carelessly entertain

the motions of his Spirit, and lie upon the bed of ease, he is gone :

Cant. V. 2, 3, ' I sleep, but my heart waketh : it is the voice of my be-

loved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove,

my undefiled : for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the

drops of the night. I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on ? I

have washed my feet, how shall I defile them ? ' and ver. 6, ' I rose up to

open to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was

gone.' God's children may stifle many a pressing conviction and

motion in their souls, hang off from the throne of grace and other good

duties, and upon every frivolous pretence keep away from God. This

unkind and ungracious dealing will cost them dear. Neglect of the

means of grace quencheth the Spirit : 1 Thes. v. 19, 20, ' Quench not

the Sjjirit ; despise not prophesyings.' Therefore we should be more

diligent in the use of means : Mark iv. 24, ' Unto you that hear shall

more be given.' We must more carefully obey the sanctifying motions

of the Spirit if we mean to avoid hardness of heart.

2. The means to cure it.

[1.] Bewail the evil, and complain of it before God, who alone can

help us. We complain of hard times, of the hard dealings of men, of

hard duties. Durus est hie sermo, this is a hard saying, and who can

hear it? But we seldom complain of that which we should most com-

plain of, hardness of heart. The Lord is pleased with these complaints :

Jer. xxxi. 18, ' I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus •

Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed

to the yoke.' Spiritual distempers must be most laid to heart. God's

children in some degree are inflexible and insensible ; there is too great

SERMONS UPON EXODUS IV. 21. 239

toncLiness, and impatiency to be admonished, too much disobedience to

the Spirit's sanctifying motions ; they are too often benumbed with the

delights of the flesh, and cares of the world.

[2.] Hasten your repentance and return to God : Ps. cxix. 60, ' I

made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments ; ' Gal. i. 16,

Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.' To press this, let

us consider these things —

(1.) How soon God may take an advantage against us we cannot

tell. He hath not told us at what number of calls he will depart, and

give us over to our own hearts ; but he hath bid us not to delay, and

lose the present season : Heb. iii. 7, 8, ' To-day if ye will hear his voice,

harden not your hearts.' The command is as express for the time as

for the duty ; there is no season like the to vvv, the present season. It

is but a flattering presumption to think that God will always stand

waiting, Felix had but one call that we hear of, and he fooled it away

to a more convenient season.

(2.) Every day spent in an unregenerate condition brings us nearer

to destruction, and puts us upon a greater disadvantage : Eom. xiii. 11,

' Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.' Apari, we may

say ; now is our damnation and final impenitency nearer.

(3.) Every call sets us yet nearer still. Sins are ripened by every

call, as iron oft heated and oft quenched is the harder. When men are

often sermon-scorched, they prove at length sermon-proof. The holy

God will not cast his pearls before swine : Isa. lv^ 6, ' Seek ye the Lord

while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.'

(4.) A presumptuous going on in sin, upon a supposition that we

shall repent at last, is the very next door and step to hell. You wit-

tingly continue under the devil's power. Life is uncertain. God may

take you away in the act of sin, as he did Zimri and Cosbi, Korali and

his accomplices ; or he may deny that space to call for mercy that you

think of, for death doth not always give warning ; or by an apoplexy, or

lethargy, or some stupefying distemper, he may deprive you of the use

of your reason. Let this rouse and awaken you out of your fond pre-

sumptions.

[3.] Beware of tendencies to it, when the heart begins to harden ;

as —

(1.) When you are not sensible of God's withdrawings, when there

are any suspensions of his grace, the comfort and conduct of his Spirit,

and the soul is stupid. It is sad not to be sensible of the accesses and

recesses of the Spirit : Mat. ix. 25, ' The days shall come when the

bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.' Grace

stands in a continual watchfulness and observation of all God's deal-

ings. Felt desertions are grievous, but not so dangerous as those that

are unfelt. It is some good degree of grace not to be quiet without

God.

(2.) When you scorn at reproof, when you are not only actors, but

defenders of sin, and bear up yourselves impudently and stubbornly in

your transgressions : Jer. vi. 10, ' To whom shall I speak and give

warning, that they may hear ? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and

they cannot hearken ; behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a

reproach.^ They are of an unteachable, untractable disposition ; they

240 SERMONS UPON EXODUS TV. 2L

think we rail when we do reprove. The devil hath then two victories —

one by the scorn and opposition that is cast on the reprover, and the

other by the hardening of the heart of the fretting and reproved sin-

ner ; that anger that should be turned upon the sin is turned upon the

reproof.

(3.) When ordinances grow powerless. You live under ordinances,

and receive no profit by them ; you have much means, and can see no

fruit : Isa. vi. 9, 10, ' Hear ye indeed, but understand not ; and see ye

indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make

their ears heavy, and shut their eyes ; lest they see with their eyes, and

hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and

be healed.' The word is powerful ; if it softens not, it hardens.

(4.) When our worldly comforts are apt to prove a snare to us : Mai.

ii. 2, ' I will curse your blessings, yea, I have cursed them already, be-

cause ye do not lay it to heart.' When your table is made your snare,

your meat becomes your poison, your estate is but as golden fetters to

bind and chain your heart to the world ; your honours blow you up.

When you do not take comforts as the mercies and blessings of God, to •

praise him for them, and to devote yourselves in the strength of them

to his service.

(5.) When corrections go away without fruit : Jer. v. 3, ' Thou hast

stricken them, but they have not grieved ; thou hast consumed them,

but they have refused to receive correction ; they have made their faces

harder than a rock, they have refused to return.' God will have an

account of every dispensation ; afflictions are upon the register as well

as mercies. Christians should never advance more in Christianity than

under the cross.

(6.) When we are lazy and loath to admit Christ into the heart.

It being thronged with creature comforts, we keep him at the door

knocking, and will not open to him : Rev. iii. 20, ' Behold, I stand at

the door and knock ; ' Cant. v. 3, ' I have put off my coat, how shall

I put it on ? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them ? ' This

laziness and spiritual security is a cause and beginning of hardness of

heart.

(7.) When trivial and slight temptations prevail against the sense

of our duty ; when for a piece of bread, and handfuls of barley they

will transgress, and sell the righteous for a pair of shoes ; when they

are as a stone to God's counsels, but as wax to all other things.

(8.) When the heart grows vain and frothy ; for a slight heart will

be an hard heart ; or God gives men over to a reprobate sense and an

injudicious mind. These are the' forerunners of hardness of heart,

which we should beware of, and carefully watch against.

SERMON UPON GENESIS III. 15.'

It (i.e., the seed of the luoman) sliall bruise thy head, and thou shall

bruise his heel — Gen. iii. 15.

These words are a part of the gospel preached in paradise, or the

first promise of grace and life made to mankind, now fallen and dead

in sin. As God was cursing the serpent, he draweth out this comfort to

our first parents, who were confounded with the sense of sin and their

defection from God. Satan's condemnation is our salvation. He did

the first mischief, therefore the crushing of his head giveth hope of our

deliverance out of that state of misery into which he hath plunged us.

The words are dark in comparison of the larger explications of the

grace of God by Jesus Christ which were after delivered to the church.

Who would look for a great tree in a little seed ? Yet the seminal

virtue doth afterward diffuse and dilate itself into all those stately and

lofty branches in which the fowls of the air do take up their lodging

and shelter. So do these few words contain all the articles and

mysteries of the christian faith, which are the fountains of our solid

peace and consolation. In the seed of the woman is contained all the

doctrine concerning the incarnation of the Son of God ; in the bruising

of his heel, his death and sufferings ; in the crushing of the serpent's

head, his glorious victory and conquest. As obscure as the words are,

an eagle-eyed and discerning faith could pick a great deal of comfort

out of them. The ol Trpea^vrepot, ' the elders,' mentioned Heb. xi,

2, the antediluvian fathers, so famous throughout all ages for their

laith and confidence in God, had no other gospel to live upon. Abel,

that offered a better sacrifice than Cain, Enoch, that walked with God,

Noah, that prepared the ark, did all that they did in the strength and

upon the encouragement of this promise.

The words are considerable —

1. For the person who speaketh them, the Lord God himself, who

was the first preacher of the gospel in paradise. The draught and

plot was in his bosom long before, but now it cometh out of his mouth.

2. For the occasion when they were spoken. When God hath been

but newly provoked and offended by sin, and man, from his creature

and subject, was become his enemy and rebel, the ofiended God comes

with a promise in his mouth. Adam could look for nothing but that

God should repeat to him the whole beadroll of curses wherein he had

\* Preached the fifth of November.

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242 SERMON UPON GENESIS III. 15.

involved himself, but God maketh known the great design of his grace.

Once more, the Lord God was now cursing the serpent, and in the

midst of the curses promiseth the great blessing of the Messiah. Thus

doth God ' in wrath remember mercy,' Hab. iii. 2. Yea, man's sentence

was not yet pronounced. The Lord God had examined him, ver. 8-10,

but before the doom there breaketh out a promise of mercy. Thus

mercy gets the start of justice, and triumpheth and rejoiceth over it in

our behalf : James ii. 13, 'Mercy rejoiceth against judgment.'

3. They are considerable for their matter, for they intimate a victory

over Satan, and that in the nature which was foiled so lately. Man by

sin had not only incurred God's wrath, but put himself under the power

of the devil, who had a legal power over fallen man, such as the execu-

tioner hath from the judge over the condemned person, and a tyrannical

power by conquest, man being seduced by him from God. Therefore

it is good news to hear of a victory over Satan, and that his power

shall be destroyed.

In the former part of the verse you have the combat ; in the text

the success.

[1.] Tlie conflict and combat: 'And I will put enmity between thee

and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.' It cannot be

understood of the hatred and antipathy between men and serpents,

though that be alluded unto. To what end should God thunder curses

and condemnation upon the serpent, a brute creature, that understood

them not ? Therefore it is meant of the war between the devil and

mankind, Satan and his instruments ; for wicked men are called his

seed : John viii. 44, ' Ye are of your father the devil ; ' and Ignatius

calleth Menander and Basilides, ttjv tov Karjov 6<^io<i '7rapa(j)voLSa,

' the spawn of the old serpent' And on the other side, the seed of the

woman, by way of emiuency, Christ and his confederates. But I shall

not consider the conflict now as carried on between the two seeds, but

between the two heads, Christ the prince of life, and the devil ' who

hath the power of death,' Heb. ii. 14. It was begun between the

serpent and the woman ; it is carried on between the seed of the woman

and the seed of the serpent : but the conflict is ended by the destruc-

tion of one of the heads ; the prince of death is destroyed by the prince

of life.

[2.] The success and issue of the combat Where observe — (1.)

What the seed of the woman doth against the serpent, 'He shall

bruise thy head ; ' (2.) What the serpent doth against the seed of the

woman, ' Thou shalt bruise his heel.'

(1.) There is something common to both ; for the word bruised is

used promiscuously both of the serpent and the seed of the woman.

In this war, as usually in all others, there are wounds given on both sides;

the devil bruiseth Christ, and Christ bruiseth Satan.

(2.) There is a disparity of the event, ' He shall bruise thy head,'

and ' Thou shalt bruise his heel ; ' where there is a plain allusion to

treading upon a serpent. Wounds on the head are deadly to serpents,

but wounds in the body are not so grievous and dangerous ; and

a serpent trod upon, seeketh to do all the mischief it can to the

foot by which it is crushed. The wound given to the head is mor-

tal, but the wound given to the heel may be healed. The seed of

SERMON UPON GENICSIS III. 15. 243

the woman may be cured, but Satan's power cannot be restored. The

devil cannot reach to the head, but the heel only, which is far from any

vital part.

(1st.) For the first clause, ' It shall bruise thy head.' The seed of

the woman crushed the serpent's head, whereby is meant the overthrow

and destruction of his power and works : John xii. 31, ' Now shall the

prince of this world be cast out ; ' 1 John iii. 8, ' For this purpose the

Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the

devil.' The head being bruised, strength and life is perished. His

kingdom and strength is his head ; that is gone, that Kpa.To<; Oavdrov,

' that power of death/ Heb, ii. 14, the power to deceive and detain

captive souls: Col. i. 13, ' Who hath delivered us from the power of

darkness.'

(2c?.) For the other clause, ' Thou shalt bruise his heel,' Where —

(1.) Note the intention of the serpent, who would destroy the kingdom

of the Eedeemer if he could ; but he can only reach the heel, not the

head. (2.) The greatness of Christ's sufferings ; his heel was bruised,

as he endured the painful, shameful, accursed death of the cross.

Doct. That Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman, is at enmity with

Satan, and hath entered the lists with him ; and though bruised in the

conflict, yet he finally overcometh him, and subverteth his kingdom.

I. That Jesus Christ is the seed of the woman. That he is one of

her seed is past doubt, since he was born of the Virgin, a daughter of

Eve. That he is ' The seed,' the most eminent of all the stock,

appeareth by the dignity of his person. God made flesh : John i. 14,

' The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us ; ' or, God manifested

in the flesh,' 1 Tim. iii. 16. As also by his miraculous conception :

Luke i. 35, ' The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of

the highest shall overshadow thee ; therefore also that holy thing which

shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' So Mat. i. 23,

\* A Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they

shall call his name Emanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us.'

He that was God-man in one person, and thus wonderfully conceived,

without a male or company of man, might well be looked upon as the

seed of the woman here spoken of. Now, if you ask what necessity

there was that the conqueror should be the seed of the woman, because

the flesh of Christ is the bread of life, and the food of our faith ? I

shall a little insist upon the conveniency and agreeableness of it.

1. That thereby he might be made under the law, which was given to

the whole nature of man : Gal. iv. 4, ' God sent forth his Son, made of

a woman, made under the law.' He that came to repair our lost con-

dition needed to subject himself to the precepts of God's law, that by

obedience he might recover what by disobedience was lost, and might

be to us a fountain and pattern of holiness in our nature ; and there-

fore Christ in our nature truly subjected himself, and conformed him-

self to the law of God, that general and moral law which all men are

obliged unto. He performed the duties of the first table : Luke ii. 49,

\* Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ? ' He took

all occasions to glorify God, And the duties of the second table, as to

his natural and reputed parents : Luke ii. 51, ' He went down with

them, and was subject to them.'

2. That he might in the same nature suffer the penalty and curse of

244 SERMON UPON GENESIS III. 15.

the law, as well as fulfil the duty of it, and so make satisfaction for our

sins, which as God he could not do. He was ' made sin for us,' 2 Cor.

V. 21, and was ' made a curse for us,' Gal. iii. 13 ; Phil. ii. 8, ' He

became obedient to death, even the deatli of the cross.' There was a

curse denounced against those who yielded not personal obedience ;

and he came in the sinner's room to undergo it, that the justice of God

might be eminently demonstrated, the lawgiver vindicated, and the

breach that was made in the frame of government repaired, and God

manifested to be holy, and an hater of sin, and yet the sinner saved

from destruction.

3. That in the same nature which was foiled he might conquer Satan.

As a tempter he conquered him hand to hand in a personal conflict,

repelling his temptations, Mat. iv. As a tormentor, and one that had

the power of death, so he conquered him by his death on the cross :

Heb. ii. 14, ' Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and

blood, he also himself took part of the same, that through death he

might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.'

Christ would stoop to the greatest indignities to free us from this

enemy, and to put mankind again into a condition of safety and happi-

ness, that he having conquered, they might also conquer.

4. That he might take compassion of our infirmities, having experi-

mented them in his own person. Therefore he assumed human nature

that he might have assurance of this : Heb. ii. 17, 18, ' Wherefore in

all things it behoved him to be like unto his brethren, that he might

be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining unto God,

to make reconciliation for the sins of the people ; for in that he him-

self hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are

tempted.' We have now assurance that he will pity us, more than one

who is a stranger to our blood. He hath had trial of our nature and

our miseries and temptations, and will be more sensible of the heart of

a tempted man, and will mind and attend upon our business as his own.

5. That he might take possession of heaven for us in our nature :

John xiv. 2, 3, ' I go to prepare a place for you ; and if I go and pre-

pare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that

where I am, there ye may be also.' The devil comes to depress our

nature, and Christ came to exalt it ; he endeavoured to make us lose

paradise, and Christ gave us heaven. Man fallen is strangely haunted

with doubts about the other world. Now he that came to save us and

heal us did himself in our nature rise from the dead, that he might

give us a visible demonstration of the life to come, which he had

promised to us, that we might more regard the offer. He himself hath

seized upon it, that the rest of the seed may be possessed of it ; and

hath carried our nature thither, that in time our persons may be

translated.

6. That after he had been a sacrifice for sin, and conquered death by

his resurrection, he might also triumph over the devil, and lead cap-

tivity captive, and give gifts to men in the very act of his ascension

into heaven : Eph. iv. 8, ' Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on

high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.' Having

foiled his enemies on the cross, it is fit he should triumph over them, to

n.ssure the world of his conquest, and give such a measure of his gifts

SERMON UrON GENESIS III. 15. 245

and graces to his church as might help them to scatter the ranks of

the battle. His victory is shown to be complete as to the head ; and

as to the rest of the seed of the woman, who are all willing to enter

into confederacy with him, he hath left ordinances and an almighty

Spirit, that they may get to heaven after him.

II. Tiiat Christ is at enmity with Satan, and hath entered into the

conflict with him.

1. We must state the enmity between Christ and his confederates,

and Satan and his instruments. For it is said in the beginning of the

verse, ' I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed ; ' which is

principally to be understood of the Lord Christ, and of his confederates

in the second place ; against Satan in the first place, and his instru-

ments on the other side. There is a double enmity which Christ hath

against Satan, and so he undertakes the war against him as contrary to

his nature and office.

[1.] There is a perfect enmity between the nature of Christ and the

nature of the devil. The nature of Satan is sinful, murderous, and

destructive ; for it is said, he was ' a liar and murderer from the begin-

ning,' John viii. 44 ; and 1 John iii. 8, ' He that committeth sin is of

the devil ; for the devil sinneth from the beginning : for this purpose

the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the

devil ; ' again, ver. 12, ' Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and

slew his brother : and wherefore slew he him ? because his own works

were evil, and his brother's righteous.' Now the nature of Christ is

quite contrary. It is the devil's work to do all the hurt that he can to the

bodies and souls of men ; and it is Christ's work to do good, and only

good ; Acts X, 38, ' God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy

Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that

were oppressed with the devil ; for God was with him.' Christ did

nothing by way of malice and revenge ; he used not the power that he

had to make men blind or lame, or to kill any ; no, not his worst

enemies, when he could easily do it, and justly might have done it.

No ; he went up and down giving sight to the blind, limbs to the lame,

health to the sick, life to the dead. He rebuked his disciples when they

tempted him to destroy some for their contempt by calling for fire

from heaven, telling them they ' know not what manner of spirit they

were of ; for the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to

save them,' Luke ix. 55, 56. It was unlike his spirit and design. All

his miracles were acts of relief and favour, not pompous, not destruc-

tive ; bating only two, the blasting the unfruitful fig-tree, which was

an emblematical warning to the Jews, and suffering the devil to enter

into the herd of swine, which was a necessary demonstration of the

devil's malice and destructive cruelty, who, if he could not afilict and

destroy men, would enter into the herd of swine, that the poor crea-

tures might perish in the sea. Thus there was a perfect contrariety

of nature between Christ and Satan.

[2.] An enmity proper to his ofiice and design. For he came \* to

destroy the works of the devil,' 1 John iii. 8 ; and was set up to dis-

solve that sin and misery which he had brought upon the world. The

devil sought the misery and destruction of mankind, but Christ sought

our salvation. Satan is the great destroyer of the creation, and Christ

'246 SERMON UPON GENESIS III. 15.

is the repairer of it. Now salvation and destruction are diametrically

opposite ; so are tlie kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan, the

limction and office of Christ as a saviour, and the purpose and design

of the devil as Abaddon, the destroyer. And therefore Christ proveth

that he had not the least confederacy with Satan ; for ' then his king-

dom would be divided against itself, and how could it stand ? ' Mat.

xii. 25, 26. It was impossible the Saviour could befriend the destroyer,

or the destroyer the Saviour. No ; their ends and designs are perfectly

opposite.

Now, as there is such an enmity between Christ and Satan, so there

is between the rest of the confederates on either side.

(1.) An enmity or contrariety of nature. The seed of the serpent

inherits his venomous qualities ; for as these are an estate opposite to

God, so they are to the people of God, and seek their destruction by

all cruel and bloody means. All people of a false religion, whether

infidels, idolaters, or heretics, are of bloody and desperate principles,

their minds being efferated by their false religion, and the influence of

their great guide and leader, who is the devil: Jude 11, ' They have

gone in the way of Cain.'

Let me instance in antichrist and his abettors and adherents, who is

the devil's eldest son. Witness their bloody practices that have been

acted on the stage of Christendom for so many years. AVhat a deal

of blood hath been sucked by these leeches in England in Queen Mary's

days, in Germany, France, and the Netherlands ! Witness of late

their horrible slaughters in Ireland, Piedmont, and the hellish powder

plot, the deliverance from which we commemorate this day ; this was

a flash of their malice, by which they would have blown up the whole

state at once. On the other side, Christ conveyeth his holy, meek, and

lamb-like nature to his sincere worshippers and followers. There is

indeed a contrariety of natui-e to the carnal, so as they do not run with

them into the same excess of riot, so as their righteous souls are vexed

with the impure conversation of the wicked, so as they are grieved to

see people go by droves to hell, and list themselves in the devil's service.

But there is no destructive enmity. If they hate the wicked, it is with

an hatred opposite to the love of complacency, but not with an hatred

opposite to the love of good-will. There is an enmity to Satan, and

his works, yet a })ity to the persons inveigled and deceived by him.

The wicked hate that holy disposition which is in the hearts of God's

people, and therefore malign and persecute them. But on the other

side there is a contrariety of disposition : Pro v. xxix. 27, ' An unjust

man is an abomination to the just, and he that is upright in the way

is abomination to the wicked.' There is odium offensionis, but not

i/iimicitice ; an hatred of offence, but not of enmity. They bear vyith

ihem with patience, pursue their recovery, strive to rescue poor captives

out of the snares of the devil, but aim not at their destruction : 2 Tim.

ii, 25, 26, ' In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if

God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of

the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of

the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.'

(2.) There is an enmity of design. As Christ actually employeth

anv as soldiers to fight under his banner, so they participate of the

SERMON UPON GENESIS III, 15. 247

enmity of his design and office. Every private christian is one of

Christ's soldiers ; for we give up our faculties and powers as weapons :

Kom. vi. 13. ' Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from

the dead, and your members as instruments/ or weapons, oirXa, of

righteousness unto God.' And the graces of the Spirit are called

armour of light : Rom. xiii. 12, ' Let us cast off the works of -darkness,

and let us put on the armour of light.' And we are bidden ' to put on

the whole armour of God, because we wrestle not against flesh and

blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of

the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in higli places,'

Eph. vi. 11, 12. The ministers and those in a public station are

leaders under Christ the general, and are by office and employment

engaged in this warfare against the kingdom of the devil. And there-

fore the apostle biddeth Timothy to ' endure hardness as a good soldier

of Jesus Christ,' 2 Tim. ii. 3 ; and the apostle says, 2 Cor. x. 4, ' The

weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God for the

pulling down of strongholds.' They must set themselves against the

devil and his kingdom.

2. The enmity being such between the seeds, Christ sets upon his

business to destroy Satan's power and works.

[1.] His power. Satan hath a twofold power over fallen man — legal

and usurped.

(1.) The legal power is that which the apostle calleth the power of

death, and the terrors which follow upon it : Heb. ii. 14, 15, ' That

through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that

is, the devil ; and deliver them who through fear of death were all

their lifetime subject to bondage.' The devil hath no power, as a

judge, to condemn sinners: he is not dominus mortis, the Lord of

death ; but minister mortis, the minister of death ; for, being con-

demned of God, the poor sinner is put into his hand that he may either

terrify or stupefy him, and so more and more involve him in the curse

of God's broken law ; and also he may hasten his death and everlasting

destruction.

(2.) Satan hath a tn'annical usurped power. So the devils are

called ' rulers of the darkness of this world,' Eph. vi. 12, the blind,

idolatrous, superstitious world ; and Satan is called ' The prince of this

world,' John xiv. 30, and ' The God of this world,' 2 Cor. iv. 4. God

made him an executioner, but we make him a prince, a ruler, and a

God, Now Christ, as a priest, disannulleth his legal power by his

death and the merit of his sacrifice ; and Christ, as a true king, and

head both of men and angels, pulls down Satan as an usurper, delivers

the poor captive souls out of his power ; and as a prophet he dis-

covereth his cheats and delusions.

[2.] His works. There is a twofold work of Satan — the work of the

devil without us, or the work of the devil within us.

(1.) The work of the devil without us is a false religion, or those

idolatries and superstitions by which Satan's reign and empire is upheld

in the world. This is destroyed by the doctrine of the gospel, accom-

panied with the all-powerful Spirit of God. And therefore, when the

gospel was first preached by Christ's messengers, the devil fell from

that great and unlimited power which he had before in the world :

248 SERMON UPON GENESIS III. 15.

Luke X. 18, \* I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.' It is an

allusion to his first fall ; as lightning flasheth and vanisheth, and never

recollecteth itself again, so ' Now shall the prince of this world be cast

out,' John xii. 31. When Christ did first set upon the redemption of

mankind, the apostles went abroad to beat the devil, and hunt him

out of his territories ; and they did it with great eff"ect. Therefore

this is made one argument by which the Spirit doth convince us of the

truth of the gospel : John xvi. 11, 'He shall convince the world of

judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.' The silencing

of his oracles, the suppressing of his superstitions, the destroying of the

kingdom of wickedness and darkness, was an apparent evidence of the

truth of the gospel. The old religion, by which the devil's kingdom

was supported everywhere, went to wrack , no moi-e the same temples,

the same rites, the same gods ; all was made to stoop and bow before

God as worshipped in Christ.

(2.) There is the work of the devil within us. This concerneth the

recovering particular persons out of the snare of the devil, who were

taken captive by him at his will and pleasure. Here we must dis-

tinguish between the purchase and application. The purchase was

made when Christ died : Col. ii. 15, ' Having spoiled principalities and

powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it ; '

that is, on his cross. Christ's death was Satan's overthrow ; then was

the deadly blow given to his power and kingdom. This was the price

given for our ransom, and the great means of disannulling all that

power Satan had before. The application is begun in our conversion ;

for then we are said to be turned from Satan unto God : Acts xxvi. 18,

' To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from

the power of Satan unto God.' Then we are rescued out of the devil's

clutches, and adopted into God's family, that, being made children, we

may have a child's portion.

III. That in this conflict his heel was wounded, bitten, or bruised

by the serpent.

1. Certain it is that Christ was bruised in the enterprise ; which

showeth how much we should value our salvation, since it costs so dear

as the precious blood of the Son of God incarnate : 1 Peter i. 18, 19,

' Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible

things, as silver and gold, &c., but with the precious blood of Christ, as

of a lamb without blemish and without spot,' He thought not his

"whole humiliation, from first to last, too much for the overthrowing of

the devil's kingdom, nor any price too dear to redeem poor captive

souls.

2. But how was he bruised by the serpent ? Certainly on the one

hand Christ's sufferings were the effects of man's sin and God's hatred

against sin and his governing justice ; for it is said, Isa. liii. 10, 'It

pleased the Father to bruise him.' Unless it had pleased the Lord to

bruise him, Satan could never have bruised him. On the other side,

they were also the effects of the malice and rage of the devil and his

instruments, who was now with the sword's-point and closing stroke

with Christ, and doing the worst he could against him. In his whole

life he endured many outward troubles from Satan's instruments ; for

all his life long he was a man of sorrows, wounded and bruised by Satan

SERMON UPON GENESIS III. 15. 249

and his instruments : John viii. 44, \* Ye are of your father the devil,

and the lusts of your father ye will do ; he was a murderer from the

beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in

him.' But the closing stroke was at last ; then did the serpent most

eminently bruise his heel. When Judas contrived the plot, it is said,

the devil entered into him : Luke xxii. 3, ' Then entered Satan into

Judas Iscariot, being one of the twelve.' When the high priest's

servants come to take him, he telleth them, Luke xxii. 53, ' This is

3'our hour, and the power of darkness.' The power of darkness at

length did prevail so far as to cause his shameful death ; this was their

day.

3. It was only his heel that was bruised. It could go no further ;

for though his bodily life was taken away, yet his head and mediatory

power was not touched : Acts ii. 36, ' This same Jesus whom ye have

crucified, God hath made both Lord and Christ.' Again, his bodily

life was taken away but for awhile. God would not leave his soul in

the grave : Ps. xvi. 10, ' Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither

wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.' The counsel and

purpose of God concerning man's redemption had then been wholly

frustrated : ' For if Christ be not risen, your faith is vain ; ye are yet

in your sins,' 1 Cor. xv, 17. Once more, though Christ was bruised,

yet he was not conquered. When the Jews and Eoman soldiers were

spoiling him, and parting his garments, then was he spoiling principal-

ities and powers ; and when Satan and his instruments were triumphing

over the Son of God, then was he triumphing over all the devils in hell,

for by death he destroyed him that had the power of death. This was

a necessary means of conquest ; and Christ must overcome Satan by

suffering himself to be overcome visibly by him. The devil doth not

conquer Chiist by death, but Christ doth conquer him. And still all

the temptations of the devil are but the wounding of the heel ; the

loss is not great to Christ or his members : as Dan is compared to ' a

serpent by the way, or an adder in the path, that biteth the horse-

heels, so that his rider shall fall backward, Gen. Ixix. 17. Such is the

craft of Satan ; he doth not usually bring temptations before our

reason, but they enter in at the backdoor of sensual appetite ; but though

he bite the heel, the life of grace is secured. Satan prevailed so far

against Christ that his wicked instruments brought him to the cross,

pursued him to the death there. But, 2 Cor. xiii. 4, ' Though he was

crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God;' or,

as it is in 1 Peter iii. 18, ' Being put to death in the flesh, but quick-

ened by the Spirit.' So for christians, he may divers ways wound and

afflict us in our outward interests, but the inner man is safe : 2 Cor.

iv. 16, 'Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is

renewed day by day.' Nay, we may be bruised in the heel by divers

temptations and slips into sin ; yet the vitals of grace are not hurt,

there is no total extinction of our love to God.

I should come now to the fourth branch, that though Christ was

bruised in the conflict, yet it endeth in Satan's total overthrow. His

heel was bruised, but Satan's head was crushed. But of that anon.

In the meantime, by way of use, let me press you cheerfully to

remember and celebrate this victory of Christ. The duty we are

250 SERT^rON UPON GENESIS III. 15.

engaging in is an eucharist, and we come to rejoice in God onr Saviour,

Let me bespeak you, in the psalmist's words, Ps. xcviii. 1, ' sing

unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things ; his

right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory ; ' or, Ps.

cxviii. 15, 16, ' The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the taber-

nacle of the righteous ; the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly ; the

right hand of the Lord is exalted ; the right hand of the Lord doth

valiantly ; ' Ps. cvi. 2, \* Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord ?

who can show forth all his praise ? '

[1.] The conqueror is the seed of the woman, or the Son of God

incarnate. Oh ! let us bless God for so great a mercy : Luke i. 68-76,

' Blessed be the Lord God of Israel ; for he hath visited and re-

deemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in

the house of his servant David ; as he spake by the mouth of his holy

prophets, which have been since the world began : That we should be

saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us ; to

perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy

covenant, the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he

would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hands of our

enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and I'ighteousness

before him all the days of our life.' What ! shall the Son of God come

from heaven to subdue the kingdom of Satan, and to deliver men from

this bondage, and we be no more affected with it ?

[2.] The manner of overcoming ; it is by suffering a shameful, pain-

ful, and accursed death : Rev. i. 5, 6, ' Unto him that loved us, and

washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and

priests to God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever

and ever. Amen.' Again, \* Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to

receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and

glory, and blessing,' Rev. v. 12 ; and ver. 9, \* For thou wast slain, and

hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and

tongue, and people, and nation ; ' that by a death which he deserved

not he should destroy the death which we deserved.

[3.] Who is overcome ? The devil : Kev. xii. 10, ' Now is come

salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of

his Christ ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accused

them before our God day and night;' ver. 11, ' And they overcame

him by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony ; and

they loved not their lives unto the death ; ' ver. 12, ' Therefore rejoice,

ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them : woe to the inhabitants of the

earth and of the sea ; for the devil is come down unto you, having great

wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.' O chris-

tians ! what will raise your hearts in thanksgiving to God, if not these

three arguments which I have plainly mentioned to you ? for the

matter needeth no descants. The incarnation of the Son of God, who

came as the seed of the woman, that he might free mankind from the

power the devil had over them by sin. Then the merit and satisfaction

of our Saviour, for he was bruised in his heel. And then the dissolu-

tion of Satan's power, and the freeing of mankind out of his hands,

either as a tempter or a tormentor.

[4.] The effects of the victory when it is applied to us. I shall

mention three —

SERMON UPON GEXESIS III. 15. 251

(1.) Our conversion to God, and the destruction of sin in our hearts,

or our actual deliverance from Satan: Luke xi. 21, 22, 'When a

strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace ; but when

a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh

from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.'

This was our case ; all was in a sinful quiet and peace. When wind

and tide go together, no wonder if their he a calm. Satan's suggestions

and our corruptions suited the one with the other. But blessed be

God that this carnal security is disturbed, that the kingdom of God is

come upon us ; that Christ, by a sacred rescue, hath dispossessed Satan,

and destroyed sin. Oh ! let us ' give thanks unto the Father, who

hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in

light ; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated

us into the kingdom of his dear Son,' Col. i. 12, 13.

(2.) Kemission of sins: Acts xxvi. 18, ' To open their eyes, and to

turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto

God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance

among them that are sanctified, by faith that is in me ; ' Col. i. 13, 14,

\* Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated

us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption

through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.' Christ's subjects have

the privileges of his kingdom. Now ' bless the Lord, my soul ; and

all that is within me, bless his holy name : bless the Lord, my soul,

and forget not all his benefits ; who pardoneth all thy iniquities, and

healeth all thy diseases,' Ps. ciii. 1-3.

(3.) Our own personal victory over Satan's temptations. In part

now. We renew that covenant now, wherein we engaged to tight

against Satan : 1 John ii. 14, ' I have written unto you young men,

because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye

have overcome the wicked one.' Fully hereafter : Rom. xvi. 20, ' The

God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.' The God of

peace, as pacified in Christ. Now this is matter of thanksgiving : 1

Cor. XV. 57, ' Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our

Lord Jesus Christ ; ' that Christ will take us along with him in his

triumphant chariot, and help our weak faith and faint hope, and that

we may conquer the tempter and accuser.

IV. Though Christ's heel was bruised in the conflict, yet it endeth

in Satans final overthrow ; for his head was crushed, which noteth the

subversion of his power and kingdom.

To explain this, we must consider — (1.) What is the power of

Satan ; (2.) How far Satan was destroyed by Christ.

First, What is the power of Satan ? It lieth in sin. And Christ

destroyed him, as he ' made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting

righteousness, and made reconciliation for iniquities,' Dan. ix. 24 ;

namely, as he reconciled man to God, and restored God's image and

life eternal. In short, the power of Satan may be considered either

as to single persons, or his interest iti the corrupt world, or the

sinful race of apostate Adam, who in their degenerate estate make up a

confederacy or party, that may be called the kingdom of the devil.

1. As to single and individual persons ; all his power over them is

by reason of sin, which was introduced by his subtlety and malice.

There are three things in sin — the power, the guiU, the being.

252 SERMON UPON GENESIS III. 15.

Whilst any of these remain, Satan hath some power ; and all these

Christ came to dissolve, but by several means and at several times.

[1.] The devil's power lieth in the corruption of v'>ur natures ; for

men continuing in the apostasy from God are of Satan's party : Eph.

ii. 1-3, ' And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and

sins : wherein in time past ye walked, according to the course of this

world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that

now worketh in the children of disobedience ; among whom also we all

had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling

the desires of the flesh, and of the mind.' This was the power that

Satan had over us, to rule us and govern us by the lusts of the flesh.

This was our daily walk and trade, without any remorse for it, or any

desire to change our condition. And we are the more confirmed in it

by the general and corrupt example of those among whom we live.

Now, whilst we follow these sinful motions and suggestions, Satan is

our prince and God ; the corrupt nature makethus readily to entertain

his motions, and we ' are taken captive by him at his will and pleasure,'

2 Tim. ii. 26.

Now how doth Christ take away this power ?

I answer — By converting grace, which is not only a turning from

sin to God, but from Satan to God : Acts xxvi. 18, ' To open their eyes,

and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan

to God ; ' whereby the reign of sin is broken ; for as long as sin reigneth,

Satan is in peaceable possession: Luke xi. 21, 'When a strong man

armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace ; ' and the devil, who

hath lost his seat in heaven, hath still a throne in the hearts of men,

and lords it over them as his slaves. Now the reign of sin is broken

when Christ puts an enmity into your hearts against it : ' I will put

enmity between thy seed and her seed ; ' for sin dieth as your love to

it dieth, and is mortified and subdued as your enmity increaseth.

Well, then, they that are converted to God are possessed with a spirit

of enmity to Satan and his ways, such as they had not before whilst

they remained in the degenerate estate. Therefore it is said, Ezek.

xxxvi. 26, ' A new heart will I also give to you, and a new spirit will

I put within you ; ' such as none else have till the Kedeemer work upon

them : 1 Cor. ii. 12, ' We have received not the spirit of the world, but

the Spirit which is of God.' The spirit which possesseth the generality

of men is the worldly spirit that inclineth to earthly and sensual sat-

isfactions ; but this Spirit maketh them look after the great things

promised by Christ, and the great things required by Christ ; in short,

a spirit quite opposite to the satanical spirit. The satanical spirit is

contrary to God and man. To God: Col. i. 21, 'And you that were

sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet

now hath he reconciled.' To man : James iv. 5, ' Tlie spirit that

dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.' But this spirit begetteth in us love to

God and man, that we may seek his glory and the good of others.

Now till this spirit be planted in us, we have not changed parties and

masters. The being of sin is found in all, but the reign only in the

unconverted ; therefore the reign of sin must be broken by the dwell-

ing of this spirit in us. Sin will put strongly for the throne again, but

you must pray earnestly : Ps. cxix. 133, ' Order my steps in thy word ;

SERMON UPON GENESIS III. 15. 253

and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' And watch con-

stantly, as ever mindful of your baptismal vow and covenant : Eom.

vi. 11, ' Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but

alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' And then you will

find Christ overcoming more and more the satanical spirit, and enlarg-

ing you into the liberty of God's children.

[2.] The guilt of sin, which is an obligation to punishment, and

arisetli from the sentence of condemnation pronounced by the law

against sinners. Our misery ariseth first from the violation of the

piecept of the law, and then from the sanction and penalty threatened.

And so also therein lieth Satan's power, as we are obnoxious to the

wrath of God ; for therein he is the minister and executioner of death,

as God maketh use of all his creatures according to their inclination.

And so this wrathful revengeful creature is the instrument of his wrath.

He hath an advantage against us by the law of God, the precepts

whereof we have broken, and so incurred the penalty ; and so Satan

cometh on as one that hath the power of death. Those obstinate and

careless souls who refuse the government of the Lord's gi-ace and spirit

are put into his hands ; as ' when the Spirit of the Lord departed from

Saul, an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him,' 1 Sam. xvi. 14. He

doth or may terrify and afright the consciences of men with the dread-

ful expectation of death and the consequences of it, especially the sick

and the dying. He that formerly tempted then beginneth to trouble ;

and he that formerly showed you the pleasant baits of sin will then

show you the hook ; he who now representeth pardon easy, will then

represent it as impossible. And when death cometh, he hath power to

hale away the sinner to torments ; for as the good angels carry the

souls of the faithful to Christ, Luke xvi. 22, 23, so probably the devil

hath a power to carry them to hell. Now, as the devil hath this power

of death, he bringeth men into sin that he may bring them into terror.

Yea, Satan hath a great hand in the troubles of conscience which befall

God's children.

Well, then, how is this power destroyed ? By satisfying the law,

Christ destroyeth the power of the devil. For first, ' he blotted out

the handwriting that was against us,' and then 'spoiled principalities

and powers,' Col. ii. 14, 15. And when he doth actually justify, we

feel the comfort and benefit of it : Kom. viii. 33, 34, ' Who shall lay

anything to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that j ustifieth : who

shall condemn ? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again,

who is even at the right hand of God ; who also maketh intercession

for us.' Our advocate is more gracious in court than our accuser.

Having paid our ransom, and interceding for us and pleading it,

what accusation from the law can stand against those who have

t embraced this gospel ?

[3.] The being of sin ; for while it remaineth there is somewhat of

Satan left which he worketh upon. There is a remnant of his seed in the

best : the godly are yet in the way, but not at the end of the journey ;

and therefore he hath leave to assault them while they are here ; but

Christ will perfect the conquest which he has begun, and so the very

being of sin shall at length be taken away : Jude 24, ' To him that

is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the

254 SERMON UPON GENESIS III. 15.

presence of his glory ; ' and Eph. v. 27, ' That lie might present it to

himself, a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ;

but that it should be holy and without blemish.' At death sin is

totally disannulled, the physician of our souls will then perfect the

cure. As in the first moment of our birth we were sinners, so in the

moment of our expiration all sin dieth. Christ taketh that time to

finish his work. No sinner can enter into the state of bliss ; but the

veil of the flesh being rent, we are immediately admitted into the sight

of God, and so made exactly perfect.

2. As to the general case, or his interest in the corrupt world. It is

true the kingdom of Satan yet remaineth ; but he doth and shall divide

the spoil with the strong : Isa. liii. 12, ' Therefore will I divide him a

])ortion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.'

And though his doctrine and religion meeteth with opposition in the

world, yet it doth prevail upon opposition, and against opposition, and

by opposition ; when in the seasons of it he cometh to set his kingdom

on foot : Rev. vi. 2, ' I saw a white horse, and he that sat on him had

a bow, and a crown was given unto him ; and he went forth conquering

and to conquer.' This is an emblematical representation of the rise

and progress of Christ's kingdom. Where you may note his furniture,

a crown and a bow. The crown noteth his dignity, the bow his

armour and strength : Ps. xlv. 3-5, ' Gird on thy sword upon thy thigh,

thou most mighty, with thy glory and majesty ; and in thy majesty

ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness ;

and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things: thine arrows are

sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under

thee.' Christ having the grant of a kingdom over the nations, is every

way furnished with power to obtain it, by means proper to the medi-

atory dispensation, by his word. Spirit, and providence.

[1.] His word, which is called ' The rod of his strength,' Ps. ex. 2 ;

' The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God,'

2 Cor. x. 4. When Christ will work, the world cannot resist its con-

vincing power ; those that feel it not fear it : John iii. 20, ' Every one

that doetli evil liateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his

deeds should be reproved.'

[2.] His Spirit. Now what can stand before the mighty Spirit of

God, convincing men of the truth of his religion? John xvi. 8-11,

' And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of right-

eousness, and of judgment : of sin, because they believe not on me : of

righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye see me no more : of

judgment, because the prince of this world is judged,' Showing hereby

Christ was the Messiah, and therefore they were guilty of great sin

who did not believe on him ; that he was a righteous and innocent

person, and no seducer, because Christ rose from the dead and went to

the Father ; that he was an exalted prince, above Satan, and whatever

things were looked upon as divine powers. Many that were not con-

verted were convinced of this.

[3.] His providence. All judgment was put into Christ's hands, to

be improved for the advancement of his mediatory kingdom : John v.

22, ' For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judg-

ment to the Son.' He hath the government of all things, angels, and

SERMON UPON GENESIS III. 15. 255

all events that fall out in the world. None of the creatures are left to

their own arbitrament or uncertain contingences, but under the govern-

ment of a supreme providence, which is left in Christ's hands. Thus

you see, though the devil's interest be held up by the combined interests

of the world agreeing together to promote the idolatries and supersti-

tions wherewith he hath inspired them, yet Christ is able to break and

dissolve all this force and power.

Secondly, How far was Satan destroyed or his head crushed ?

1. Negatively.

[1.] Non ratione essentice, not to take away his life and being. No ;

there is a devil still, and shall be, even when the whole work of Christ's

redemption is finished ; for then it is said, Kev. xx. 10, ' The d(;vil that

deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the

beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night

for ever and ever.' So Mat. xxv. 41, ' Depart from me, ye cursed, into

everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels/ Then eternal

judgment is executed on the head of the wicked state. Sentence was

passed before, and the devil feareth it : Mat. viii. 29, ' Art thou come

hither to torment us before the time ? ' He was condemned before,

but then it is executed upon him ; he is finally punished, and shall for

ever remain with the damned.

[2.] Non ratione malitice, not in regard of malice ; for the enmity

ever continueth between the two seeds, and Satan will be doing though

it be always to loss : 1 John iii. 8, ' The devil sinneth from the begin-

ning.' Therefore he is not so destroyed as if he did no more desire the

ruin and destruction of men. He is as malicious as ever. The devil

is always at the old trade of destroying souls, and watcheth all advan-

tages, and observeth our motions and inclinations, to make use of

them.

2. Affirmatively, it remaineth that it is ratione potentice, in regard

of his power. But the question returneth. How far is his power de-

stroyed ? for he still governeth the wicked, and possesseth a great part

of the world. Therefore the devils are called, Eph. vi. 12, ' The rulers

of the darkness of this world.' He molesteth the godly, whether con-

sidered singly and apart, or in their communities and societies. Singly

and apart he may sometimes trouble them and sorely shake them, as

wheat is winnowed in a sieve : Luke xxii. 31, ' Simon, Simon, behold,

Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.' And

in their communities and societies: Ps. cxxix. 1, 2, 'Many a time

have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say : many a

time have they afflicted me from my youth.'

Ans. Though he may afflict and molest the people of God, yet he

cannot totally prevail over them.

[1.] There is enough done by way of merit to break the power of

Sataji, or that whole kingdom of darkness which is united under one

head called the devil. The price and ransom is fully paid for captive

souls : ' The Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world,' John i,

29. There need no more to be done by way of merit and satisfaction

to bruise the serpent's head and to dissolve that woful work which he

hath introduced into the world. Now, not only the comfort of parti-

cular believers is ascribed to the death of Christ, but the success of the

256 SERMON UPON GENESIS HI. 15.

gospel over false religions ; as 1 Peter i. 18, ' Forasmuch as ye know

that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,

from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers,

but with the precious blood of Christ.' He purchased the power of re-

covering souls out of their apostasy at a dear rate. Therefore, though

the superstitions of the world were entailed on people by a long de-

scent, yet when we go forth to preach the gospel in the virtue and value

of the blood of Christ, that will work mighty wonders for the destruc-

tion of the kingdom of the devil.

[2.] Christ is upon the throne, and we are under his protection ;

therefore the devil cannot totally prevail as to those who have interest

in him. As to single believers : John x. 28, ' None is able to pluck

them out of my hand.' Or as to their communities and societies : Mat.

xvi. 18, ' Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell

shall not prevail against it.' The gates of hell signify the power and

policy of hell, for there was their armoury and their counsel. Christ

expecteth their most subtle and furious assaults, but all should be but

as the dashing of waves against a rock, end in foam, and shame to the

aggressors and assailants. So that besides his merit on the cross, there

is his power in heaven, as now sitting upon the throne.

[3.] The victory is carried on so as that our duty and trials may not

be excluded.

(1.) Though Satan's head be crushed, yet still there is room for our

duty, that we may use the means for our safety, as good soldiers of

Christ, and live as in a continual fight. These are set down, 1 Peter

v. 8, 9, ' Be sober and vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a

roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour ; whom re-

sist steadfast in the faith.'

(1st.) Sobriety, or an holy moderation as to the comforts and

delights of the present life. The devil, the flesh, and the world are in

conspiracy. By the baits of the world he enticeth our flesh to a neglect

of God and heavenly things ; therefore we must use the world as if we

used it not, lest our hearts be burdened and depressed, and disabled

from seeking after our great end and happiness.

(2c?.) Vigilancy and watchfulness is necessary, that we may stand

upon our guard, avoiding snares, and forecasting hazards, lest we fall

as a ready prey into the mouth of the tempter : 1 Cor. xvi. 13, ' Watch

ye, stand fast in the faith, quit yourselves like men, be strong.' The

first point of a christian soldier is to watch ; conscience must stand

porter at the door, examining what cometh in and what goeth out.

The devil watcheth all advantages against us, that he may spy where

we aie weakest ; and if the enemy watch and we sleep, we cannot be

safe.

(3c?.) Steadfast resistance in the faith. When we are yielding, Satan

gets ground ; but when we believingly and steadfastly resist, he is dis-

couraged. This steadfast resistance in the faith is — (1.) Adhering to

the privileges of the gospel as our happiness ; (2.) Persevering in the

duties thereof as our work ; resolving not to let go our hold, but by

patient continuance in well-doing to wait for the mercy of our Lord

Jesus unto eternal life. Now if Christ should so destroy the devil as

to exempt from this duty, the whole gospel would be in vain, and the

SERMON UrON GENESIS III. 15. 257

promises and precepts of it to no purpose, and all the furniture of grace

which Christ hath purchased for us and promised to us be lost and

useless. Surely Christ hath not so crushed the serpent's head but that

we need to be sober and watchful and steadfast in the faith ; otherwise

we were not his soldiers, but his enemies.

(2.) Not to exempt us from trials of our sincerity. God will have all

obedience to be tried and honoured by opposition, and sometimes by

sharp and grievous opposition : Eev. ii. 10, ' The devil shall cast some

of you into prison, that you may be tried.' Thus Job was remitted to

Satan for his trial : chap. i. 12, ' And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold,

all that he hath is in thy power.' And Paul had his messenger of

Satan for his trial, to see what shift he could make, with sufficient

internal grace under outward and vexatious evils, 2 Cor. xii. 7-10.

Now better undergo the fiery trial than the fiery torment. Tried we

are then, but not destroyed. God may let loose the wolf to drive us

into the fold, and exercise us with temptations, but not suffer us to be

overwhelmed.

[4.] In the external management of the mediatorial kingdom there

are many vicissitudes and interchanges of the outward condition of the

ohurch. Sometimes God doth notably defeat Satan and his instruments,

and the devil's kingdom visibly goeth to wrack ; as at the first promul-

gation of the gospel, though the world was captivated under Satan,

rooted in former superstitions, yet Christ prevailed and got ground by

the rod of his strength and the word of his kingdom, though Satan

everywhere had his temples wherin he was worshipped and his oracles

were resorted to with great reverence. Till the Hebrew child silenced

him, he ate the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink-

offerings, yea, often the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they

sacrificed to him ; yet all of a sudden his strongholds were demolished,

the idols broken, whom they and their fathers had worshipped and

prayed unto in their distresses and adversities, and blessed in their pros-

perities; the temples broken down, the altars polluted and set at

nought, and the world turned from these vanities to the living God.

But a little while after the fires were kindled, and the professors of the

true religion were butchered and slaughtered ; but then \* they overcame

him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and

not loving their lives unto the death,' Kev. xii. li. So that when the

church seemed weakest and her enemies strongest, then she had more

for her than against her. When Satan's instruments were killing

christians, then they were pulling down Satan's throne and advancing

Christ's ; so that it is better to be a simple soldier on Christ's side than

commander of a whole army against him. When the persecutors had

done, Satan raised up heretics in the church, as worms that bred in

the body, and devoured it ; yet Christ confounded them, and in a little

time brake each sect in pieces, and those that were the great scourge

and vexation of one age were scarce known to the next but by their

names and some obscure reports. The light of the gospel did soon

scatter these mists as soon as they did arise. Last of all came the

great apostasy of antichristianism, whereby the simplicity of the chris-

tian doctrine was turned into school niceties, the worship of the gospel

into a theatrical pomp and the pageantry of ridiculous ceremonies, and

VOL. XVII. II

258 SERMON UPON GENESIS III. 15.

the discipline of the clmrch into a temporal domination ; and all thi»

supported by the blood of the saints and worldly grandeur, and the

combined interests of many popish nations. And here are the ebbs

and flows between the two shores of Christ and antichrist amongst us.

You know by what a bloody design Hagar the bondwoman, that was

cast out, sought to weaken and vaunt it over Sarah ; but the Lord broke

the snare, and our foot is escaped.

[.5.] If the promised seed had not bruised the serpent's head the

world had been in a worse case than it is. There is some conviction and

restraint where conversion taketh not place. Consider how Satan

reigneth where Christ hath not pursued him with his gospel, or where

Christ hath withdrawn his gospel for the ingratitude of men. Surely

there is a difference between the places where people live in the dregs

of Christianity, and there where the devil is worshipped and idolatry

set up.

[6.] Though there be not a total destruction of the kingdom of Satan,

yet it is in an absolute subjection to the throne of the mediator. The

kingdom of sin and Satan are so far destroyed as not to hinder the

demonstration of mercy to the elect, and as to be subservient to the

demonstration of his justice to others, who neglect or contemn the

remedy offered, which is God's great design that the elect may obtain,

though the rest be hardened.

[7.] That in time Christ will destroy all opposite reigns and kingdoms.

He doth some sooner, others later ; but there will be an universal and

absolute subjection to Christ at the day of judgment. Infernal spirits

shall then bow the knee to him, Phil. ii. 10, with Rom. xiv. 10, 11,

and that with Isa. xlv. 23. Then saints shall judge angels, 1 Cor. vi.

2, and the whole mystery of iniquity will then be finished and come to

nothing.

Use 1, Thankfulness and praise to our mediator. The eternal God

hath selected a people from the rest of the world to praise him for the-

mystery of his love here in the assemblies of his people ; for ' God

inhabiteth the praises of Israel,' Ps. xxii. 3 ; and hereafter, that he may

have the thanks of his glorified saints for ever. Consider to this end

how Satan's design is crossed and counterworked in the mystery of our

redemption.

1. Satan's design was to dishonour God by a false representation, as

if envious of man's happiness : Gen. iii. 5, ' God doth know that in the

day that ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be

as gods, knowing good and evil.' And so to weaken the esteem of

God's goodness. Now in the work of our redemption God is wonder-

fully magnified, and represented as amiable to man ; not envying our

knowledge and delight, but promoting it by all means, even with great

care and cost : 1 John iv. 8, ' God is love.'

2. To depress the nature of man, that in innocency stood so near

God. Now that the human nature, so depressed and abased by the

malicious suggestions of the devil, should be so elevated and advanced,

and be set up far above the angelical nature, and admitted to dwell

with God in a personal union, oh ! let us now cheerfully remember

and celebrate this victory of Christ. Our praise now is a pledge of our

everlasting triumph. This table is spread for us in the sight of our

SERMON UPON GENESIS III. 15. 269

enemies, and we come to have intimate communion and fellowship

with him at his table.

Use. 2. To exhort us to make use of Christ's help for our recovery

out of the defection and apostasy of mankind. Oh ! let Satan be

crushed in you, and the old carnal nature destroyed. He that so will-

ino^ly entered into the conflict on the cross, though his heel were bruised,

will as willingly employ the power of the Spirit to help you ; the one

was in order to the other. Christ doth not only enter upon the work

by conquest, but hath much to do with every individual person before

he can settle his kingdom in their hearts. There is a combat between

Christ and Satan for the rescue of every sinner, and we are not easily

brought to change masters. Now yield to him, suffer him to save you.

You look to the outward interest of Christ in the world, and you do

well ; but it is easier to bring men to own a true religion than to bring

them under the power of it. Christ's greatest victory is the overcoming

men's corruptions and carnal inclinations, to purify their polluted souls,

and to set up Christ's government in the heart, where once Satan ruled.

The kingdom of Christ within us is the most excellent kingdom : Luke

xi. 20, ' If I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the

kingdom of God is come upon you.' If once we become Christ's, we

will more really care for his interest in the world.

Use 3. To show us the nature of Christ's victory, and wherein it

consisteth ; not in an exemption from troubles, nor in a total exemp-

tion from sin for the present.

1. Not in an exemption from troubles. No ; you must expect con-

flicts. Though Satan's deadly power be taken away, our heel may be

crushed. Christ hath delivered us from the present evil world : Gal.

i. 4, ' Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from this

present evil world.' Not that the world should trouble us no more,

but that the world should not be a snare to us. He came not to

exempt us from trouble, but ' to save us from our sins,' Mat. i. 21 ;

' To deliver us from wrath to come,' 1 Thes, i. 10. We have the

victory which he purchased for us, if the devil and the world do not

hinder the fruition of eternal glory. Our victory over Satan is mostly

gotten by patience even to the death ; and so those that are killed all

the day long are ' more than conquerers through him that loved them,'

Horn. viii. 35-37. Satan's main spite is not at your worldly interests,

but your souls. God may give him sometimes a power over your

worldly and bodily interests, but he doth not give him a power over

your souls. Though he get his will over your bodies, yet, if he get

not his will over your souls, it is you that conquer, and not Satan ;

therefore in the christian sense suffering is conquering. If he do not

draw you away from God and Christ, though he and his instruments

have great power over you, it is your heel only is bruised, but your head

is safe.

2. It is not a total exemption from sin. Necessary vital grace is

only absolutely secured ; you shall receive no deadly wound to destroy

your salvation. The godly sometimes may be foiled. Satan stirred up

David to number the people : 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3, ' I am jealous over you

with a godly jealousy ; for I have espoused you to one husband, that

I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ : for I fear lest by any

260 riEEMON UPON GENESIS III. 15.

means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds

should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ ; ' 1 Cor. vii.

5, ' That Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.' Yea, God may

employ Satan in punishing his people ; as when the Israelites mur-

mured, ' he sent evil angels among them/ Ps. Ixxviii. 49, and ' they

were destroyed of the destroyer,' 1 Cor. x. 10. Because careless souls

are apt to fall asleep, God permitteth him to be the executioner of his

indignation.

Use 4. To animate and encourage Christ's servants in their war

against Satan's kingdom, at home and abroad, within and without:

' Not to give place to the devil,' Eph. iv. 27. Christ whom we serve

is more able to save than Satan is to destroy.

1. The devil is a creature, but Christ is the sovereign Lord, who

hath power over him and all creatures. The devil's tempting is by

leave : Job i. 12, ' And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath

is in thy power; ' Luke xxii. 31, 'And the Lord said, Simon, Simon,

behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.'

He could not enter into the herd of swine without leave from Christ :

Mat. viii. 31, ' So the devils besought him, saying, IE thou cast us out,

suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.' When we are in Satan's

hands, Satan is in God's hands.

2. The devil is an usurper, Christ is the heir of all things. Satan is

the god of this world by usurpation, but by lawful ordination Jesus

is both Lord and Christ : Acts ii. 36, ' Therefore let all the house of

Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye

have crucified, both Lord and Christ.'

3. The devil hath only a persuasive force, no constraining efficacy.

He cannot change the heart, or create any new principles and habits

there, which were nut before. But God can ' put his law into our in-

ward parts, and write it in our hearts,' Jer. xxxi. 35. He can only

propound alluring baits or objects to the outward senses and fancy,

but God worketh immediately on the heart.

4. If the devil be vigilant and assiduous in his temptations, he is

matched and overmatched. Christ is always mindful of the affairs of

his people ; he doth ever make intercession for us before God : ' And

he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep,' Ps. cxxi. 4.

Satan daily bloweth the bellows, inflaming our corruptions, suggesting

temptations ; but the Spirit is as watchful in our hearts, maintaining

his interest there.

5". The devil's malice is restrained, for he is held in chains of dark-

ness : 2 Peter ii. 4, ' If God spared not the angels that fell, but cast

them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness to

be reserved unto judgment ; ' meaning thereby not only the powerful

restraints of providence, but the horror of their own despairing fears.

Chains imply restraint, but chains of darkness, horror. He himself

believeth and trembleth : James ii. 19, ' Thou believest that there is

one God, thou doest well ; the devils also believe and tremble.'

6. The Lord Jesus doth often give out demonstrations of his power

and providence. Partly in protecting, strengthening, assisting his

people, and prospering their just endeavours for the advancement of

his kingdom, so that all the machinations of the wicked against them

SERMON UPON GENESIS III. 15, 261

come to nought. Partly in making fearful havoc and destruction in

Satan's kingdom. In protecting his people, sometimes he destroyeth

their enemies: Isa. xxvii. 4, 'Who would set the briers and thorns

against me in battle ? I would go through them, I would burn them

together.' Sometimes infatuateth their counsels : Job v. 12-14, ' He

disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot per-

form their enterprise : he taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and

the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. They meet with dark-

ness in the daytime, and grope in the noonday as in the night.'

Sometimes he hideth his people in the secret of his presence : Ps. xxxi.

20, 'Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride

of man ; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strifes

of tongues.' He smiteth his enemies by an invisible curse : Job xx.

26, ' All darkness shall be hid in his secret places ; a fire not blown

shall consume him ; it shall go ill with him that is left in his taber-

nacle.' He divideth them : 2 Chron. xx. 23, ' The children of Ammon

and Moab rose up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay

and destroy them ; and when they had made an end of the inhabitants

of Seir every one helped to destroy another.' Christ is the assailant,

and makes fearful havoc in the devil's kingdom. The word of truth is

come into all the world, and pulleth down idolatrous and false worship :

Col. i. 6, ' The word of truth is come unto you, as it is in all the world,

and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day you heard

of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.

SERMOiNS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

SERMON I.

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the even-tide^ —

Gen. xxiv. 63.

The context is spent in describing the journey of Eebekab. with Abra-

ham's servant, and the text showeth the occasion of the first inter-

view between Isaac and Eebekah ; he goeth out into the fields to

meditate, and of a sudden he seeth the camels coming.

I cannot pass by this accident without some remark and observation.

Isaac goeth to meet with God, and he meeteth with God andRebekah too

Godliness hath the promises of this life and that which is to come ; there

is nothing lost by duty and acts of piety and worship. Seneca said the

Jews were an unhappy ])eople, because they lost the seventh part of their

lives, meaning the time spent in the sabbath. This is the sense of nature,

to think all lost that is bestowed on God. Flesh and blood snufleth

and crieth, What a weariness is it ! and what need all this waste ?

Oh ! let me tell you, by serving God you drive on two cares at once.

Worldly interests many times are cast into the way of religion, and,

besides the main design, these things are added to us. Wonderful are

the providences of God in and about duties of worship. Some have

gone aside to pray, and escaped such as lay in wait to destroy them ;

and Luther tells a story of one that balked a duty and fell into a danger,

passed by a sermon, and was presently surprised by thieves. Others

there are that thought of nothing but meeting God in his worship, and

God hath made their duties an occasion of advancing their outward

comforts. Certainly it is good to obey all impulses of the Spirit ; there

may be somewhat of providence as well as grace in it : \* Isaac went out

to meditate in the field at the even-tide ; and he lift up his eyes and

saw, and beliold the camels were coming.'

In the words you have several circumstances : the person, ' Isaac ; '

his work, ' He went out to meditate ; ' the place, \* In the field ; ' the

time, ' At even-tide.

1. For the person, Isaac, I need not say much, because I would not

digress. He was Abraham's son, and God said of Abraham, Gen.

xviiL 19, ' I know him, that he will command his children, and his

household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do

justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that

2G4 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. (53.

which he hath spoken of him.' Good education leaveth a savour nnd

tincture upon the spirit, at least an awe and a care of duties and exer-

cises of religion ; and therefore it is no wonder to hear of Abraham's

son that liad been trained up in the way of the Lord, to go out to

meditate ; it is a seal of the blessing of education, again Isaac was

now in his youth ; certainly he could not be very old. Sarah was

ninety years old when the promise was first made to her of a son : Gen.

xvii. 17, ' Then Abraham fell upon his face and laughed, and said in

his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old ?

and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear ? ' Now Sarah was but

one hundred and twenty-seven years old when she died. Gen. xxiii. 1,

and this match was immediately after her death ; for just as he received

Rebekah he left off his mourning for Sarah : Gen. xxiv. 67, ' And

Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and

she became his wife ; and he loved her : and Isaac was comforted after

his mother's death.' Probably Isaac was now a little above thirty.

Isaac, a young man, that was now entering into the world, goeth out to

meditate. Usually we make religious exercises the work of grey hairs,

and after we have spent the heat and flower of our spirits in the vanities

of the world, we hope to make amends for all by a severe and devout

retirement. Young and green heads look upon meditation as a dull

melancholy work, fit only for the phlegm and decay of old age ;

vigorous and eager spirits are more for action than thoughts, and their

work lieth so much with others that they have no time to descend into

themselves. But the elder world was more innocent ; the exercises of

Isaac's youth were pious ; he went out into the fields to meditate.

2. To open his work to you, ' to meditate,' or, as it is in the margin,

to pray, "^l^\*?, the word used in the original is indifferent to both senses ;

it properly signifies muttering, or an imperfect and suppressed sound.

The Septuagint sometimes renders it by deiSeco, to sing, but here they

render it by dSoXeaxijo-at, which signifies to exercise himself, and most

properly a sportive exercise, as if his going abroad had been only to

sport and recreate himself after the toil of the day. But that is not so

probable ; the Holy Ghost would not put such a mark upon such a cir-

cumstance. Therefore I suppose the Septuagint's word must be taken

more largely to comprise also a religious exercise. But how is it ? To

pray or meditate ? I would not recede from our own translation with-

out weighty cause ; most other translations look that way. Symmachus

renders it \aXi)(xai, to speak ; Aquila, b^iCkrjaai, to discourse as with

others, that is, with God and his own soul ; and so it suiteth with the

force of the original word, which properly signifies to mutter, or such

a speaking as is between thoughts and words. So that the meaning is,

he went aside privately to discourse of God, and the promises, and of

heavenly things.

3. The place, ' In the field.' Partly for privacy ; deep thoughts

require a retirement. Many of David's psalms were penned in the

wilderness. He that would have the company of God and his own

thoughts had need go aside from other company, and be alone that he

may not be alone, that the mind, being sequestered from all distractions,

may solace itself the more freely in these heavenly thoughts : Exod.

iii. 1, ' Moses led the flock to the back-side of the desert and came to

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIY. fili. 265

the mountain of God, even to Horeb." He goeth aside from the other

shepherds, that he might converse with the great shepherd and bishop

of OTir souls, and there he seeth the vision of the burning bush. When

God woukl communicate his loves to the church, he inviteth her into

the wilderness : Hosea ii. 14, ' Therefore behold I will allure her, and

bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.' The

most familiar and intimate cor^verses between God and the church are

in private. So the spouse inviteth the bridegroom: Cant, vii, 11,

' Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field, let us lodge in the

villages.' In these solitary and heavenly retirements, to which no eyes

are conscious and privy, we have most experience of God and of our-

selves. Duties done in company are more easy ; by ends and man's eye

and observance may have an influence upon our worship, and therefore

meditation is difficult and tedious, because it is a work of retirement,

that hath approbation from none but our Father that seeth in secret.

Partly because the field is an help to meditation, fancy and invention

being elevated and raised by the sweetness, variety, and pleasure of it,

there being on every side so mauy objects and lively memorials of God.

However in this sense the circumstance is not binding. Some do better

in a closet than in a field or garden, where the senses being locked from

all other objects, the mind may fall more directly upon itself, which

otherwise in a field or garden would skip from object to object, without

pitching upon any seriously.

4. The last circumstance in the text is the time, ' In the even-tide,'

Avhich is also a matter of an arbitrary concernment. Time in itself is

but an inactive circumstance ; all hours are alike to God ; he taketh no

more pleasure in the sixth or ninth hour than in the first hour ; only

you should prudently observe when your spirit is most fresh and smart.

To some the morning is quickest, the fancy being fittest to offer spiritual

and heavenly thoughts, before it hath received any images and repre-

sentations from carnal objects abroad. Morning thoughts are, as it

were, the virgin thoughts of the mind, before they have been prostituted

to these inferior and baser objects, and so are more pure, sublime, and

defecate ; and then the soul, like the hind of the morning, with a swift

and nimble readiness climbeth up to the mountains of myrrh and

frankincense : Cant. iv. 6, ' Until the day break, and the shadows flee

away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frank-

incense ; ' and it tendeth much to season the whole day when we can

talk with the law in the morning: Prov. vi. 22, ' When thou awakest,

it shall talk with thee.' To some the evening seemeth fitter, that,

when the gayishness and vanity of the spirit hath been spent in business,

their thoughts may be more serious and solemn with God ; and after

the weights have been running down all day through their employ-

ments of the world, they may wind them up again at night in these

recesses and exercises of piety and religion ; as David says, Ps. xxv. 1,

' Unto thee, Lord, do I lift up my soul.' To others the silence and

stillness of the night seemeth to be an help, and because of the curtain

of darkness that is drawn between them and the world, they can the

better entertain serious and solemn thoughts of God. David speaks

everywhere in the psalms of his nocturnal devotions : Ps. Ixiii. 6,

\* When I remember thee upon my bed. and meditate on thee in the

266 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

night-watches.' The expression is taken from the custom of the Jews,

who divided the night into so many watches. Whilst others were repos-

ing their bodies on their beds, David was reposing his soul in the

bosom of God, and he gave the less rest to his eyes that he might give

the more to his soul. So Ps. cxix. 148, ' Mine eyes prevent the night-

watches, that I might meditate in thy word.' Certainly in the night,

when we are taken off from other business, we have the greatest com-

mand of our thoughts, and the covert of darkness that God hath stretched

over the world begetteth a greater awe and reverence. Therefore Mr

Greenham, when he pressed any weighty point, and perceived any care-

less, used to beg of them that, if God by his providence should suffer

them to awake in the night, they would but think of his words.

Certainly the mind, being by sleep emptied of other cares, like a mill

falleth upon itself, and the natural awe and terror which is the effect

of darkness helpeth to make the thoughts more solemn and serious.

So that you see much may be said for the conveniency of either of these

seasons, evening, or morning, or night. It is your duty to be faithful

to your own souls, and sometimes to take the advantage either of the

night, or of the day, or of the morning, or of the evening, as best suits

us. David saith, Ps. cxix. 97, ' Oh ! how love I thy law ! it is my

meditation all the day.' So he describes his blessed man : Ps. i. 2,

' His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate

day and night ; ' that is, sometimes in the day, and sometimes in the

night ; no time can come amiss to a prepared spirit. Isaac's hour was

in the even-tide ; in the evening he went out to meditate, in which two

things are notable —

[1.] That he made duty his refreshment. He had wrought all the

day, and in the evening he goeth to recreate himself with God. What

a shame is it that what was his solace is our burden ! If we had a

spiritual discerning, we should soon see that there is no delight to that

of duty, and no refreshment like that which we enjoy in the exercises

of religion and in communion with God. The world's delights are

vain and dreggy ; they may provoke laughter, but they cannot yield

any pure, solid, and true contentment. It was Christ's meat to do his

Father's will : John iv 34, ' My meat is to do the will of him that sent

me, and to finish his work.' It was sweeter to Job than his appointed

food to hear God's word : Job xxiii. 12, ' I have esteemed the words

of his mouth more than my necessary food.' And David saith, Ps.

cxix. 54, ' Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my

pilgrimage.' All the comfort he had to drive away the sad and dis-

consolate hours of his pilgrimage was to exercise himself in the study

and meditation of God's word. And it was Isaac's evening comfort

to go out and meditate. Gracious hearts must have spiritual delights,

the word, and obedience, and prayer, and meditation. As one said,

Alii hoc non est evangelium, aut nos non sumus chrtsiiani — Either these

histories are not true, or our hearts are much unlike theirs. Oh ! how

sweet would it be if we could make duty a recreation and our work our

pleasure ; that in the close of the day this might be our solace, after

the work of the day to take a turn with God in the mount, and to

walk in the garden of love, and, as David saith, Ps. civ. 34, ' My

meditation of him shall be sweet ; I will be glad in the Lord.' Isaac

went out at even-tide.'

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 03. 267

[2.] That at the evening his spirit was still fresh and savoury ; this

was the time not of necessity, but choice. Many spend their heat and

strength in the world, toiling all day, and in the evening come and

offer God a drowsy yawning prayer, when all the vigour of their spirits

is wasted. You should bring forth the best wine at last ; never so

engage in the world as to hinder a duty. It should be the wisdom of

christians to guide their affairs with such judgment that duties may

not become a burden and a weariness. Now a soul encumbered with

business cannot act with such delight and freedom as it ought. Too

often do we suffer the lean kine to devour the fat. Mary hath cause

to comphiin of Martha ; so much time is spent in the world that we

have no heart or strength for communion with God ; and usually when

all are asleep and wearied out with the world, then we call to duty. Oh !

remember in the evening and close of the day your affections should be

quick and free for spiritual things. Isaac went out ' at evening-tide.'

I shall sum up the intent of the whole verse in this one point —

Doct. That it is the duty of christians to sequester and set apart

some time and place for solemn meditation, or the exercising their

souls in heavenly and holy things.

My purpose is to speak of meditation, a duty unaccustomed and

unpractised ; both the practice and the knowledge of it are become

strangers to us. The times are times of action and tumult, and we all

think that we have so much to do with others, that few desire to con-

verse with God and themselves. Our case is somewhat like theirs in

Nehemiah's time, Neh, iv. 17, ' With one hand they wrought in the

work, and with the other hand held a weapon.' We are forced to

fight and quarrel for our religion, that we may rescue the innocent and

holy principles of it from violation and scorn. I observe that many

christians use the sword, they spend the heat and strength of their

spirits in controversies ; but I doubt they do not use the trowel enough,

and are not so serious in private retirements as they are earnest

in public defences. Therefore I shall make it my work to press

the duty of meditation. My method shall be this : I shall show —

(1.) What meditation is ; (2.) The necessity and profit of it ; (3.)

The rules that serve to guide us in this holy work and business ; (4.)

The lets and hindrances of it, with the helps and remedies against

them ; (5.) The object or matters upon which you are to meditate,

which I shall handle — first, generally ; secondly, particularly.

I shall give you some hints of meditation on those objects which

are most usual and most practical.

I. What meditation is. Before I can define it I must distingush it.

1. There is that which we call occasional meditation, which is an

act by which the soul spiritualiseth every object about which it is con-

versant. A gracious heart is like an alembic, it can distil useful medita-

tions out of all things it meeteth with. Look, as it seeth all things in

God, so it seeth God in all things. Our Lord at the well discourseth

of 'the water of life,' John xxi. 10. At the supper of the pharisee

one discourseth of ' eating bread in the kingdom of God,' Luke xiv. 15.

There is a chemistry and holy art that a christian hath to turn water

into wine, brass into gold, to make earthly occasions and objects to

minister spiritual and heavenly thoughts. God trained up the old

268 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

church by types and ceremonies, that upon a common object they might

ascend to spiritual thoughts ; and our Lord in the new testament

taught by parables and similitudes taken from ordinary functions and

offices among men, that in every trade and calling we might be

employed in our worldly business with an heavenly mind, that, whether

in the shop, or at the loom, or in the field, we might still think of

Christ and heaven. There is a parable of merchant-men, a parable

of the sower, a parable of a man calling his servants to an account.

In all these similitudes Christ would teach us that we should still think

of God and heaven. So small a matter as a grain of mustard-seed

may yield many spiritual applications.

2. There is set and solemn meditation. Now this is of several sorts,

or rather, they are but several parts of the same exercise.

[1.] There is a reflexive meditation, by which we wholly fall upon

ourselves. This is nothing else but a solemn parley between a man

and his own heart : Ps. iv. 4, ' Commune with your own hearts upon

your bed, and be still.' When in a solemn retirement, reason and

inward discourse returneth and falleth back upon itself. Of all the

jiarts of meditation this is the most difficult, for here a man is to exer-

cise dominion over his soul, and to be his own accuser and judge; it

is against self-love, and carnal ease. We see all our shifts are to avoid

our own company, and to run away from ourselves. Guilty man, like

a basilisk dieth, by seeing himself. Hence the worldly man choketh

his soul with business, lest his thoughts, for want of work, like a mill

should grind upon itself. The voluptuous person melteth away his

days in pleasure, and charmeth his soul into a deep sleep with the

jiotion of outward delights, lest it should awake and talk with him.

Oh ! then, necessary it is that a christian should take some time to

discourse with himself, to ask of our own souls, what we ai-e ? Avliat

we have been? what we have done? Jer. viii. 6; what straits, what

temptations we have passed through, and how we have overcome

them ? You would think it strange of two men that conversed every

day for forty or fifty years, and all this while they did not know one

another ; yet this is the case between us and our souls ; we live a long

time in the world, and are strangers to ourselves.

[2.] There is a meditation, which is more direct, and that is of two

sorts — (1.) Dogmatical, whose object is the word ; (2.) Practical, whose

objects is our own lives. There is more of search and apprehension

in the first, there is more of plot and contrivance in the second ; the

one is more conversant about doctrines, the other about things ; the

latter catcheth hold of the heel of the former, for where dogmatical

meditation endeth, there practical meditation beginneth,

(1.) Dogmatical meditation is when we exercise ourselves in the

doctrines of the word, and consider how truths known may be useful

to us. It differeth from study, partly in the object ; study is conver-

sant about a thing unknown in whole or in part : Rom. xii. 2, ' That

ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of

God ; ' but meditation is an act of knowledge reiterated, or a return of

the mind to that point to which it arrived before ; it is the inculcation

or whetting of a known truth, the pause of reason on something already

conceived and known, or a calling to remembrance what we know

SERMONS UrOK GENESIS XXIV, 03. 2G9

before. Partly in tlie end ; the end of study is information, but tlie end

of meditation is practice, or a work upon the affections : Josh. i. 8,

' This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou

shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do

according to all that is written therein.' Study is like a winter's sun,

that shineth but warmeth not ; but meditation is like the blowing up

of the fire, where we do not mind the blaze, but the heat. The fruit

of study is to hoard up truth, but the fruit of meditation is to practise

it. Curious inquiries have more of the student in them than the

christian. In study we are rather like vintners, that take in wines to

store themselves for sale ; in meditation we are like private men, that

buy wine for our use and comfort. A vintner's cellai- may be better

stored than a nobleman's, but he hath it for others' use. The student

may have more of notion and knowledge, his cellar may be fuller, but

he hath it not for taste and necessary refreshment, as the christian

hath.

(2.) More practical and applicative meditation is when we take our-

selves aside from worldly distractions, that we may solemnly debate

and study how to carry on the holy life with better success and advan-

tage, when we are wise in our sphere : Luke xvi. 8, ' The children of

this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light, eh

T7]v ryeveav, in their generation ; ' it is an Hebrew phrase for the man-

ner, course, and sphere of our lives : Gen-, vi. 9, ' These are the genera-

tions of Noah ; Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation, and

Noah walked with God ; ' so to be wise in om- generation is to be wise

in our manner of living and business. So it is said, Ps. cxxii. 5, ' He

will guide his affairs with discretion,' which noteth plotting and wise

foresight, choosing our way, or devising our way, as Solomon calleth

it: Prov. xvi. 9, ' A man's heart deviseth his way.' It is a great part

of a christian's employment. The scriptures call for it for a minister :

2 Tim. ii. 15, ' Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman

that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,' to

devise how to carry on his ministry with most honour and success.

8o for private christians : Heb. x. 24, ' Let us consider one another, to

provoke unto love and to good works.' We should consider one

another, each other's gifts, dispositions, and graces, that so our spiritual

converse and commerce might be the more improved. By this kind

of meditation piety is made more prudent, reasonable, and orderly.

Christians that live at haphazard, and order their lives at adventure,

without these rational and wise debates, if they do not stain their pro-

fession with foul indiscretions, yet find much inconvenience and toil

in the holy life, and are not half so useful as others are. Certainly

we should learn this of the children of this world. A wicked man is

plotting for his lusts : Kom. xiii. 14, ' Make no provision for the flesh

to fulfil the lust thereof,' /x?; TrocelaOe irpovoiav. They make provision,

they are catering how they may feed such a lust and satisfy such a

carnal desire. Therefore certainly we should take care for the conven-

iencies of the holy life, how we may be most useful for God, and pass

through our relations with most advantage, and cast our businesses

that they may be the least disadvantage to religion, and consider how

particular duties may be the most dexterously accomplished : Ps.

270 ' SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

cxvi. 12, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits

towards me ? '

These are the kinds of meditation. The definition may be formed

thus : Meditation is that duty or exercise of religion whereby the mind

is applied to the serious and solemn contemplation of spiritual things,

for practical uses and purposes.

I shall open the description by the parts of it.

1. It is a duty and exercise of religion.

[1.] That it is a duty and exercise of religion appeareth by the

evidence of scripture, where it is commanded, Josh. i. 8, ' This book

of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate

therein day and night.' It is made a character of a godly man : Ps. i.

2, ' His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he medi-

tate day and night.' It is commended in the practice and example of

the saints that were most famous in scripture ; Isaac in the text, Moses

and David. And as it is plain by the evidence of scripture ; so by the

light of nature and reason. God that is a spirit deserveth the most

pure and spiritual worship, as well as such as is performed by the body.

The thoughts are the eldest and noblest offspring of the soul, and the

solemn consecration of them is fit for God. In the gospel meditation

is called for. I find in the Old Testament the main thing there called

for is meditation in the law ; in the gospel we are directed to a new

object, the love of Christ : Eph. iii. 17-19, ' That ye, being rooted and

grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is

the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love

of Christ, which passeth knowledge ; ' that is the study of saints. I

confess it is more called for in the Old Testament ; being gross and

carnal, they needed greater enforcements to spiritual duties ; but now it

suiteth every way with the nature of our worship : John iv. 24, \* God

is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and

in truth.' Now worship in spirit and in truth is more agreeable to

our state. Meditation is a pure and rational converse with God ; it is

the flower and height of consecrated reason.

[2.] It is not a duty of an arbitrary concernment. It is not only a

moral help that may be observed or omitted, but a necessary duty,

without which all graces would languish and wither. Faith is lean

and ready to starve unless it be fed with continual meditation on the

promises ; as David saith, Ps. cxix. 92, \* Unless thy law had been my

delight, I should then have perished in my affliction.' Thoughts are the

caterers of the soul, that purvey for faith, and fetch in food and refresh

it with the comfort of the promises. Hope is low, and doth not arise

to such a fulness of expectation till by meditation we take a deliberate

view of our hopes and privileges: Gen. xiii. 17, 'Arise, walk through

the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it, for I will give

it unto thee.' Our hopes arise according to the largeness of our thoughts.

It is a great advantage to have our eyes open to view the riches of our

inheritance, and to have a distinct view of the hope of our calling.

The apostle prays for the Ephesians, chap. i. 18, ' The eyes of your

understandings being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope

of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in

the saints.' Men of barren thoughts are usually of low hopes, and for

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 2^ 1

want of getting to the top of Pisgah to view the land, our hearts sink

within ns. Certainly hope thriveth best on the mount of meditation.

Then for love, the sparkles of affection will not flow out unless we beat

upon the will by constant thoughts. Affection is nourished by appre-

hension, and the more constant and deliberate the thoughts are, the love

is always the deeper. Those christians that are backward to the duty

of meditation find none of those impulses and meltings of love that

are in others ; they do not endeavour to comprehend the height and

breadth and length, and depth of the love of Christ, and therefore no

wonder that their hearts are so narrow and so much straitened towards

God. Affections always follow the rate of our thoughts, if they are

ponderous and serious. Then for obedience, or keeping the spirits

constantly in a religious frame ; to others good motions come like

flashes of lightning, and are as soon gone, as their thoughts are slight

and vanishing, but deep musing maketh the fire burn, and keepeth a

constant heat and flame in the spirits, not by flashes. And as for duty,

so for comfort ; a man that is a stranger to meditation is a stranger to

himself. In acts of review you enjoy yourselves, and you enjoy your-

selves with far more comfort in these private recesses ; you have most

experience of God, and most experience of yourselves. Moses when he

went aside to meditate had the vision of the fiery bush. Usually God

Cometh in, in the time of deep meditation, and an elevated heavenly

mind is fittest to entertain the comforts and glory of his presence.

Thus you see it is a necessary duty. Many think it is an excuse to

say it doth not suit with their temper ; that it is a good help, but for

those that can use it. I answer —

(1.) It is true there is a great deal of difference among christians ;

some are more serious and consistent, and have a greater command

over their thoughts, others are of a more slight, weak spirit, and are

less apt for duties of retirement and recollection. But our unfitness is

usually moral rather than natural, not so much by temper as by disuse ;

and moral unfitness cannot exempt us from a moral duty. Inky water

cannot wash the hand white, or a sin exempt me from a duty. Indis-

position, which is a sin in me, doth not disannul my engagements to

God ; as a servant's • drunkenness doth not excuse him from work.

That it is a moral unfitness appeareth by two things —

{1st.) Disuse and neglect is the cause of it. Those that use it have

a greater command over their thoughts. Men count it a great yoke,

but custom would make it easy. Every duty is an help to itself, and

the more we meditate the more we shall. It is pleasant to them that

use it : Ps. i. 2, ' His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law

doth he meditate day and night.' Fierce creatures are tame to those

that use to command them, and if a man did use to govern his thoughts,

he would find them more obedient.

{2d.) Want of love. Thoughts are at the service of love ; we pause

and stay upon such objects as we delight in : Ps. i. 2, 'His delight is

in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.'

Love naileth and fasteneth the soul to the object or thing beloved ; as

we see we can dwell upon carnal pleasures because our heart is there ;

as Solomon gives this reason why a carnal man cannot dwell upon a

si\d and solemn object, because ' his heart is in the house of mirth,'

272 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 03.

Eccles. vli. 4. We usually complain we want temper and we want

matter ; but the truth is we want an heart. David saith, Ps. cxix. 97,

' Oh ! how love I thy law ; it is my meditation all the day.' Delight-

some objects will engross the thoughts. Therefore see if it be not a

moral distemper.

(2.) Suppose it be a natural unfitness, yet while you have reason it

is not total and universal, and therefore cannot excuse. We see in

other duties, some have the gift of utterance, and have a great savouri-

ness and readiness of expression for prayer ; others are more bound up

and restrained ; but this can be no plea for them wholly to neglect

prayer. Duty must be done as we are able ; God will hear the breath-

ing, panting soul as well as the rolling tongue. So it is in meditation ;

some are more for musing, and can better melt out their souls in devout

retirements, others can show their love better in zealous actions and

public engagements for the glory of Christ ; yet still, though there be

a diversity of gifts, we are all bound to the same duties, and though

w^e be fitter for some rather than others, yet none must be neglected in

their order and course.

(3.) The rank and place that meditation hath among the duties.

Meditation is a middle sort of duty between the word and prayer, and

hath respect to both. The word feedcth meditation, and meditation

feedeth prayer ; we must hear that we be not erroneous, and meditate

that we be not barren. These duties must always go hand in hand ;

meditation must follow hearing and precede prayer.

{1st.) To hear and not to meditate is unfruitful. We may hear and

hear, but it is like putting a thing into a bag with holes : Hag. i. 6,

' He that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes ; '

James i. 23, 24, ' He is like unto a man beholding his natural face in

a glass ; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway

forgetteth what manner of man he was.' Bare hearing begets but

transient thoughts, and they leave but a weak impression, which is

rather like the glance of a sunbeam upon a wall ; there is a glaring for

the present, but a man never discerneth the beauty, the lustre, and the

order of the truths delivered till he cometh to meditate upon them ;

then we come clearly to see into the truth, and how it concerneth us,

and how it falleth upon our hearts. David saith, Ps. cxix. 99, ' I have

more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my

meditation.' The preacher can but deliver general theorems, and draw

them down to practical inferences ; by meditation we come to see more

clearly and practically than he that preacheth. We see, in outward

learning, they thrive best that meditate most ; knowledge floateth, till

by deliberate thoughts it be compressed upon the afi'ections.

(2d) It is dangerous to meditate and not to hear because of errors.

Man will soon impose a deceit upon himself by his own thoughts.

Fanatic spirits that neglect hearing pretend to dreams and revelations.

We have a sophister and an heretic in our own bosoms, ' which soon

deceiveth without a stock and treasure of some knowledge ; ' for men

would be vain in their imaginations were not their thouglits corrected

by an external light and instruction. Jude calleth those fanatic persons

ewTTuia^ofjuevot,, ' filthy dreamers,' Jude 8. All practical errors are

men's natural imaginations gotten up into a valuable opinion.

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. Go. 273

(3d) It is rashness to pray aud not to meditate. What we take in

by the word we digest by meditation and let out by prayer. These

three duties must be so ordered that one may not jostle out the other.

Men are barren, dry, and sapless in their prayers for want of exercising

themselves in holy thoughts : Ps. xlv. 1, ' My heart is inditing a good

matter ; ' and then it follows, ' I will speak of the things which I have

made touching the King ; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.' The

heart yieldeth matter to the tongue ; the word signifieth, boileth and

frieth ; a word from mincha, their meat-offering ; the oil and the

flour was to be kneaded together, and then fried in a pan, and then

offered to the Lord ; implying we must not come with raw dough-

baked offerings, till we have concocted and prepared them by mature

deliberation. It is notable that often in scripture prayer is called by

the name of meditation, because it is the product and issue of it ; as

Ps. V. 1, 'Give ear to my words, Lord: consider my meditation.

Implying that his prayer was but the expression of his deliberate and

premeditated thoughts. So Ps. xix. 14, ' Let the words of my mouth

and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, Lord, my

strength and my redeemer.' It is the vent of the thoughts.

2. Whereby the mind is applied to the serious and solemn consi-

deration. I add this to distinguish it from occasional meditation, and

those good thoughts that accidentally rush into our minds, and to note

the care and intenseness of the soul in such an exercise : Prov. xviii. 1,

' Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and inter-

meddleth with all wisdom ; ' then is a man fit for these solemn and holy

thoughts, and for intermeddling with all wise and divine matters, when

he hath divorced himself from other cares, and is able to keep his

understanding under a prudent confinement.

3. Of spiritual things. This notetli the object, and so I call matters

that are of an useful consideration ; as for instance, God, that we may

fear him ; sin, that we may abhor it ; the works of God for the

Creator's glory ; any useful subject. So David limiteth it : Ps. xlix.

3, ' My mouth shall speak of wisdom ; and the meditation of my heart

shall be of understanding.' He meaneth of the state and end of man.

Generally the object in the Old Testament is of the law.

4. For practical uses and inferences. This noteth the end. Medi-

tation is not to puzzle the head with notions, but to better the heart.

The proper use of this exercise is to set on those great practical heads

of religion, to work the heart to a greater care of duty and detestation

of sin. To a greater care of duty : Ps. cxix. 15, \* I will meditate in

thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways ; ' and to a greater detes-

tation and hatred of sin : Ps. cxix. 11, ' Thy word have I hid in mine

heart, that I might not sin against thee.'

VOL. XVIL

274 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

SERMON II.

And Isaac loent out to meditate in the field at the even-tide. —

Gen, xxiv, 63.

II. I AM now come to the necessity and profit of meditation, or motives

to press to this duty. I shall urge such as will serve also for marks y

for when it is well -performed, you will find these efi'ects wrought in

you. Meditation is the mother and nurse of knowledge and godliness^

the great instrument in all the offices of grace ; it helpeth on the work

of grace upon the understanding, affections, and life, for the under-

standing of the doctrine of godliness, for the provoking of godly affec-

tions, and for the heavenly life.

1. In point of understanding it is of great advantage to us in the

entertainment of the doctrines of religion.

[1.] To give us a clearer and more distinct sigh." of them. A man seetli

the meaning, scope, and order of all points of religion, when he cometli

to meditate on them. Knowledge without meditation is but an hear-

say knowledge ; we talk after one another like pan ots, and as the moon

that shineth with another lustre without any light rooted in its own

body : Eom. ii. 20, ' Which hast the form of knowledge, and of the

truth in the law,' ix6p<^paLv t?}? <yv(oaea)<i, a map of knowledge ; we

have nothing but the lean apprehension of others. As the philosopher

said, ra fiev Xeyovcnv 6c veoi, aXka ov Tnarevovcrtv, they repeat them by

rote, without affection and belief ; so we speak one after another by rote^

but do not so distinctly discern the worth and excellency of Christianity

as when we come to meditate upon it : John iv. 42, ' Now we believe,,

not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know

that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.' Most men's

knowledge is but traditional ; they never made an essay, and tasted the

sweetness of Christ, or of their own thoughts. Oh ! do but try ; bare

apprehensions of the report of Christ is but tradition, not religion.

When we come to exercise our own thoughts thereon, then we see him

ourselves ; the sight is more clear when it is steady and fixed. To one

that passeth by, to see men dancing and frisking seemeth lightness and

madness, but when he cometh nearer, and heareth the music, and

observeth that they keep time, and pace, and measure with it, he findeth

art in that which he thought frenzy. The beauty and excellency of

religion is not discerned by a transient glance ; when we come to medi-

tate, and so see what is our beloved above all beloveds, then we admire

him. The christian religion is not to be taken up by chance, but by

choice ; not because we know no other, but because we know no better ;

then our affections to it are the more rational, the judgment having had

a clearer sight and trial.

[2.] That we may the better retain them. When an apple is tossed

to and fro in the hand, it smelleth of it when the apple is gone, as when

civet hath been long kept in the box the scent remaineth when the

civet is taken out. A constant light is a great friend to memory, and

sermons meditated on are remembered long after they are delivered.

We do not forget those friends whom we have entertained with any

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63, 275

solemnity. Solemn and serious thoughts leave a charge upon the

memory,

[3.] That they may be always more ready and present with us. All

sins do arise out of incogitancy or forgetfulness. As for instance, dis-

trust : Heb. xii. 5, ' Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh

unto you as unto children ; ' Luke xxiv. 6, ' He is not here, but is

risen : remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,'

A temptation gets the start of holy thoughts. It were a mighty

advantage to have truths always ready. Now this is the Spirit's office :

John xiv. 26, ' But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the

Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring

all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you,' But

now, for an outward help, there is no such thing as meditation : Prov.

vi. 21, 22, ' Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them

about thy neck : when thou goest, it shall lead thee ; when thou

sleepest, it shall keep thee ; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with

thee ; ' that is, shall be always present with thee. Continual medita-

tion maketh religious thoughts actual and present

2, It is a great advantage to the work of grace upon the affections.

Ponderous thoughts are the bellows that kindle and inflame the affec-

tions ; they blow up those latent sparkles of grace that are in the soul.

Impure thoughts stain the heart, and convey a taint and filth to the

soul : 2 Peter ii, 14, ' Having eyes full of adultery,' When the fancy

is rolled upon unclean objects, lust is kindled. Lust, revenge, covetous-

ness, they are all fed with thoughts ; a wicked spirit distilleth sin into

the quintessence of villany, the imaginations of the heart are evil. So

suitably good thoughts leave a forcible impression upon the soul. The

papists talk of St Francis and St Clara, that had the wounds of Christ

impressed on them. It is true, in a spiritual way, deep thoughts leave

the wounds and sorrows of Christ upon the heart, and do crucify us ;

it is true morally, as well as mystically : ' I am crucified with Christ,'

Gal, ii. 20. Certainly you find this by experience, that when you know

not things, you are not so thoroughly affected with them. Serious medi-

tation hath this advantage, that it doth make the object present, and as

it were sensible ; therefore faith, which is a deep acting of the thoughts

upon the promises, and upon glory to come, is called V7r6araai<;, ' the

substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen,'

Heb. xi. 1. It giveth the future blessedness a present subsistence in

the soul, and therefore it must needs ravish it. It is a principle in

nature, appetition followeth knowledge, and desire is answerable to

that certain and clear judgment that we have of the worth, value, and

dignity of the object. Now it is not enough that the judgment be once

convinced, but that it stay upon the object, for things lose their virtue

when we do not keep them in the eye of the soul. When the bird

often leaveth her nest and is long absent, the eggs grow cold, and do

not come to be quickened ; so do our desires grow cold and dull, which

otherwise by a constant meditation are hatched into some life. Instance

in any affection, Hope and trust are ripened by constant thoughts of

the grace, power, truth, goodness, and unchangeableness of God : 2

Tim. i. 12, ' I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he

is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day,'

276 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. G3.

Presumption is an inconstant careless apprehension, and therefore soon

overborne : Ps. ix. 10, ' They that know thy name will put their trust

in thee ; ' that is, that seriously consider it ; for the Hebrew word is

used for consider ; they that know what a God thou art, how merciful,

true, and powerful thou art, they will trust thee. So for fear, so far

as it is sanctified it is fed by a consideration of the dreadfulness of

Gods wrath and displeasure : Ps. xc. 11, ' Who knows the power of

thine anger ? according to thy fear, so is thy wrath ; ' that is, who doth

seriously consider of it ? According to those awful apprehensions that

they form within themselves doth God's wrath more or less move them.

{So for desire, either of Christ or of heaven. Of Christ ; a serious con-

sideration of the excellency of Christ is that which ravisheth the heart.

The spouse formeth a description of Christ, and then she saitli he is all

desires : Cant. v. 16, ' His mouth is more sweet, yea, he is altogether

lovely.' Enough to ravish all our desires. The value of things lieth

hid when we do but slightly and superficially look upon them, but

when we meditate of them, they are double to that which is seen at the

first blush : Job xi. 6, ' And that he would show thee the secrets of

wisdom, that they are double to that which is.' In natural things

serious thoughts are necessary, much more in spiritual, because the

mind, by long use, having been inured to earthly objects and profits,

had need to be much raised. We see that we do insensibly receive taint

from those objects with which we do converse, and therefore we had

need to be often and serious in meditating of the excellences of Christ,

that by a spiritual art he may be as usual an object to us as the world.

So for heaven, when we do not hold our hearts to the consideration of

the glory of it, it doth not work upon us. Moses, Heb. xi. 26, ' Had

respect to the recompense of the reward,' eire^XeTre ; he had an eye to

it. The word noteth a serious and intent consideration ; we should

again and again consider it, and be sending our thoughts as spies into

the land of promise, to bring us reports and tidings of it, as love

between men is maintained by constant visits and letters. So for

sorrow for sin past : Ps. li. 3, ' My sin is ever before me ; ' and Jer.

xxxi. 19, ' Surely after that I was turned I repented ; and after that

I was instructed I smote upon my thigh ; I was ashamed, yea, even

confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.' When we

come deeply to consider our errors, and the unkindness of them, that

begetteth a sad sense. So for hatred and displicency against sin. Evil

affections are nourished by thoughts, and kept up in life and strength,

for thoughts are pabulum animce, the food of the soul: Rom. vii. 13,

' Sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is

good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.'

The sinfulness of sin appears by considering the purity of the law, the

majesty of God, and the kindness of Christ. So for joy and delight ;

the soul is feasted by meditation, it turneth the promises into marrow :

Ps. Ixiii. 6y &/ My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,

and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember

thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches.' Hereby

we discern their relish and savour : Ps. xxxiv. 8, ' Oh ! taste and see

that the Lord is good ; ' the thoughts, taste, and the relish is left on

the affections.

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV- C3. 277

3. It is an advantage to the fruits of grace in the life ; it maketh

the heavenly life more easy, more sweet, more orderly and prudent.

[1.] More easy, because it calleth in all the rational help that may

he, Eeason, which otherwise would serve the senses, and be enslaved

to appetite and worldly desire, now is employed in the highest and

purest use ; and therefore when reason is gained, which is the leading

faculty, the work cometh on more easily. Meditation putteth reason in

authority, and rescueth it from being prostituted to sense : 2 Cor. x.

5, ' Casting down imaginations,' Xoyca-fiov';, reasonings, ' and every high

thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing

into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' And then for

sense, it maketh our eyes to furnish us with matter : Job xii. 7, 8,

' But ask now the beasts, and they will teach thee ; and the fowls of

the air, and they shall tell thee : or speak to the earth, and it shall

teach thee ; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.' Every

element giveth in an help ; he that doth not want an heart cannot want

an object ; the air, the sea, the earth giveth fuel for wisdom and

spiritual advantage. But for want of consideration a man is worse

than the beasts : Prov. vi. 6, ' Go to the ant, thou sluggard ; consider

her ways, and be witic.'

[2.] More sweet. It bringeth the heavenly life into more liking

with us. Duty to worldly men is irksome and unsavoury, because they

lose the sweetness and blessedness of communion with God : Ps.

xxvi. 3, ' For thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes ; I have walked

in thy truth.' This constraineth and enforceth to holiness, and gives

encouragement to it. Others only attempt this work, but do not con-

sider the fruit of it.

[3.] More orderly and prudent. Others do good duties by chance :

Phil. iv. 8, ' Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever

things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are

pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good

report ; if there be any vii'tue, and if there be any praise, think of

these things.'

III. That which I am now to do is to give you the rules to guide

you in this weighty affair of the christian life. There are rules to be

observed to fit the soul, but those I shall handle under the term of

helps. I handle such now as must guide the soul.

1. Whatever you meditate upon must be drawn down to application :

Job V. 27, ' Lo this, we have searched it, so it is ; hear it, and know

thou it for thy good.' In meditation our aim and design is to promote

the good of our souls. The heathen Emperor Antoninus had observa-

tions, which he called ra ek i/xavrov, ' things for myself ; ' that is the

proper end of this exercise, things for ourselves. In conference we

aim at the good of others, but the end of meditation is to fall directly

upon our own souls. All the while we stay in generals we do but bend

the bow ; when we come to application we let fly the arrow, and we

hit the mark when we come to return upon our own souls. Now this

application must b\*r partly by way of trial, partly by way of charge.

[1.] The first reflection upon ourselves must be by way of trial.

This should always be the close of all, How is it wntli thee, oh ! my

soul ? or, Is not this my state ? When the apostle had taken a view

278 SRRMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

of the doctrine of justification, he shutteth np all witli a practical

return upon his own heart: Rom. viii. 31, ' What shall we then say to

these things ? ' How am I concerned in this truth ? So Nazianzen

in his 41st Oration saith his custom was aTro'^^oyprjaac Qeoi ro fjuKpov,

to go aside to converse with God, hut always in the course of the duty

he did eavrbv l-Tnaixe^^raa-QaL, search himself.

[2.] By way of charge and command. You should charge your-

selves to serve God with greater care. Meditation is as it were the

heat of the cause, and after the debate you should give sentence, and

issue forth a practical decree, as David ; now I see ' It is good for me

to draw nigh to God,' Ps. Ixxiii. 28. When he had been meditating of

the providence of God in punishing the wicked, now, my soul ! thou

seest what is best for thee, even to keep close to God. So in two

psalms, when lie had been meditating of the mercy and power of God,

he layeth a charge upon his soul to bless God for his mercy : Ps. ciii.

22, ' Bless the Lord all his works, in all places of his dominion ; bless

the Lord, my soul ! ' Of his i)Ower : Ps. civ. 35, \* Let the sinners

be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more ; bless

thou the Lord, my soul ! praise ye the Lord.'

2. Do not pry further than God hath revealed ; your thoughts must

be still bounded by the word. There is no duty that a fanatic brain

is more apt to abuse than meditation. When men are once able to raise

their thoughts, they soar too high, and being ])uffed up with their fleshly

mind, intrude themselves into things that they have not seen, Col. ii.

18. They are dazzled with ungrounded subtleties, and so, like a lark

that have flown high, of a sudden fall down again. David saith, Ps.

cxxxi. 1, ' Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty, neither

do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things to high for me.' In

spiritual exercises you must stint your thoughts with what is revealed;

ixrf V Trepcfivovelv 'Trap o Set <^povelv, aXka (ftpoveiv et? to aoi(f>povelv, Rom.

xii. 3, ' Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think,

but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the mea-

sure of faith ; ' that is, as God hath revealed and dispensed the measure

of faith to you. To pry into the mysteries of the divine decrees were to

disturb aftection, not to raise it ; nice disputes feed curiosity, not

religion. Again, regard must be had not only to the word, but to

your own abilities. Those that soar too high fall low enough ere they

have done. Consider what is fit for your pitch and size. Again, do

not leave bread and wine and gnaw upon a stone, or leave practical

matters for intricacy of dispute.

3. When you meditate of God you must do it with great care

and reverence ; his perfections are matter rather of admiration than

inquiry. Some dispute whether it be best to meditate of God's essence

or no. Certainly as it is discovered to us in his attributes it is very

comfortable and useful : Ps. civ. 34, ' My meditation of him shall be

sweet, I will be glad in the Lord.' And though you should get as

large thoughts as possibly you can of his majesty and power, yet you

must not pry too curiously into his nature, lest you be oppressed by his

glory. The mysteries of the trinity are matters of belief rather than

debate, we may well cry out, c2 ^d6o<i, Oh, the depth ! It is enough to

know that it is so, we cannot search how. It is said, 1 Tim. vi. 16,

SERMONS UTON GEXESIS XXIV. 63. 279

■\* Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can

approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see ; ' and Ps. xviii.

11, ' He hath made darkness his secret place, his pavilion round about

him were dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies.' God is said to

dwell in light to show his majesty, and to dwell in darkness to show

liis incomprehensibleness. Do not entangle yourselves while you go

about to raise your zeal ; the full knowledge of these things is our

portion in heaven.

4. In meditating on common things, keep in mind a spiritual pur-

pose. God hath endowed man with a faculty to discourse, and employ

his mind on earthly objects to spiritual purposes: Eccles. iii. 11, ' He

hath set the world in their heart.' 3Iundum tradidit disputationi

eorum ; the meaning is, he hath endowed him with natural light to

contemplate on his handiwork. The mind is soon apt to grow common

and vain, and therefore here you have need of more care and watchful-

ness : Ps. viii. 34, ' When I consider the heavens, the work of thy

fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, what is

man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou

visitest him ? ' Basil calleth them BiSaarjaXelov koI Traihevrepiov

'^v-)(a)v, a school to teach us not knowledge but religion : Ps. xix. 1 ,

' The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth

his handiwork.' Philosophers study the creatures to find out their

natural causes, we to find out arguments of worship and religion.

5. Take heed of creating a snare to your souls. Some sins are

catching, like fire in straw, and we cannot think of them without

infection and temptation ; the very thoughts may beget a sudden

delight and tickling, which may pass through us like lightning, and

set us all on fire : Ezek. xxiii. 19, 'She multiplied her whoredoms in

calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she had played

the harlot in the land of Egypt.' Thougli the prophet speaketh of

spiritual fornication, yet there is a plain allusion to outward ; it is an

allusion to an unchaste woman, who feedeth a new fire by remembering

her vile lusts. Some temptations cannot be supposed without sin ; it

is less dangerous to suppose the temptation of Peter than the tempta-

tion of Joseph, of Peter that was tempted to deny his master, than of

Joseph who was tempted to folly witli his mistress. This direction is

not unnecessary ; you know not how apt a carnal heart and busy devil

may be to taint the best duties, and how soon an innocent thought

may degenerate into an unclean glance. The apostle would have some

sins not named among the saints : Eph. v. 3, ' But fornication and all

uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as

becometh saints.'

6. Meditate of those things especially which you have most need of.

There is the greatest obligation upon the heart. The matter is not

arbitrary ; there you will find most help, and there the benefit will be

most sensible. Seasonable thoughts have the greatest influence. The

servants of God have sometimes meditated on his power, sometimes on

his mercy, sometimes on liis providence, according as their affairs and

temptations call for it : Ps. Ivi. 3, ' What time I am afraid, I will

trust in thee.' In a time of fear he would think of arguments of

trust.

280 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. (i3.

7. Whatever you meditate upon, take heed of slightness. Transient

thoughts leave no impression. See that you meditate but of one thing

at once. Hoc age, mind the work you are about, is a good rule in

meditation as well as prayer, the thoughts should be under a restraint

and wise confinement. A skipping mind, that wandereth from one

meditation to another, seldom profiteth. In meditation be not like the

dogs of Nile, that snatch here and there, or like the bee, that passeth

from flower to flower. A constant fixed light worketh most. The

apostle speaketh of apostates that they have flashy tastes : Heb. vi. 4, 5,

' They were once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were

made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasted the good word of God,

and the powers of the world to come.' They had vanishing and fleeting

motions : James i. 25, ' He that looketh into the law of liberty,'

6 Be irapaKv^^ra'i, he that boweth down to take a deliberate view ; it is

a metaphor taken from them that stoop down, and bend their bodies

toward a thing that they may narrowly pry into it. The same word

is used to imply that narrow search which the angels use to find out

the mysteries of salvation by : 1 Peter i. 12, ' Which things the angels

desire irapaKvi^eLv, to look into,' an allusion to the cherubim, whose

faces bowed down towards the ark, as desirous to see the mysteries

therein contained. There must be. a deep sight and serious inculca-

tion : Luke ii. 19, ' But Mary kept all these sayings, and pondered

them in her heart,' avfxjBaXkovaa ; she examined, compared them,

traversed them to and fro in her mind, which is afterwards expressed,

ver. 51, ' She kept all these sayings in her heart.' There is a folly in

man, when once we apprehend a thing ; curiosity being satisfied, we

begin to loath it, the first apprehension having as it were deflowered it,

but at last they lose their power and virtue. When digestion is pre-

cipitated there is no nourishment, and when the meditation is not deep

and ponderous we have no comfort, no lively perception and feeling of

it in our hearts. A glance doth not discover the worth of anything ;

he that doth but cast his eye upon a piece of embroidery doth not dis-

cover the art of it.

8. Come not off from holy thoughts till you find profit by them,

either sweet tastes and relishes of the love of God, or high affections

kindled towards God, or strong resolutions begotten in yourselves.

Usually God droppeth in sweetness into the hearts of his people, as all

those ecstasies of love in the Canticles were occasioned by medita-

tion. But we cannot always expect raptures and high elevations ; it

is some fruit if it maketh you fall to prayer and holy complaints.

9. Be thankful to God when he blesseth you in meditation, or else

you will find difficulty in the next. Christians often forget to return

God the glory : Cant. i. 4, ' Draw me, we will run after thee, the king

hath brought me into his chambers ; we will be glad and rejoice in thee,

we will remember thy loves more than wine ; the upright love thee.'

That which goeth up in vapours cometh down in showers. So the

psalmist, Ps. Ixvii. 5, 6, \* Let the people praise thee, God, let all the

people praise thee ; then shall the earth yield her increase, and God

even our own God, shall bless us.' There is a mutual access and recess

between the rivers and the sea, so there is between blessings and praises.

In this duty God is jealous lest we should give the honour to ourselves,

because there is so much work of our own thonirhts : Ps. Ixiii. 4, 6,

SEBMONS UPON GENEals XXiV, 63. 281

\* Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee:

thus will I bless thee while I live, I will lift up my hands in thy name.'

Not only in my necessity, but for ever, for such sweet experiences.

10. Do not bridle up the free spirit by the rules of method. That

which God calleth for is religion, not logic. When christians confine

themselves to such rules and prescriptions, they straiten themselves,

and thoughts come from them like water out of a stUl, not like water

out of a fountain. Voluntary and free meditations are most smart and

pregnant. In all arbitrary directions, that make only for the conveni-

ency of the duty, you must remember we come to you like Paul to the

Corinthians : 1 Cor. vii. 12, ' To the rest speiik I, not the Lord.' "We

do not prescribe, but advise.

11. Your success in the duty is not to be measured by the multitude

and subtlety of the thoughts, but the sincerity of them. Christians

puzzle and disquiet themselves because they look too much at gifts ;

you should covet the best gifts, but not inordinately : Ps. IL 6, ' Thou

desirest truth in the inward parts.' In prayer God looketh more to

the impulses of zeal than the flowers of rhetoric ; so in meditation, if

we are less subtle, it is no matter, so we be more devout.

12. Tou must begin and end all with prayer. Duties are subser-

vient one to another. In the beginning you must pray for a blessing

on the duty, and in the end commend your souls and resolutions to

God. There is no hope in your own promises, but God's. They were

in an high pang of zeal when they offered so freely to the service of

the house of God ; but David prays, 2 Chron. xxix. 28, ' Lord God

of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the

imaginations of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare

their hearts to seek thee.' Our motions are fleeting and vanishing ;

God must preserve in us these resolutions of consecrating ourselves and

all that is ours to him.

SEEMOX IIL

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the even-tide. —

Gen. xxiv. 63.

My work now is to handle the lets or hindrances of meditation,

together with the helps and means that may quicken you to the per-

formance of it. The lets may be sooner discovered than remedied,

as the nature of many diseases is better known than the cures, an^l

therefore they are called opprohria mediconim, the disgrace of thu

physician's skill ; so these remain as marks and memorials' of the fall.

Entire and uninterrupted visions are the privileges of heaven ;\_ we must

be contented with our broken and imperfect measures ; it is enough

that we have ' doves' eyes,' Cant. iv. 1 ; that we can peck and look up-

ward, and enjoy some temperate glances on the glory of our hopes,

thou"-h we be not transported with the ravishments of a constant

282 SKRMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

and steady vision. We cannot expect to be absolute ; we shall still

have cause to be humbled ; it is enough if we can be encouraged

against despair ; for many find themselves so unfit that they have not

hopes enough to attempt the duty. To these I shall speak chiefly in

this discourse. I had thought to have handled the lets severally, and

then the helps ; but I think it would be better to suit each discourage-

ment with its proper helps.

The lets and hindrances are of several sorts, some common to this

with other duties, and others more peculiar to the duty of medita-

tion.

First, I begin with the first sort, such hindrances as are common to

other duties, and they are four — sloth, love of pleasure, a guilty con-

science, and an unwieldy mind.

1. There is a spiritual slothfulness. Men lie upon the bed of ease,

and are loath in good earnest to apply themselves to what is painful

and difficult. If grace would drop to them out of the clouds, or God

would be contented with some faint lazy wishes, or some cold and

yawning expressions of a drowsy devotion, they would be religious ; but

where duties must cost labour and self-denial, and put them to pains,

men withdraw the shoulder, and hang off. Therefore Solomon saith,

Prov. xxi. 25, ' The desire of the slothful killeth him, for his hands

refuse to labour.' They would fain have grace, and perform what God

requires, but are loath to take pains. Now, as this is a prejudice

against all other duties, so especially against the duty of meditation ;

partly because of all duties it is most difficult and tedious to the flesh ;

it is a duty lying within the soul ; we cannot so easily command our

own thoughts. Now inward duties are the most difficult, because we

cannot always exercise a dominion over our own spirits. Partly because

it is a private duty, to which God alone is conscious. In public duties

secular interests and ends have a great constraint, and therefore we

excite the heart to be more intent and serious. We see byends make

men deny themselves, but where there is not this to prompt them, they

either omit the work, or turn it into a slight and idle practice.

How shall we do to shake off this spiritual sloth ? I answer —

[1.] You must consider that a lazy spirit is most unfit for Christianity.

The whole christian life is carried on with much labour and diligence.

You were as good never look after Christ and heaven as refuse labour.

There is nothing required in the whole compass of religion but what

will cost you a great deal of pains. Faith is a work : John vi. 29, ' That

is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' It is

not a barren idle speculation, nor a naked apprehension, but a matter

of difficulty and diligence to bring Christ and the soul together, and to

lodge the soid in the bosom of Christ. Love is labour : Heb. vi. 10,

' God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love.' It

is not a naked profession, but there is labour in it ; take it either for

love to God or men. For love to God, that is not a fellow-like

familiarity, but a laying out ourselves in his service ; or for love to

men, that doth not consist in a few good words. Debts are not paid

with a noise of money ; you do not satisfy the commandment by say-

ing, ' Depart in peace, be ye warmed, be ye filled, if you give them not

those things which are needful to the body,' James ii. 16. So for

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. iV3. 283

obedience : it is expressed by a constant course of work and labour :

1 Cor. XV. 58, ' Be ye steadfast and unmovalile, always abounding in the

work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your Uibour is not in

vain in the Lord.' Keligion is a constant exercise ; there are no loiterers

in heaven. Grod's work must not be followed with a faint wish and a

slack hand. Men mistake religion if they think it a broad and easy way

where men may live at large. Xo ; the gate is narrow and the path

is strait, and few there be that find it ; it is a work, not a sport and

play ; and men had as good lay all thoughts of God and Christ aside

as to resolve upon an easy course, and flatter themselves with an

expectation that they shall go to heaven with a lazy wish, and fancy

such a short cut and passage to heaven as will cost no pains.

[2.] It is better to take pains than to suffer pains, and to be bound

with the cords of duty than with the chains oi darkness. The bonds

of duty are not gyves, but ornaments, for duty is the greatest freedom :

Ps. cxix, 45, ' I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts.' You

will never be more free than when you once make experience of God's

service. How sad is it to see men prejudiced against such pains as

yield freedom and comfort for the present and glory for the future, and

take pains for that for which they shall suffer eternal pains ! Isa. v. 18,

■ Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it

were with cart ropes.' They moil and toil in the work of Satan as a

horse in a mill, and labour for their own destruction. Consider the

devil's work is drudgery and his reward is death ; yet such is the

wretchedness of man, that he accounteth nothing toilsome but God's

work, and nothing pleasant but the accomplishment of his own lusts,

to be lust's vassal and pride's slave, and to be at the command of every

covetous and unclean desire. How do men toil in the world, go to

bed late, rise early, eat the bread of sorrows, exhaust and waste their

strength and spirits, and yet there is sin in the work, and hell in the

wages ! Oh ! consider, if it seem difficult, which is better, to labour for

A season, or sufter for ever ? which is the end of them that live in the

constant neglect of a known duty.

[3.] There is nothing so hard in God's service but he hath manifested

love enough to sweeten it. We begrudo:e a few thoughts of God, and

God had thoughts of us before all worlds : Ps. xl. 5, ' Many, Lord

my God, are the wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy

thoughts which are to us- ward ; they cannot be reckoned up in number

unto thee : if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than

can be numbered ; ' Ps. cix. 13, ' How precious also are thy thoughts

unto me God ! How great is the sum of them ! ' Who can tell

what a condescension it was for infiniteness to think of poor worms,

and that he should before all worlds plot and design our salvation ?

And when the plot came out, there was a great deal of love to sweeten

duty. The Lord Jesus Christ thought no danger too great, no suffer-

ing or extremity too hard, no work too difficult for our sakes, what a

mercy is this ! God hath not only required obedience, but discovered a

love that may sweeten the difficulties of it.

[4.] There is no difficulty in religion wholly insuperable and too

hard for an active and industrious spirit. Those that follow on after

Ood do at length find him to their comfort. A faint pursuit is the

284 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

cause of discouragement. When a flint doth not strike fire at the first,

we strike again : Pro v. x. 4, ' He becoraeth poor that dealeth with a

slack hand, but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.' It is a rule in

grace as well as nature ; let us therefore follow on till we have overcome

the difficulty that is before us.

[5.] A lazy backward heart must be urged forward with the greater

importunity. When David was shy of God's presence, he lays a

command upon himself : Ps. xxxii. 5, ' I said I will confess my trans-

gressions unto the Lord ; ' he maketh reason to issue out a decree and

positive conclusion. So Ps. xxxix. 1, 'I said I will take heed to my

ways, that I sin not with my tongue.' So by just analogy we may

gather that the soul should in this case determine, I will go and try,

and see what may be done ; I will keep off from God no longer, but

will go to him.

2. Another let and hindrance is love of pleasures. Men that would

pass their time in mirth are unwilling to be so solemn and serious.

When children's minds are set to play, it is irksome to hear of school

or of their books ; so when the heart is set for pleasure, it is a hard

matter to bring the soul to religious performances.

How shall we do to wean the soul from pleasures ?

[1.] Consider to love pleasure is to gratify the beast in us rather

than the angel. Man is in part an angel and in part a beast ; he hath

a nature common to both. Now when men study altogether to gratify

their sensual part, it is to turn men into beasts. To serve our lowest

faculty, and to enjoy pleasures without remorse, is the happiness of the

beasts ; to eat, and drink, and sleep, and sport is but to do as the beasts

do ; a man's delight should be in the pure and free exercises of reason.

If men would exercise themselves herein, they would find the greatest

delectation would be in the contemplation and view of truth : Ps. xix.

8, ' The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.' That taste

which hypocrites have of the good word of God, Heb. vi. 5, is merely

such as scholars have in the height of speculation and study, because

the gospel is such an excellent contrivance, and a sublime satisfying

truth. Nulla major vohiptas qiiam fastidium voluptatis ; there is no

greater pleasure than a disdain of sensual pleasures.

[2.] Consider the sweetness of religious exercises is far better than

that of carnal pleasures, as that heat is more manly that is gotten by

exercise than by hovering over the fire. It is hard, I confess, to abjure

accustomed delights ; pleasantness is connatural to us ; but we should

consider that by communion with God in spiritual exercises delight is

not abrogated but preferred, and advanced to a more noble becoming-

object ; it is taken out of Egypt that it may grow in Canaan, trans-

planted out of a fen into a paradise, that it may thrive in a better

soil ; it is less dreggy, but more masculine and grave : Ps. civ. 34,

' My meditation of him shall be sweet ; I will be glad in the Lord ; '

Eph. V. 4, 'Neither filthiness nor foolish talking nor jesting which are

not convenient, but rather giving of thanks.' We keep the affection,

but change the object. The comforts of Christianity are expressed by

terms proper to the delights of the senses, to teach us this excellent art,

to keep the affection and change the object, and by an holy sleight and

wile to cozen the soul into better joys. Here delight is most pure and

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. G3. 285

more free, no excess is vicious. Castce delickc mece sunt scripiurce

iu(x ; thy scriptures are my chaste delights. The pleasures of the world

are l)ut sugared halts ; a man may soon lose himself ; but here by trial

5'ou will find the same sweetness with less hazard and danger.

[3.] TVe may make choice of matter more pleasant to allure the

soul. All the objects of meditation are not dark and gloomy ; there

are some things pleasing to nature — the variety of providences, the

beauty of the creation, the excellent contrivance of the gospel. All

objects are not mournful, and in case of such a temptation we may

allure the soul ; and when we are not so fit for the severe exercises of

the closet, we may, as Isaac, go out into the fields to meditate, and

heighten fancy and imagination by objects more pleasant.

3. The next general hindrance is a guilty conscience. When the

soul is under the burden of guilt, we are loath to be serious and alone,

lest the mind should tall on itself ; of all tilings we then desire to flee

the company of ourselves, and therefore meditation is an unpleasant

duty. We cannot think of God but as of a judge, nor of a world to

come but as of our own ruin. A guilty conscience would fain obliter-

ate the thoughts of God ; as the guilty heathens, Eom. i. 28, ' They

(lid not like to retain God in their knowledge ; ' that is actual, sound,

distinct thoughts of God. It is said, James ii. ] 9, ' The devils believe

and tremble.' Thoughts of God impressed the more horror on them,

therefore they cried out, Mat. viii. 29, ' Art thou come hither to torment

us before the time? ' So guilty men are under these horrors, ' They

are all their lifetime subject to bondage,' Heb. ii. 15 ; which, though it

be not always felt, is soon awakened : Job xxi. 14, ' Therefore they say

unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy

ways.'

What shall we do to remedy this.

[1.] Get your conscience cleansed by the hearty application of the

blood of Christ. A galled conscience is much discomposed and un-

settled, and unfit for such an exercise ; musing requireth a quiet sedate

mind.

[2.] There are matters comfortable that maybe of excellent relief to

the sphit. When the soul is sadly humbled, and bondage is indeed

revived, there is an hope set before us to which we may fly for refuge :

Heb. vi. 18, ' That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible

for God to lie, we may have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge

to lay hold upon the hope set before us.' The wounded soul may run

up to the mountains of myrrh and frankincense. So David, Ps. xciv.

19, ' In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight

my soul.'

4. Another let and hindrance is unwieldiness of spirit to spiritual

and heavenly duties. The heart is many times burdened and oppressed,

and sunk down with its own burden and weight, that it cannot be

lifted up to any holy duties, and so is unfit for any exercise of religion.

This our Saviour bids his disciples have a care of : Luke xxi. 34, ' Take

heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with sur-

feiting and drunkenness and cares of this life.' Pleasures and cares do

as it were hang a weight upon the soul that it cannot mount up to God

in heavenly exercises. This is expressed by a fat heart : Isa. vi. 10.

286 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

' Make the heart of this people fat ; ' that is, spiritually dull, as it \fi-

observed of the ass, which is the simplest of all creatures, it hath the

fattest heart. There is a spiritual dulness and listlessaess that is apt

to seize upon us.

What shall we do to help this ?

[1.] Learn a holy moderation and sobriety in outward businesses

and pleasures. As the apostle says of prayer, Eph. vi. 18, ' Watching^

thereunto ; ' the same rule holds good in meditation. Watch that you

may always keep the soul in a fitness for the duty ; order your affairs

with great wisdom, that you may not jostle out so necessary a duty.

When a man is encumbered with business, there is no room left for

such an exercise ; if he let loose his heart disorderly all the day, he will

find this spiritual dulness to seize on him.

[2.] Keep the body in a fit frame, that it may not be a clog to the

soul, but a dexterous instrument. There is a sanctification of the body :

1 Thes. V. 23, ' And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I

pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless

unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' And the apostle commands,

1 Thes. iv. 4, ' That every one of you should know how to possess his

vessel in sanctification and honour.' Men emasculate and weaken

their strength and spirits, and so the body ioseth its fitness.

Secondly^ There are hindrances that are peculiar to the duty of

meditation. I shall name but two — barrenness of thoughts and incon-

stancy.

1. Leanness and barrenness of thoughts. When we go about to

meditate, we have no matter whereupon to bestow our time and

thoughts, and so christians are much discouraged. This is opposite to

that which the scripture calls the abundance of the heart : Mat. xii. 34,

' Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh ; ' that is,

when there is a holy treasure in the soul.

Now to remedy this —

[1.] You must not give way to it, but try and use constant exercise.

When we give way to such indispositions, they prove an utter bondage.

Voluntary neglects are punished with penal hardness, and evils grow

upon us ; as to lie in the dirt will make us more filthy, and by little and

little men are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. The apostle

speaks of them that have alaBrjT^pia yeyv/xvaa/jLcva : Heb. v. 14, ' Who

by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and

evil.' All habits are increased by frequent acts, long disuse makes the

duty uncouth. Wells which are at first a puddle are the sweeter for

draining. If we are under indisposition, should we not strive to come

out of it ? The more we work, the more vigorous and free is the soul

for the work of God.

[2.] Get a good stock of sanctified knowledge. Let there be a

treasure in your hearts : Mat. xiii. 52, ' Every scribe which is instructed

in the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder,

which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.' Those

that buy by the penny will be sometimes in want: Pro v. vi. 21, 22,

' Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.

When thou goest it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee^

and when thou awakest it shall talk with thee.' This is the way to make

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 287

truths present and ready in the thoughts ; when we have laid them

up, we can the better lay them out.

[3.] AYhen the heart is barren, think of your own sins and corrup-

tions, and the experiences of God to your own souls. If we did not

want an heart we could never want matter, did we but consult with

our own experiences : Ps. xl. 12, ' Innumerable evils have compassed

me about ; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not

able to look up ; they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore

mine heart faileth me.' And if nothing else will come to hand, medi-

tate upon your present unfitness for any holy duty.

[4.] You may season and affect your mind before meditation with

some part. of God's word. Reading is a good preparative, and when

we have taken in food, we may exercise our depastion and digestion

upon it.

2. A loose garish spirit, that is apt to skip and wander from thought

to thought. There is a madness in man ; his thoughts are light and

feathery, tossed to and fro, and like the loose wards in a lock, only

kept up whilst we are turning the key. This doth much discourage

christians, that they cannot keep up their affections and command

their thoughts.

How shall we help and remedy this ?

[1.] "When you go to meditate, you should exercise a command and

restraint upon yourselves. This is expressed in scripture by trussing

up the loins of your minds : Luke xii, 30, ' Let your loins be girded

about ; ' an allusion to their hanging garments, that they trussed up

when they went about any work, that they may be compact and succinct.

Lay a command upon yourselves : Zeph. ii. 1, ' Gather yourselves

together, yea, gather together, nation not desired ! '

[2.] Pray and call in the help of God's Holy Spirit : Ps, Ixxxvi, 11,

' Unite my heart to fear thy name.' Lord, make my heart one. He

that could stay the sun can stay the fleeting of your thoughts.

[3.] Dry up these swimming toys and fancies with the flame of

heavenly love. Love unites the heart, and where we have a pleasure,

there we can stay : Ps, cxix. 97, ' Oh, how love I thy law ! it is my

meditation all the day.'

[4.] Let the course of your lives be grave and serious. The mind is

according to the course of the life. You flatter yourselves when you

think you are able to command spiritual thoughts on a sudden, when

you have suffered your thoughts to rove and wander : Prov, xvii, 24,

' Wisdom is before him that hath understanding, but the eyes of a fool

are in the ends of the earth ; ' here and there and everywhere.

[.5.] Watch against the flrst diversion ; how plausible soever it be,

look upon it as an intruding that breaks the rank. The devil injects

good thoughts sometimes that he might divert your other thouo-hts.

Charge your thoughts that they may not disturb your meditation:

Cant, iii, 5, ' I charge you, ye daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir

not up, nor awake my love till he please.'

[6] When you come to meditate in God's presence, do not bring

the world with you ; purge yourselves of all carnal affections : Ezek.

xxxiii. 31, ' Their heart goeth after their covetousness.' Always consider

this, the prevailing lust will engross the thoughts. To a distracted

288 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

mind no place is a solitude ; the very closet is a market-place. There-

fore before meditation we should purge our hearts of worldly affections.

SERMON IV.

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the even-tide. —

Gen. xxiv. 63-

I SHALL not wholly divert from the subject in hand, though I shall a

little interrupt the method of it. My purpose is now to speak of that

meditation that is proper to the sacrament.

The main part of that worship is dispatched in thoughts. Here we

come to put reason to the highest and most sublime use, to be an

instrument and servant to faith and love.

But now the thoughts proper to the Lord's supper are many. There

are an union of mysteries, yea, so many, that they are a burden to some

christians, and a snare to those that are most scrupulous. It will be

necessary therefore to give you some directions how you may guide

yourselves in this duty for your best advantage. It is a matter of

great profit to be wise and skilful in duties. Many that know the

general nature of them know not how to manage them. David saith,

Ps. cxix. 27, ' Make me to understand the way of thy precepts, so shall

I talk of thy wondrous works ; ' intimating that then we perform duties

with most success when we go about them with most wisdom and

understanding ; and when we are skilled in the way of Grod's precepts,

we shall understand those marvellous acts of grace which he vouch-

safeth to his people.

Now it is good that eveiy one according to his talent should help

one another's joy, and therefore I shall now speak a little to this pur-

pose, and the rather because it will much conduce to the opening or

the doctrine of meditation in the general. My method shall be this —

(1.) I will show the usual defects of christians in this service, with

their necessary remedies ; (2.) I shall handle some cases.

First, The usual defects and faults of people in this duty, I mean

so far as they concern meditation, and they are four — barrenness,

stupidity, roving of thoughts, and a lazy formality.

1. Barrenness. This is a great trouble to christians, when their

understandings are unfruitful, and they cannot enlarge themselves in

pertinent and necessary thoughts.

Now how shall we do to get our hearts to be fruitful in holy thoughts ?

[1.] There must be a solemn preparation for this service. It is

good to breathe ourselves in some religious exercises beforehand, that

we may run the more freely without fainting. Spiritual dispositions

do not come on us of a sudden ; christians are deceived that look for

rapt and sudden motions ; there must be a time to put off the shoes

off our feet when we come upon holy ground to converse with God in

so sweet a service ; we must lay aside the distractions of the woi-ld,

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 289

and not come reeking from the world into God's presence. There

must be a time to raise the soul into a zealous height and ardour ;

there must be a blowing of the fire, for here you come to flame, your

thoughts are to flame out in great and raised ascents : Cant. i. 12,

'While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth

the smell thereof.^ Wood doth not blaze and flame as soon as it is

laid on.

[2.] Those solemn and preparative thoughts are chiefly to be spent

in these two things — the nature of the supper, and the love of Christ

in the institution of it.

(] .) The nature of the supper. You are ' to consider the great

things that are offered to you, and the great blessings and benefits

which God cometh to represent, exhibit, and seal up to your souls :

Mat. xi. 7, ' What went ye out into the wilderness for to see ? ' Christ

examineth the grounds of their resort and concourse to him. It is

good to consider what we are about, and the dainties of the banquet

we are invited to, what assurance the outward signs are to give you,

what communion we have with Christ and his graces. We are barren,

because we do not consider our work, and the nature and importance

of it.

(2.) The love of Christ in the institution of it. (1.) The time when

it was instituted : 1 Cor. xi. 23, ' The Lord Jesus Christ the same

night in which he was betrayed, took bread.' The Lord Jesus Christ

had thoughts of the greatest good to man when man was executing the

greatest spite and malice against him. And the rather because it is

an act of mercy that Christ frequently useth to surprise sinners in the

midst of their wickedness. When Saul was breathing out threatenings

against the disciples, God had a design of love to him, and smites him

from his horse. Some are smitten with conviction in the height of

provocations. We read in ecclesiastical story of a young man that

came to stab St John who was converted by him ; so many come to

jeer and catch at a sermon, and have been converted by it. (2.) The

rights which he instituted, appointing bread and wine, symbols of

pleasure and delight. As a physician conveys health to us in a golden

pill, so doth Christ convey spiritual nourishment to us by those

elements which we take pleasure in. The outward observance is com-

fortable. God doth not require us to lance ourselves, and to exercise

the body with whips and cords ; the rites are not bloody, as in circum-

cision, but bread and wine. And yet this is nothing to the inward

sweetness, meat and drink which the world knows not off : John iv. 32,

' I have meat to eat which ye know not of.'

(3.) The advantage and relief that faith has from these things of

sense. God speaketh to you now, not by words, but things. He doth

as it were embody religion, and represent it to the senses ; Gal. iii. 1,

' foolish Galatians ! who hath bewitched you, that you shotild not

obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set

forth crucified among you ?' that is, in the word or sacraments ; here

God doth as it were hold forth Christ dying before your eyes. It is a

pleasure to see things by picture, though we know the person ; so

though we have an image of Christ in the word, and may know his

person there, yet it is a great relief to us to see Christ in the supper by

VOL, XVII. T

290 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

these outwnrd symbols, where sense may teach faith what strength of

grace and what sweetness of comfort to expect from Christ. These

thoughts through the blessing of God will raise the soul into a frame

of religion, that when you come to this ordinance you will not be so

dry and barren.

2. Wandering when the heart is prepared and set towards God, how

shall we do to keep it from roving, and prevent those excursions which

are apt to carry away the heart.

[1.] Get an awe and dread of God. Labour to have the deepest

apprehensions of the presence of God as possibly may be. Strong

•itfections, especially fear, lock up the mind, and do not suffer it to flit

abroad. Now fear is not unseasonable to this duty, but rather proper,

because of the excellent mysteries by which God condescendeth and

approacheth us. Chrysostom calls it tennbilis mystica mensa, the

dreadful mysterious table, and therefore now our apprehensions should

be most aweful. When Jacob had a sight of God, says he, Gen. xxviii.

17, ' How dreadful is this place ! ' And the psalmist saith, Ps. Ixviii.

35, ' God ! thou art terrible out of thy holy places.' Mixed affec-

tions do best in the sweetest worship : Ps. ii. 11, ' Serve the Lord with.

fear, and rejoice with trembling;' Hosea iii. 5, ' They shall fear the

Lord and his goodness in the latter days.' Here we are to have dis-

tinct thoughts of his holiness and goodness, and therefore we should

fear before him, lest we forget ourselves to be poor guilty creatures ;

and fear confineth the soul, and will not suffer it to run abroad.

[2.] Chide the heart for your vain excursions. Christians might

have more command over their hearts if they would but hold the reins

a little straiter, and check their souls ; they are not so sadly sensible of

the idle roving of the brain, which do not so directly carry them after

the evil, though they make them to neglect the good. Take up your-

selves, as David doth about his lumpishness : Ps. xlii. 5, ' Why art

thou cast down, my soul ? and why art thou disquieted in me ? '

Did I come hither to think of anything but Christ and heaven ? Did

I come to think of news, vanity, business, and lust ? My work is to

discern the Lord's body, not to think of worldly toys. Is this to remem-

ber and fruitfully to insist upon his death ? Look, as Christ did chide

his disciples. Mat. xxvi. 40, ' What ! could ye not watch with me one

hour ? ' so chide your heart. Cannot I keep my heart free for God a

little while ? In heaven duty will be my constant work, and if my

heart wander now, how shall I be able to hold it for ever ? In the

supper God ties my soul by outward rites ; lest my eyes should carry

away my heart, God would exercise my eyes. Certainly if you would

chide your souls the heart would not steal so many glances. But

usually our hearts do not steal away ; we dismiss them, and let them

go. God gave reason a command of your thoughts at first, and we

might exercise it more than we do.

3. Stupidness. Many times the soul is surprised with deadness and

amazement ; it neither actually thinks of evil nor of good, but is at a

dead pause and stay. For this I shall urge a double help.

[1.] By earnest ejaculations call in the help of the Spirit: Cant. iv.

16, ' Awake, north-wind, and come, thou south ; blow upon my

garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.' Desire God to breathe

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 291

upon the soul with a fresh gale and excitement ; that he would take a

coal from his own altar, that the perfume might burn bright. Censers

must not be kindled with strange fire. Oh ! raise and quicken this

dead soul ! Kemember \* the first Adam was made a living soul, the

last Adam was made a quickening spirit,' 1 Cor, xv. 45.

[2] Call upon your own hearts. It is a mistake of christians to

think they are only to call upon God ; you are also to call upon your-

selves, and to deal with your own souls by way of quickening : Ps. Ivii.

8, ' Awake up, my glory ; awake, psaltery and harp : I myself will awake

early.' Charge your souls, awake to the consideration of heavenly

mysteries. Speak to your own hearts, as David lays a charge upon

himself : Ps. ciii. 1, ' Bless the Lord, my soul ; and all that is with-

in me bless his holy name.' The children of God are brought in

speaking to themselves, Oh ! my drowsy, blockish heart ! how coldly

dost thou think of Christ ! This dead heart will not become the ser-

vice of the living God.

4. A lazy formality. Either we cannot get the soul to this worship,

or we perform it slightly. We content ourselves with a few careless

glances, and lazy barren thoughts. To remedy this, consider, in so

sweet a duty God doth not only require affection, but height of affec-

tion, an holy ardour, earnestness and raisedness of spirit : Cant. iv. 6,

' Until the day break and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the

mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense ; ' an allusion to

the censers used in the Levitical worship. God requires such thoughts

as will comfort, revive, and quicken our souls. Such thoughts as end

in affection. Leave not off till you can say as the spouse, Cant. ii. 5,

' Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.'

Do not leave meditating of Christ till you can bring your souls to a

holy ravishment, and your hearts are wounded with impatient desires

after communion with Christ. No thoughts will work but those that

are serious.

Secondly, I will propound some cases, which shall not only concern

the duty of the Lord's supper, but some of them the duty of meditation

in general.

Case 1. How can we do, because of variety of matter that is to be

meditated upon, that plenty makes us barren ? And in such straits of

time, how can we run through all ? I shall answer to this in three

propositions.

1. The mind of man is ivepyr}<;, working, and much may be done by

thoughts in a short time. The mind's motion is not so slow as that of

the body, which is burdened with a mass and clod of flesh, and there-

fore must have time for its action, but the soul is quick. There are

two sorts of meditations in the supper, as indeed in all other matters

— pregnant apprehensions and enforcing reasons. (1.) Pregnant

apprehensions, suitable to each circumstance of the duty. Now these

are absolutely necessary ; as in blessing the elements, and setting them

aside for this use, think of the eternal decrees of God, by which Christ

was separated to the office of mediator. In breaking the bread, your

thoughts must act afresh on the sorrows of Christ's cross, and those

bruises wherewith he was broken for our iniquities. Thus it is good

to follow every part of the duty with some devout and religious

292 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

thoughts. (2.) Enforcing reasons, when we pitch upon one matter,

and inculcate it, and whet it upon the soul according to our present

distress and exigencies, which is a pleading with our own hearts from

the main design and end of the duty.

2. It is not good to skip from matter to matter hastily ; partly be-

cause a light touch leaves very little impression, and therefore, as long

as milk cometh, suck on the breasts of consolation. Hold reason and

faith to its work ; when things drop thus on their own accord, they

are sweetest, as life-honey that drops of itself from the comb, or as

marrow, that the bone droppeth of its own accord ; as the Iamb sucks

the dam's dugs till they cease dropping. When thoughts come, freely

entertain them. Partly because we cannot think of all at once ; one

thought would but intrude and thrust out another ere we have received

comfort and profit, and in a throng and crowd of thoughts there is

little good done. And besides it would draw a tediousness upon the

soul if every time we should renew the same thoughts ; God appointed

this variety for our relief, not our burden.

3. There must be a wise choice in such variety of matter according

to your necessities and wants : Job v. 27, ' Hear it, and know thou it

for thy good.' Things that nearly concern us do most affect us, and

thoughts in season are most affecting ; while we are here in the world

we are always humbled with some present want. Now these wants

are known by search and trial, and therefore is examination appointed

us a preparative to receiving, that we may know our wants.

Case 2. Is it good to bind ourselves to such or such a meditation ?

Will not this hinder much sweetness, which we should otherwise reap

by the duty ? and will it not exclude other thoughts which God by his

spirit might raise up in our minds ? and so we shall defraud ourselves

of much sweetness and comfort in the duty. To this I answer —

1. In every particular duty a christian should have one main parti-

cular aim, either the removing of such a doubt the relieving of such a

want, the beating down of such a corruption, or the receiving of such a

grace. Upon a trial you will find some special need for the supply of

which you wait upon God. And there are several reasons why it is

good for a christian to be thus particular ; partly because it discovers

sincerity, and prevents much guile ; partly because one case may be

best managed and carried on at one time, either in prayer, by wrestling

with God, or in meditation by argument and pleading with ourselves ;

partly because the comfort and success will be most sensible, as a

needle that toucheth but in one point entereth sooner than a blunt thick

piece of iron that toucheth many, so particular things are most sensible,

and leave a quicker and smarter sense upon the soul ; partly because

when you are thus particular it will make you come with fresh and

renewed affections. It is good to drive on this main care, and the bent

and design of your thoughts must run that way : 2 Cor. xii. 8, ' And

for this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me.'

2. God usually comes in over and above our aims and expectations :

Eph. iii. 20, ' He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we

ask or think.' Solomon asked wisdom, and God gave him riches and

honour in great abundance. Jacob desired of God to be kept in the

way, and God made him two bands. The prodigal comes with a

SEIJMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 6.J. 293

modest request, Make me a hired servant, and the father puts on him

the best robe, and entertains him with the fatted calt'. We seek to

subdue such a hist, and the Lord comes in with an overflow of comfort.

He would have such a doubt removed, and it may be the Lord comes

in with a high tide of sensible appearance to his soul and increase of

grace.

3. You should do in the Lord's supper as in prayer. You meditate

in prayer, but not to exclude supervenient thoughts and sudden motions ;

so here, you meditate on your own wants and needs, and leave the

Spirit to his free assistance. When we use the most prudent course,

it is no straitening to the Spirit of God. In all preparations we

leave ourselves at a liberty to receive his free breathings and coming

into our souls. We keep matter ready at hand to kindle om- thoughts

to feed our confessions and petitions, so it is good to keep matter ready

at hand to feed our meditations, and to drive on the main care, waitino;

for supervenient assistances.

Case 3. Whether there be required of a christian a fixing of the

soul in a steady view and contemplation of God in quietness and silence,

without any variety of discourse ? Or whether God doth now raise

and heighten the soul to a sole act of vision and intuition without

any discourse, or the traverses of reason, in the supper or any other

ordinance ?

That you may understand the case, you must know that the school-

men and other writers of devotion usually distinguish between consid-

eration, meditation, and contemplation. Consideration is a thinking of

truth, and a rolling of it in the understanding and memory. Medi-

tation is an enforcing of truth upon the soul by discourse or variety

of pressing arguments. Contemplation is the fruit and perfection of

meditation ; and this they make a supernatural elevation of the mind,

by which it adhereth to God, and pauseth in the sight of God and

glory without any variety of discourse ; the soul being dazzled with the

majesty of God, or the glory of heaven, and transported into a present

joy, the use of reason is for a time suspended, and the soul is cast into

a kind of sleep and quietness of intuition, staring and gazing with

ravishing sweetness upon the divine excellences and the glory of our

hopes. In short, contemplation is a ravishing sight without discourse,

the work of reason not discoursing, but raised and ecstasied into the

highest way of apprehension.

Now it is inquired whether there be any such thing required

of a christian ? or whether there be any such dispensation in these

latter times of the gospel ? As, for instance, Paul had the glory of

God and Christ presented to him ; he did not barely think of these

things by the apprehensions of the mind, or discourse of these things

by the enforcement of reason, but he had an intuition, a steady view

or sight of these things, such as did, as it were, ravish his soul from

his body. Doth God use such a dispensation now ? I answer in these

propositions —

1. In the primitive times these dispensations and raptures were more

usual. We read of John's rapture. Rev. i. 10, ' I was in the Spirit on

the Lord's day.' Mark, he doth not say the Spirit was in him, as it is

present in the heart of every child of God ; but he was ' in the Spirit,'

294 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

which intimateth height and plenty of revelations. So we read of

Peter's rapture while he was praying : Acts x. 10, ' He fell into a

trance,' eTreireaev iir avrov eKaraai^, a trance fell upon him, noting

that those raptures are things of dis[)ensation rather than choice and

duty ; they fall upon us, we do not work ourselves into them. So we

read of Paul's rapture : 2 Cor. xii. 2, ' I knew a man in Christ above

fourteen years ago (whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out

of the body I cannot tell, Grod knoweth), such an one caught up to the

third heaven.' Whether these things were framed by way of represen-

tation to the soul, or whether the soul were for a time separated from

the body and was transported into heaven, Paul himself was at a loss,

and could not determine and resolve the case,

2. These dispensations may still be, though not in the same height

and manner which the apostles enjoyed. Grod may do it still, for he

is left to the liberty and sovereignty of his own dispensations; and

though sight, and the beatifical vision and contemplation be the happi-

ness of the next world, yet in some measure God may begin it here,

that his children may enter into their inheritance by degrees, and may

be beforehand led into the suburbs of heaven. As a father gives the

child not only a part of the estate, but sometimes the liberty of the

whole house, so God may give us here in this world not only those more

temperate enjoyments of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and the

tirst-fruits of the Spirit, but he may lead us into the suburbs of heaven,

and put us above the clouds into the glory of the world to come.

Though there may be such a dispensation, yet not in the same manner

that the apostles enjoyed it, for that was peculiar to them ; and there-

fore when the apostle Paul had reported his rapture, he pleaded that

he had the sign of an apostle: 2 Cor. xii. 12, ' Truly the signs of an

<in apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and

wonders, and mighty deeds. With these raptures there was a concom-

itant revelation of the will of God. And they were for other ends ;

these raptures were not so much excesses of religion, but revelations

for the great ends of the gospel. John's rapture was to receive the

visions of God for the comfort of the churches ; Peter's to go to the

Gentiles ; Paul's that he might have commission for the apostleship, and

the mark and sign of an apostle. Therefore though God may use some

such dispensation (for we know not what he may do out of sovereignty),

yet not in the same way, and for the same end.

3. Those raptures and transportations, which the children of God

now feel sometimes, proceed from strong pangs and ecstasies of love,

which for a while do suspend and forbid the distinct use of reason, and

cast the soul into a quiet silent gaze. Observe that love, where it is

moderate, venteth itself in thoughts and words, and it is a great help

to make the inward sense more acute and sharp ; but where it is

vehement and strong, it is contented with itself, and satisfied with its

own heat, ardour, and intenseness, therefore there is not such a distinct

actual discourse. As when a man huggeth and embraceth a friend,

the closer he huggeth him, the less distinctly doth he behold and

take a view of him; so in the embraces of love, when the soul

falleth into the arms of Christ, and claspeth about Christ with the

aims of its own love, it hindereth the distinct exercise of reason, and

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV, C3. 295

those offices of discourse by wliich the sonl would otherwise reflect

upon him. A man that desireth a precious jewel, at first he vieweth

it with greediness and delight, but afterwards he layeth it up in

his bosom, and wholly pleaseth himself in the possession of it ; so

the soul that thirsts after Christ pleaseth itself in the consideration

of his beauty and perfection, and dwells upon it with religious thoughts,

but afterwards love growing very strong, and being heightened unto the

utmost degree, shutteth the eyes of our souls, and we only please our-

selves in a more intimate feeling, and in the sweetness of our embraces.

Great and high affections must needs hinder the use of reason, because

all our strength and vigour runneth out into one faculty, and then such

a poor limited creature as man is cannot attend other offices and em-

ployments of the soul. It is very notable in the whole life of Christ

that he had no ecstasy, propter maximam capacifatem supernaturalem

animce, because of the extraordinary perfection of his person, and the

large capacity of his soul ; he had a transfiguration, yet all the while

in the midst of that he had a temperate use of reason. Mat. xvii. The

disciples were indeed surprised by those glimpses and emissions of his

glory ; they were overwhelmed, so that ' they fell on their faces, and

■were sore afraid,' ver. 6. Poor man, being of a lesser capacity, cannot

sufi'er such a feeling and high tide of affection without some transpor-

tation and ravishment beyond the support of reason, for the strength

and vigour of his soul is melted out to Christ in love. Now the soul

being of a limited power and capacity, the more strongly it attendeth

one office and function, the less can it serve others. Look, as a flame,

when it ascendeth, endetli in a point, and groweth narrower and thinner,

so such high flames and such glorious ascents of afi'ection usually mind

but one thing, and do not permit the soul any variety of discourse, but

fix it in one thought, and in one steady and deliberate gaze.

4. Usually such experiences of God's children are given in to them

in the most social duties. As in the time of prayer ; Peter's trances

fell upon him in prayer. Ordinary ecstasies carry some proportion

with that which is extraordinary, and usually the soul flames out to

God, and breaks forth in religious accents in the time of prayer. And

go such strong affection oversets the soul in the time of the Lord's

supper: Cant. v. 1, 'Eat, friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly,

beloved.' Be drunk with loves. That whole song concerneth our com-

munion with Christ in heaven and in the ordinances ; above all, in the

ordinance of the supper, which is the pledge of heaven. So also in

the height of meditation ; when the soul hath been spent and much

exercised itself in that work, after the labour of meditation God giveth

in this silence and rest in the steady contemplation of his love and

glory, and the mind being inflamed and heightened with spiritual

thoughts and exercises, suftereth a kind of transportation. It is very

notable that those ravishments that were between Christ and the

spouse were in the palm-tree: Cant. vii. 8, 'I said, I will go up to

the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof ; now also thy

breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like

apples.' There Christ would satisfy himself with the church's breasts,

and there she should be satisfied with his love. The palm-tree hath a

long naked bark, and carrieth all its leaves, branches and fruits upwards ;

296 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

it noteth the religious ascent of the soul in spiritual exercises, when

the thoughts do not run out in underwood and lower branches, in

earthly thoughts and carnal distractions. Well, then, in the top of the

palm-tree there we taste the sweetness of Christ, and the soul is ravished

and spiritually made drunk with the clusters of his grapes,

5. These experiences, where God seeth fit to give them, are given to

persons of much holiness and religion : Mat. v. 8, ' Blessed are the pure

in heart, for they shall see God.' Those bright and clear souls are

more fit to enjoy the sight of God ; when by constant and daily exer-

cise the heart hath been subdued to a religious frame, the Lord may

then give in those ravishing sweets, and those gazes upon his beauty

and glory. There are degrees in the sense of God's love. Hypocrites

have but a taste and a little sip, as the merchant that selleth wine will

give a taste to those that do but cheapen it. Christians whose spirits

are not defecated or cleared from the clouds of passion or purged from

the dregs of carnal interests seldom meet with those sweet and rich

experiences ; to such an intimate discerning the senses had need be

exercised. The lute had need be rightly strung and tuned that maketh

a ravishing melody ; easy, lazy, and gross hearts feel none of these rapt

motions and strong qualms of affection : God usually gives them to

those that are purged and purified.

6. These rich experiences are very fleeting and vanishing, and but

now and then bestowed. We have not such high experiences under

lock and key, and at the command of our own endeavours. God gives

them when he seeth fit, and when he pleaseth they pass away again.

If they were constant, and God should continually pour in, the vessel

would break, and the soul could not sustain itself under the burden of

it. The disciples in the transfiguration were astonished and fell down

for fear, they could not bear the glory, though but for a little while :

Mat. xvii. 6, ' And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces,

and were sore afraid.' Our present state is not capable of these trans-

ports long ; the soul is not extended and enlarged to such a capacity

and fitness, neither is the body qualified. We are in the animal state

now, the deliberate contemplation is our portion in heaven, when sin

and weakness is done away, and when we have that which the apostle

calls a spiritual body, 1 Cor. xv. 44 ; that is, a body fit for those high

communications, and for the continual presence of God. This is an

extraordinary indulgence, which, if continued, would destroy and abro-

gate the economy and dispensation of grace. This pause of reason

upon the majesty of God and the glory of heaven is somewhat like the

sun's standing still in Joshua's time, which, if it were so always, would

burn up the frame of nature ; therefore God hath ordained that it

should roll hither and thither. Motion and change is fitter for this

state to which God hath subjected us.

7. Such ravishing experiences are not to be sought for, but referred

to the good pleasure of God. We cannot pray for them in faith, having

no promise of them, and we must not be too hasty to eat of the fruits

of paradise before our time. It is enough for us to go to heaven in the

usual roadway, and not like Elijah, in a fiery chariot. Look, as in

outward things we are not to desire riches, but a competency ; if God

casteth them in upon our endeavours, we should be thankful ; so

SERMON S UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 297

in meditation we must mind those enjoyments which tare more temperate,

and leave other thing^s to God. It is good to content ourselves with

grace, and peace, and joy in the Holy Grhost, though we have not those

transports and high ecstasies of love and affection. We must not

tempt God with immodest requests and expectations, but sit down

humbly and quietly, and if the master of the feast bid us to sit higher,

and call us to a more choice dispensation, well and good. These

experiences are not to be ranked among duties, but among enjoyments ;

we shall not be called to an account for the want of them, for we are

not obliged to pursue them ; they are acts of God's magnificence and

indulgence to the soul. Many times christians oppress their souls by

their indiscreet aims ; it is good to keep an even hand, that we may not

vex ourselves with the disappointment of a rash and foolish trust.

Some are altogether careless, and content themselves with any frame

of spirit in worship ; others are not satisfied but with ecstatic and rapt

motions. Look, as it is with a lute-string, if it be too slack, it doth

not sound at all, if it be too high stretched, it is hoarse and screeching ;

so it is with our souls in duty ; when we are careless, there is no melody

made to God, but if we be too high strained, then the soul is oppressed

with its own aims, and with a pursuit of things above our reach ; the

temperate middle way should be our aim.

8. Upon all such experiences we should be careful and watch our

hearts, because many times herein we delude ourselves ; we call that a

rapture which is but the suppositions of a troubled fancy, or some fanatic

delusions by which Satan abuseth an over-credulous and superstitious

soul. Dotage many times passeth under the pretence of vision, and

the extravagances of a wild zeal seemeth rapture. Always observe

their end and scope ; if they end in pride, and prove a temptation, they

are from the devil, and not from God. Experiences from God enlarge

our hearts for service, and make us more humble, as the highest flames

tremble most. These souls that are called to the highest enjoyments

are most humble. It is true we are apt to be puffed up with a revela-

tion from God, as Paul was puffed up with the abundance of revelations,

but there was a subsequent dispensation, some cross to humble him :

2 Cor. xii. 7, ' And lest I should be exalted above measure through the

abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh,

the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above

measure.' This is through the corruption of our nature, which God

preventeth in his children by such dispensations. But if it tendeth to

make us neglect piety, and to be above duties, it is against the nature

of religion, which presseth us to wait upon God with the more encourage-

ment, because we have already discerned his beauty and glory : Ps.

Ixiii. 2, ' To see thy power and glory so as I have seen thee in the

sanctuary.'

Thus I have done with this case, in which I have been in the high

mountains. I shall come to the valleys, which, as they are more easy

of access, so usually they are more fruitful. What follows will be more

plain.

298 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

SERMON V.

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the even-tide.-—

Gen. xxiv. 63.

Case 4. When must we meditate ?

1. In the general, something should be done every day ; seldom

converse begetteth a strangeness to God, and an unfitness for the duty.

It is a description of God's servant, Ps. i. 2, ' His delight is in the law

of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' At least

we should take all convenient occasions. It is an usual way of natural

men to make conscience of duties after a long neglect ; they peiforni

duties to pacify a natural conscience, and use them as a man would use

a sleepy potion or strong waters ; they are good at a pinch, not for

constant drink. Alas ! we lose by such wide gaps and distances

between performance and performance ; it is as if we had never done

it before.

2. For the particular time of the day when you should meditate,

that is arbitrary. I told you before you may do it either in the silence

of the night, when God hath drawn a curtain of darkness between you

and the things of the world ; or in the freshness of the morning, or in

the evening, when the wildness and vanity of the mind is spent in

worldly business.

3. There are some special solemn times, when the duty is most in

season; as —

[1.] After a working sermon ; after the word hath fallen upon you

with a full stroke, it is good to follow the blow ; and when God hath

cast seed into the heart, let not the fowls peck it away : Mat. xiii. 19,

\* When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth

it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was

sown in his heart.\* Euminate on the word, chew the cud ; many a

sermon is lost because it is not whet upon the thoughts : James i. 23,

24, ' He is like a man that beholdeth his natural face in a glass ; for

he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth

what manner of man he was : ' Mat. xxii. 22, ' When they heard these

things, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.' You should

roll the word in your thoughts, and deeply consider of it.

[2.] Before some solemn duties, as before the Lord's supper, and

before special times of deep humiliation, or before the sabbath. Medi-

tation is, as it were, the breathing of the soul ; that it may the better

hold out in religious exercises, it is a good preparative to raise the spirits

into a frame of piety and religion. When the harp is fitted and tuned,

it doth the better make music ; so when the heart is fixed and settled

by a preparative meditation, it is the fitter to make melody to God in

worship.

[3.] When God doth specially revive and enable the Spirit. It is

good to take advantage of the Spirit's gales ; so fresh a wind should

make us hoist up our sails. Do not lose the Spirit's seasons ; the Spirit's

impulses are good significations from God that now is an acceptable

time.

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 299

Case 5. What time is to be spent in the duty ?

I answer — That is left to spiritual discretion. Suck the teat as long

as milk cometh. Duties must not be spun out to an unnecessary length.

You must neither yield to laziness, nor occasion spiritual weariness ;

the devil hath advantage upon you both ways. When you rack and

torture your spirits after they have been spent, it makes the work of

God a bondage ; and therefore come not ofi' till you find profit, and do

not press too hard upon the soul, nor oppress it with an indiscreet zeal.

It is Satan's policy to make you out of love with meditation by spinning

it out to a tediousness and an unnecessary length.

Case 6. Whether should the time be set and constant ?

I answer — It is good to bind the heart to somewhat, and yet leave it

to such a liberty as becomes the gospel. Bind it to somewhat every

day, that the heart may not be loose and arbitrary. We see that

necessity quickeneth and urgeth, and when the soul is engaged it goes

to work the more thoroughly. Therefore the Lord asks, Jer. xx. 21,

' Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me ? ' It is good

to lay a tie upon the heart ; and yet I advise not to a set stinted hour,

lest we create a snare to ourselves. Though a man should resist dis-

tractions and distempers, yet some business is unavoidable, and some

distempers are invincible. I have observed this, that even religious

persons are more sensible of their own vows than of God's commands ;

when men have bound up themselves in chains of their own making,

their consciences fall upon them, and dog them with restless accusations,

when they cannot accomplish so much duty as they have set and pre-

scribed to themselves. And besides, when hours are customary and set,

the heart groweth formal and superstitious.

Case 7. Are all bound to meditate ? are the ignorant ? are men of an

unquiet nature ? are servants ? are ministers ?

1. Are the ignorant, and men of barren minds, that have not a good

stock of knowledge ? I answer — Yes, they are bound to this as well as

other duties, though they cannot do it well ; it is their duty to strive

that the word of God may dwell richly in them. It is a mark of a

godly man ; every man is bound to be skilful in the scriptures : Jer.

xxxi. 34, \* They shall all know me, from the least of them to the

greatest of them, saith the Lord.' God hath no child so little but he

knows his father, therefore all are bound in some measure to be able to

discourse of God and of the things of God.

2. But some are of an unquiet nature, fit for public duties, but not

for private exercises ; are they bound as well as those of softer spirits,

and fitter for meditation ? I answer — This is not temper, but distemper,

the unquiet spirit must not totaliter cessare, wholly discontinue this

work. They are to mind wherein they may serve God most, but not

totally desist from a work so necessary, and of such great importance.

3. Are servants bound to it, whose time is not theh' own ? I answer

— They should do what they can ; God is more merciful to them, but

those that are in bondage to others may find some leisure for God.

4. Are ministers obliged ? Their whole work is a study, their em-

ployment is a continual meditation. I answer — There is a difi'erence

between meditation and study. In study we mind the good of others,

in meditation the good of our own souls. Things work with us accord-

300 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

ing to our end and the aims that we propose to ourselves. Pubhc

teaching is no such trial of our hearts ; there is a natural pride in us

to urge us to teach others, and that makes so many intrude into the

mini.stry ; there is some kind of authority in it, that we exercise over

others ; but we are to mind the good of our own souls, and to regard

private duties. There is a greater engagement upon us than others,

because we have the help of art and education, and have greater advan-

tages than others, and therefore we should not lose so sweet a comfort.

It is strange that papists confine it altogether to spiritual men, as if it

were not a lay duty, and usually we lay it aside, as if study would serve

the turn, and it did not belong to us.

V. My work is now to speak of the object of meditation, which I am

first to handle in general, and then in special.

First, In the general consideration of the object I am to speak — (1.)

Of the choice of the object ; (2.) The manner how to work upon it.

1. For the choice of the object, I need not press you to choose that

which is seasonable, and what suiteth with your own case. A sermon

worketh more forcibly when it is suitable, so do thoughts when they

are seasonable, and direct to the present case of the soul : Ps, xciv. 19,

' In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my

soul ; ' he meaneth sad thoughts, then it was his advantage to exercise

himself in seasonable comforts, like a shower of rain on new-mown

grass ; it would be burnt up with the drought, which if rain had come

seasonably might have flourished and grown up with a fair herbage ;

so the soul is parched with a temptation, if it be not watered with suit-

able thoughts. ' We faint not/ saith the apostle, ' for we look not to

the things that are seen, but to the things that are not seen,' 2 Cor.

iv. 16-18, viz., by reviving our christian hopes ; and therefore the exi-

gencies of the soul must be served. Food in thirst doth enrage rather

than please. It is not enough to consider what is good, but what is

seasonable. Things mistimed and misplaced lose tlieir force and

operation ; as the blood when it is in vessels is the continent of life,

but when it is out it breedeth diseases, so truths out of their order and

place do not nourish the heart, but oppress it ; as if you should talk of

hell and the severity of God's judgment to those that are dejected, this

were to speak to the grief of those whom God hath wounded, and when

the back is ready to break to lay on more load.

I shall for the present (having spoken largely in the general direc-

tions) give you but two rules —

[1.] Choose that which is profitable. There is a great deal of differ-

ence between the objects of meditation ; some are more speculative,

others altogether practical. There are matters speculative revealed in

the word which yet have their use and profit ; as the fall of the angels,

the order of providence, &c. ; yet out of these the heart may distil

matter of practical use and profit. All the benefit we receive from

these truths lieth in our meditation of them. But then there are others

that are altogether practical, and these should chiefly be chosen. The

mind of man is the mill of God, not to grind chaff, but wheat. Matters

practical are there to be ground for bread to the soul ; they that hunt

after fancies do but misemploy their thoughts, and beat chaff into

dust, and do not grind good corn for nourishment ; and that is the

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. C3. 301

reason why many times mean christians excel those of the best gifts,

because they spend their time in subtle inventions and inquiries, and

whilst we strive to be more subtle they are more sincere. Oh ! con-

sider the soul is diseased while it is only fed with quails and fine

notions ; there is more delicacy but less nourishment. Notions that

are airy tickle the fancy, and move the lighter part of the afiPections,

but those considerations that are grave and masculine convince most

soundly, and work most deeply : ' Wisdom entereth into the heart,'

Prov. ii. 10. Look, as wicked men do not please themselves in abstrac-

tions of sin, they devise wickedness to accomplish it, so the christian

should not satisfy himself with nice speculations, but employ his

thoughts about practical matters to promote holiness in his heart and

life.

[2.] Choose matters to meditate upon in an orderly and apt method.

But you will say, Do you think this useful to confine the soul to

method in meditation, to prescribe a set course to ourselves ? Shall

we not jostle out seasonable thoughts ? I answer —

(1.) It is lawful and necessary to prescribe to ourselves a course and

method, partly that we may know our work, and that we may not be

to seek both of a subject and how to work upon it; therefore, that you

may keep your religious exercises together, and know how to pass from

one to another, it is good to keep a set course. Partly because things

work with us according to method ; it is the way of knowledge and

affection ; the soul finds it an excellent advantage when things are

aptly suited and ranked in their order. God himself hath disposed all

his works in order, so should we ours. You will find an advantage

when you take your rise low, and go on from matters more plain and

obvious to those that are more mysterious. There are shallows for the

lambs of God, and there are deeps for those of an higher growth and

stature. You must pass from the most obvious matter of Christianity

to those that are of more sublime speculation. The rise of the sun is

first low, and gildeth with its beams the eastern parts, and then riseth

higher to the top of the heavens ; so in your progress there are the

third heavens to which you must ascend, but first you must pass the

first and second heavens. Before we search the depths of the Spirit, it

is good to search the depths of the belly (I compare Paul's expression

with Solomon's), to begin with the knowledge of ourselves before we

come to the knowledge of God. Prius redi ad te qicam rimari prce-

sumas quce supra te, is a rule of Bernard, who was of much experience

in these exercises ; first return to ourselves, and by an orderly progress

to go on from examination of ourselves, before we soar up to the con-

templation of the divine glory. You know what Christ saith, John iii.

12, ' If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye

believe if I tell you of heavenly things ? ' They were spiritual matters

he spake of, regeneration and principles of religion ; yet in comparison

of deeper mysteries of religion, and because he had set them out by

earthly similitudes of generation, water and the wind, he called them

' earthly things.' Christ trained up his own disciples this way ; first

he begins with plain matters : John xvi. 12, ' I have yet many things

to say unto you, but you cannot bear them yet.' There were greater

mysteries above the reach and size of their present capacity. So the

302 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

apostle Paul speaketh of wisdom for them that are perfect : 1 Cor. ii.

6, ' Howbeit we speak wisdom to them that are perfect ; ' that is, for

them that had made some progress in religion ; perfect, not absolutely,

but in comparison with babes and novices. Therefore it is good, with

Mary, to sit at the feet of Jesus, and not presently with the spouse to

beg the kisses of his mouth, but to go on by degrees.

(2.) Though we must contrive a method and course, yet there must

be a liberty left for things, for all seasons and occasions. As in the

world, though a man hath disposed his business, yet he reserveth a

liberty for incidental and unthought of occasions ; so in these spiritual

matters, and in the course of religious exercises, you must not bind

up yourselves from these occasions. I shall name four —

{1st.) Working and forcible sermons. It is not good to lose the

heat that we have gotten at the word, but to go home and chew the

cud. In the word there is ingestion ; in meditation you turn it into

nourishment. There must be a time for concoction, and when the

seed is scattered, it must be covered.

(2d.) For present impulses, keep yourselves free, that you may

not lose the advantage of such impulses. Many times Christ cometh

' leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills,' Cant. ii. 8.

He impelleth our hearts on a sudden and unlocked for, by causing

holy thoughts to shoot into our minds ; by representing our unworthi-

ness, coldness, and deadness of life ; or else he inflameth us by repre-

senting the beauty and loveliness of grace. Then it is good those thoughts

should take the next turn, and our method must give way to God's dis-

pensation. As general nature altereth its course in some great par-

ticular exigencies, fire descendeth, and water ascendeth, so in this case

the general work must be interrupted. It is a kind of resisting God

not to entertain these motions ; I do not mean when they come upon

you in the necessary work of your callings, but only that they may have

the next turn.

(3d.) For remarkable providences, when God casteth us upon such

objects as stir up special veneration and reverence, as some marvellous

events, or creatures that discover his wisdom and glory, or sudden

death of one near us, it is of excellent use while such experiences are

warm to go home and consider of them ; as Waldo, a rich merchant

of Lyons, was conversing with a friend, and he fell down dead, and

presently he went home, and thought of the uncertainty of life, and

the necessity of providing for a future state, and God blessed these

thoughts for his conversion. Or else the sad falls of a person eminent

for religion, when we see some glorious star fall like lightning from

heaven, these are accidents that must not be passed over without some

mark and consideration, and then God doth as it were call you off from

your usual thoughts.

{4ith.) The present exigence of the Spirit. Choose that which is season-

able, and what suits with your own case ; a sermon works more forcibly

when it is seasonable. Thus David : Ps. xciv. 19, ' In the multitude

of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.' He means

his sad thoughts ; it was an advantage to him then to solace himself

with those comforts God had provided. The scripture useth this

similitude of rain upon new-mown grass. Kain when it comes season-

SERMONS UPON GENTESIS XXIV. 63. 303

ably refresheth the grass and causes it to spring up, which, otherwise

would be burnt up with the drought and heat of the season ; so the

soul would be parched with a temptation if it be not watered with

seasonable thoughts. But I have spoken to this point before.

But you will say, What is the method that we should use ?

Ans. Though I cannot exactly prescribe it, yet give me leave to

advise —

(1.) For those that are wholly to begin this duty, it is best first to

meditate about meditation, the nature, use, and excellency of it, and how

they may carry it on with success ; it is a good preparative to the

whole work. I do direct you to this course, because this is that which

the soul standeth in need of ; this will lay a charge and necessity upon

the soul. As to pray is a good preparative to prayer, so to meditate on

meditation is a good preparative to meditation. To quicken you, con-

sider the motives alleged, and when you have done all, say, soul !

do but go and try ! Lord ! help me, and keep this up in the thoughts

of thy servant!

(2.) For the general method, it is good to keep the method of the

Spirit. The method of meditation should follow that of God's dispen-

sation : John xvi. 8, 'When the Spirit is come, he shall reprove the world

of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.' First begin with sin, which

is more easy and familiar to the understanding ; it is good to lay the

foundation of all in the mortifying and purgative way ; and then go to

righteousness, and after the extermination of sin we shall be fitter to enter-

tain the love of God, and then go to judgment. Take another method ;

first consider the great end of man, that you may come to yourselves ;

then the evil of sin, that you may bemoan and avoid it ; then the

miseries of the world, or the vanity of the creature, that you may con-

temn it ; then the horrors of death, the severity of judgment, the tor-

ment of hell, that you may prevent it ; then the excellences of Christ,

the privileges of the godly, the rare contrivance of the gospel ; then of

providence, of heaven, of God and his attributes, his power, his wisdom,

his eternity, &c., with suitable scriptures for each of these.

2. For the manner how you must work upon these objects.

[1.] There must be pregnant thoughts and apprehensions. Deep

consideration begins the work ; you must set your hearts to consider the

subject, for when the heart is once set, these thoughts through the

blessing of God will come in freely. It is often spoken in scripture of

setting our hearts to seek the Lord ; when the heart is set for prayer,

God comes in with a great enlargement ; so when the heart is set to

consider, you will have serious and solemn thoughts. If vain thoughts

trouble you and interpose, yet still set the heart and go on ; as a man

in a journey, though dogs come out and bark upon him, he rideth on ;

to run after every cur would be a great hindrance and diversion ; so if

you stand quarrelling with ever vain thought, you lose your purpose, and

so the devil will gain that by a reflex act which you seek to reject in

a direct act ; as criers in a court in calling for silence many times make

the greatest noise. Mr Greenham was wont to lift up his heart in a

short ejaculation, and so go on.

[2.] There are serious enforcements and rational inculcations. Things

barely propounded do not work ; it is by lively reasons they are whetted

304 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

upon tlie soul. Look, as it is in going to sea, those that only mind

passage do not stay upon the ocean, and therefore do not fetch up the

treasures of the great deep, but those that go to fish cast out the net

again and again, so must you ; you must cast in reason upon reason,

enforcement upon enforcement, till you bring up treasure, cast on weight

upon weight till it weigh down. Now these rational enforcements are

four — by arguments, similitudes, comparison, colloquies or soliloquies.

(1.) By arguments that are most effective. Inquire what kind of

arguments have most force upon the spirits. The usual arguments you

should look after are causes and effects ; by the one knowledge is

increased, and by the other affections are stirred. Do not emptily

declame, but see that your eye may affect your heart. Choose such

arguments as are evident and strong ; you have them in the word and

in sermons, and you should have them in your hearts : Luke vi. 45,

' A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that

which is good, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart

bringeth forth that which is evil, for out of the abundance of the heart

the mouth speaketh.' A good man should be able to bring forth good

arguments, that he might bring his heart powerfully to the acknow-

ledgment of the will of God ; for what did God give you faculties, and

the use of reason and discourse, and such helps in the ministry, but for

such a purpose ?

(2.) By similitudes. The word will furnish you upon every point.

Heaven speaketh to us in a dialect of earth. Heavenly mysteries are

clothed with a fleshly notion. In the Book of Canticles communion

with Christ is set forth by banquets and marriages, and spiritual things

are shadowed out by corporal fairness and sweetness. In other places

of scripture Christ's kingdom is set forth by an earthly kingdom, the

word of God by a glass, the wrath of God by fire. Now apt similitudes

have a great force upon the soul for two reasons — partly because they help

apprehension, and partly because they help discourse. There is as it

were a picture for the thoughts to gaze upon. By similitudes we come

to understand a spiritual thing that we know not, being represented

by sensible things with which they are acquainted ; the thing is twice

represented to the soul — in reality and in picture, as a double medium

helpeth the sight, the glass and the air in spectacles ; a shilling in a

basin of water seemeth bigger, so it is here. Yea, they yield matter

for much enlargement, and help discourse, as when they brought God

the blind and the lame : Mai. i. 8, ' Offer it now unto thy governor ;

will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person ? saith the Lord of

hosts.' Sin is expressed by death ; now the soul may reason thus : I

tremble at death, why do I not tremble at sin ? So mortification is

physic ; I can dispense with the trouble of physic for my body, this will

make my soul healthy.

(3.) By comparisons, wherein other things are like or unlike the things

we meditate upon. I urge this because it is a natural help ; it is a rule

of nature that contraries being put together do mightily illustrate one

another'; as when you compare fairness and deformity, black and white,

deformity is more odious, and black is more black. So if I would con-

template the beauty of virtue and of the spiritual life, I would compare

it with the filthiness of vice, and of the profane life. So when you

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 305

compare tlie pleasant path of wisdom with the filthy and dreggy delights

that are in the path of sin, you gain upon the soul. Put earthly things

into the scales with heavenly, and see which weigheth heaviest, set

heaven against hell, and heaven against the world. Our Saviour

teacheth us to meditate hy way of comparison : Mat. xvi. 26, ' For what

is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own

soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ? ' So by

comparing yourselves with other creatures, as thus ; when you would

shame yourselves for your disobedience, you may argue thus : All things

obey the law of their creation, the sun delighteth to run his race, the

stars keep their course, and do not go beside the path God hath set

them, and I only have found out my own path. ■ So for your nncom-

fortableness in the ways of God ; you may say. Wicked men delight

to do wickedly, but I do not delight in the service of God ; shall it not

be a pleasure to me to be exercised in the duties of religion ? shall I

not rejoice in the Lord ?

(4.) By colloquies and soliloquies ; colloquies and speeches with God,

and soliloquies with ourselves. Thoughts are more express and formal, '

but when turned into words and speeches, it is a sign the affections are

stirred. Strong afiections must have vent in words ; speech is an help

in secret prayer.

{1st.) In colloquies with God, either by way of complaint: Lord, I

am poor, and needy, and worldly. Lord, my heart is naked, and void

of grace. Or else by way of request ; as the infant will show the apple

or jewel, or whatever it hath received, to the parent or nurse, so the

soul representeth to God whatever it hath gotten by meditation, and

taketh occasion further to converse with God, and beg grace of him.

{2d.) In soliloquies with your own souls, and these are either byway

of urging the heart or charging it. (1.) By way of urging the heart.

As suppose you have been meditating on the glorious salvation that

was purchased by Jesus Christ, let this be the close of all, ' How shall

we escape if we neglect so great salvation ? ' Heb. ii. 3. So if you have

been meditating on the sinfulness of sin, fall upon your own hearts :

Bom. vi. 21, ' What fruit shall we have in those things whereof ye are

now ashamed, for the end of those things is death ? ' Or if you have

been meditating of hell and the wrath of God, speak to your heart :

Ezek. xxii. 14, ' Can thy heart endure, or can thine hand be strong in

the day that I shall deal with thee ? ' Art thou stronger than God,

that thou canst wrestle with him ? Or if you have been meditating on

your sinfulness, or the course of your own wicked lives, you may return

upon your heart : Micah vi. 8, ' He hath showed, man, what is good,

and what doth the Lord require of thee ; ' and ver. 6, ' Wherewith

shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God ? '

How shall I get a ransom to redeem my soul from the guilt of sin ?

(2.) By way of charge and command. Suppose you have been medi-

tating of the benefit of God's service, and the danger of going a- whoring

from him ; Hosea ii. 7, ' She shall say, I will go and return to my first

husband, for then was it better with me than now.' Or if you have

been meditating of the benefits of God to your souls, you may return

upon your hearts by way of charge : Ps. cxvi. 7, ' Return unto thy rest,

O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with me.' God hath

VOL. SYII. u

306 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

opened his good treasure to thee, this hath been thy portion, therefore

\* Return unto tliy rest.' Well, then, thus do, and then be watchful

that you do not lose what you have wrought. Isaac digged wells and

the Philistines dammed them up ; so when the soul hath digged a well

of salvation, Satan will seek to dam it up ; therefore be watchful.

SERMON VI=

And Isaac went out to meditate in tlie field at the even-tide. —

Gen. xxiv. 63.

Secondly, I come now to the particular objects of meditation —

First, I begin with that which is the chief end of man, a necessary

work that you may come to yourselves : Luke xv. 17, eh kavrov he

eXdcov, ' When he came to himself, he said. How many hired servants

of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with

hunger ! ' That is, when he began to consider of his condition, it put

better thoughts into him. Therefore, that we may come to ourselves,

it is good to consider the end why we were created, and the errand upon

which God sent us into the world, to reason thus with ourselves : Why

was I sent into the world ? Why do I live here ? to get an estate, or to

get into Christ ? to wallow in pleasures, or to exercise myself in com-

munion with God ? to heap up perishing things together, or to make

my everlasting state more sure ? When the end is rightly stated, men

know their work, and so live up to the purposes of their creation. But

alas ! many know other things, but are ignorant of themselves, and

so pass on carelessly to their own ruin ; like him that gazed on the stars,

and fell into a deep pit, their eyes are upon the ends of the earth, but

they do not consider their souls. Others, for want of considering the

end of their lives, are so far from living as christians, that they scarce

live as men, but either as beasts or as devils. Delight in the pleasures

of the world transformeth a man into a beast ; it is their happiness to

enjoy pleasures without remorse, and to gratify the body ; and delight

in sin transformeth a man into a devil. Worldly pleasures are not

bread, and sinful pleasures are poison. You that are allured by the

pleasures of the world, which are lawful in themselves, you lay out

your money for that wliich is not bread ; and you to whom it is meat

to do evil, you feed upon that which is rank poison ; the world cannot

satisfy, and sin will surely destroy. Thus men beguile themselves, and

do not consider of the end of their lives, till their lives be ended, and

then they make their moan. Usually when men lie a-dying, then they

cry out on this world how it hath deceived them, and how little they

have fulfilled the end of their creation. Partly because then conscience

is awake, and puts off all disguises ; and partly because present things

are apt to work upon us, and when the everlasting estate is at hand,

the soul is troubled that it did no more think of it. Oh ! consider, it

is better to be prepared than to be surprised. Think not only of your

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIY. 63. 307

last end, but of your chief end ; what should be the great aim of your

lives, even before death comes ? All religion lies in this, in fixing the

aim of your life ; all the difference between men and men is in their

chief good and utmost end-

In the managing of this meditation, I shall pursue it in this method ;

not that I prescribe to you, but that I may set some bounds to my own

discourse. However I shall use such a method as is most facile and

obvious, not exceeding the capacity and reach of the meanest. The

work of such a meditation may be divided into three parts — (1.) The

considering work ; (2.) The plotting and contriving work ; (3.) The

aro:uinof work.

First, In the considering work you may propound these or such

like things to your thoughts.

1. Man was made for some end. All God's works are referred to

the service and use of his glory : Prov. xvi. 4, ' The Lord hath made

all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of wrath/ God,

being a wise agent, must have an end ; now God could have no other

end but himself and his own glory, for the end must be more worthy

than the means, something better and above all created things ; and

if God made all things for himself, then man, who was the visible

masterpiece of the creation, the lesser world, the compendium and sum

of all God's other works. So the apostle, Kom. xi. 36, ' For of him,

and through him, and to him are all things.' All things are of him as

a creator, through him as a preserver, and to him, or to his glory ;

from him as the first cause, to him as the last end. Certainly God

did not make such a glorious creature as man for any low use. The

whole creation was for man's use, and man was for God's glory : Ps.

viii. 3, 4, ' When I consider the heavens, the works of thy fingers, the

moon and the stars that thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art

mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him ? ' He was

God's deputy and vicegerent, created to enjoy the comfort of other

creatures, and to exercise dominion over them ; the whole world is his

palace, arched with heaven, and floored with earth, but still, that he

might be faithful to his Maker, and do his homage to God, and give

him the rent and tribute of his glory and praise. And therefore if the

heavens do declare the glory of God, and the creeping things, and all

beasts in their rank and place, much more should man, who was

furnished with higher privileges, and with an higher capacity. "VTe

have faculties that are especially suited to this purpose ; therefore it Ls

said, 1 John v. 26, 'He hath given us an understanding that we may

know him that is true.' Certainly God never made such a glorious

creature for wealth or pleasures, but for an higher use and piu^ose,

even for himself. If you do but look upon his mind and understand-

ing, you will find it to be a wrong and debasement to take it off from

a spiritual use, and put it to a carnal.

2. This end is the enjoying and glorifying of God. To enjoy God

is man's happiness, and to glorify God is man's work ; by glorifying

God he comes to enjoy him, and he enjoyeth him that he may glorify

him. Herein he differeth from other creatures ; they were made only

to glorify him, not to enjoy him, but man to glorify him, and enjoy

him too.

308 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63,

[1.] He was made to enjoy him, for that is his happiness. Domine,

fecisti nos propter te, et irrequieium est cor nostrum, donee perveniat

ad te. The soul is made up of unlimited and restless desires ; there

are such crannies and chinks in the soul that cannot be filled up but by

the enjoyment of God; we were made for him, and we are not quiet

till we do enjoy him. Nature will teach us to grope after an eternal

good, as the Sodomites did after Lot's door in the dark : Acts xvii. 28,

' That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him,

and find him.' So Ps. iv. 6, ' There be many that say, Who will show

us any good ? ' It should be translated, The many say, &c. ; for this

IS the voice of the multitude ; all are for good, for something that is

every way satisfying and contentful. There are some remains of entire

reason and right nature, as Job's messengers said, Job i. 15, ' And I

only am escaped alone to tell thee.' There are some obscure instincts

that are alone escaped out off the ruins of the fall, to tell us that God

is our chiefest good, and therefore must be our utmost end. But the

scriptures go further, and teach us that there is no way of enjoying

God but in Christ, and till then man can never be happy. God is the

centre of the soul, the place of the soul's rest. All things move to their

own place, so should man to God. It is monstrous to see things move

contrary to the impulse of nature, to see fire to descend, or a stone to

leap upward ; so it is as monstrous in grace for our souls to descend,

and to cleave to those things which are without us, which were made

only to rest in God ; our souls are of a heavenly original, and therefore

.should tend thither. Say then, This is that which will make me happy

here and hereafter, and therefore why should I run elsewhere ? It is

against grace and nature. There is a principle in nature by which all

creatures aim at their own satisfaction ; there is a weight and propen-

sion that poiseth them to their happiness. If I would show myself a

christian or a man, all my comfort lieth in enjoying God in Christ :

Isa. xlvi. 8, ' Remember this, and show yourselves men.' He is a

beast that can satisfy his soul with the world, and he is a devil that

can satisfy liis soul with sin. Let me show myself a man, and return

to my own rest. Things are miserable when they do not attain their

end ; so shall I be out of my place, tossed to and fro till I return to

God ; the faculties of the soul are misplaced, and are as a member out

of joint.

[2.] He was made to glorify God. The creatures do it necessarily ;

we must do it voluntarily and by choice. This must be the care of

our hearts — (1.) In every business ; (2.) In every enjoyment.

(1.) In every business, be it never so trivial and low, even in the

ordinary refreshments of nature : 1 Cor. x. 31, ' Whether therefore ye

eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' These

common actions of eating and drinking must be done upon reasons of

religion. In a king's house there are many ofiicers, but they are all to

please the king ; so in my calling, in my duties, all must be done for

the glory of the great God. All things must be measured by this rule,

and give place to this great end, how I may glorify God, whether in the

shop or in the closet, in my outward calling or in my private duties, or in

my public relations or engagements, so far am I to mingle with any out-

ward business as I may still enjoy God, and be serviceable to his glory.

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 309

Tliis is to make religion your work, and not your play and recreation,

when still in every business God is at the utmost end, whatever present

ends I have. If nature interpose to make us look after our particular

conveniences, yet this is but in subordination to God's glory.

(2) In every enjoyment, whether it be natural or spiritual. I am

to desire outward increase and estate, but I cannot desire it lawfully,

but so as I may honour God with it. Agur measureth every estate

by ends of religion : Prov. xxx. 8, 9, ' Give me neither poverty nor

riches, but feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and

deny thee, and say. Who is the Lord ; or lest I be poor and steal, and

take the name of God in vain.' As God should be at the end of everv

business, so at the end of every enjoyment, though it be spiritual. It

is a mistake in christians to think that spiritual blessings are only to

be desired for themselves. I must desire the pardon of my sins, not

merely for itself, but that God may be glorified in pardon. I must

desire grace not only that I might be saved, but that God may be

glorified in my salvation : Eph. i. 6, ' To the praise of the glory of

his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.' The

creature's aims are never regular but when they suit with God's. In

the work of redemption Jesus Christ pleased not himself, but had an

aim at the Father's glory : Eom. xv. 3, ' For even Christ pleased not

himself.' So should we in the comforts of redemption, not please our-

selves merely in the consideration of our own happiness, but rejoice in

it as God's ends are promoted in it, that God is glorified in pardoning

my sin, or giving me grace and salvation. Though it be a difficult,

yet it is a necessary piece of self-denial to desire salvation in a subor-

dination to God's glory.

Secondly, For the contriving plotting work. The end being once

fixed, we are to consider generally by what means it may be accom-

plished, and more particularly how you may observe and carry it on to

the glory of God.

1. Generally, by what means we may accomplish it. Every end is

obtained by apt and fit means, and God, as he hath ordained the end,

so he hath appointed the means. The whole duty of man is to ' fear

God and keep his commandments,' Eccles. xii. 13. The whole duty is

comprised in obedience and fear ; obedience respects the rule, and fear

the principle. Or obedience and love ; he instanceth in that principle

that was most suitable to the present dispensation. In the Old Tes-

tament, fear is the beginning of wisdom, fear is represented as the great

principle of duty and worship, as in the New Testament, love : 2 Cor.

V. 14, ' The love of Christ constraineth us ; ' 1 John v. 3, ' This is the

love of God, that we keep his commandments.' The meaning of that

place is, that God hath required entire obedience out of an holy and

upright principle. Look, as God hath appointed to the creatures a

law of creation by which they are bounded to their stated times and.

paths, as the psalmist saith of the waters of the sea, Ps. civ. 9, ' Thou

hast set a bound, that they may not pass over, that they turn not again

to cover the earth,' so God hath given a moral law and rule to the

rational creature, which must be observed by love and reverence. So

it is said, Eph. ii. 10, 'We are the workmanship of God, created in

Christ Jesus to good works, which God hath before ordained that we

310 SKRMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

should walk therein.' God having by the same decree and wise counsel

ordained botli end and means, he hath given us a rule by which we

are to be guided in serving his glory.

2. More particularly, how you may observe and carry it on in this

way according to the will of God. A christian is to be wise in his

generation ; that is, in the course and sphere of his employments to

manage the holy life by a wise foresight. A man that is a child of

God hath wisdom if he would improve it : Luke xvi. 8, ' For the chil-

dren of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of

light' Christ makes it to be the application of the parable of the

unjust steward; he was plotting aforehand how he should maintain

himself when he was turned out of his service ; so Christ would hence

commend to us spiritual wisdom, how the children of light should plot

and contrive how to manage their course according to the will of God ;

as the prodigal contrives aforehand how he shall make his address

most acceptably to his father : Luke xv. 18, ' I will arise and go to my

father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven

and before thee.' He is searching out meet words, words of humble-

ness and submission, by which he might work upon his father's bowels.

So if this be my end, to enjoy God and glorify him, how shall I order

my life so as to maintain most communion with him, and so as I may

most promote his glory ? Neh. i. 11, ' Grant me mercy in the sight

of this man ; for I was the king's cup-bearer.' He showeth the reason

why he did undertake the work ; he was a courtier, and had the liberty

of address to Artaxerxes ; Mnemon, he was devising what he might

do for God in that station. So you should be contriving : This is my

place, and these are my relations ; what shall I do for God as I am a

minister, a magistrate, a master of a family ? how may I serve the

great end of my creation, and promote the glory of God ? Such fore-

sights make the holy life to be a life of care and choice ; not merely

of chance and peradventure, but managed and guided with discretion

for the glory of God.

Thirdly, For the arguing work. In such a meditation as this is

you must dispute and argue with the soul, that you may gain it from

base and inferior objects, which would divert you from looking after

the great end of your conversation, which is the glorifying and enjoy-

ing of God.

Follow the method formerly prescribed by pregnant reasons, apt simili-

tudes, forcible comparisons, and by holy colloquies and soliloquies.

1. By pregnant reasons. Debate thus with yourselves, Why should

I look after other things, when my end is to enjoy God ? Take these

reasons —

[1.] Other things cannot satisfy and yield any solid contentment to

the spirit : Isa. Iv. 2, ' Wherefore do you spend your money for that

which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ?'

Carnal affections are most irrational ; why should I lavish away my

choice respects upon those things that will do me no good ? The

things of this world cloy rather than satisfy. A man is soon weary of

worldly comforts, tlierefore he must have sliift and change. When

we have wealth and honour, we want peace and contentment ; nay,

sometimes the particular pleasure must be changed because of satiety

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 311

and loathing which will grow upon us. A man may be weary of life

itself, and it may be a burden to him, but never of the love of God ;

you never heard any one complain of too much communion with God.

Heavenly comforts are more lovely when they are attained than when

they are desired ; one taste ravisheth, and imagination is nothing to

feeling. Worldly things cannot satisfy the affections. Man's heart is

made up of vast and unlimited desires, because it was made for God,

and cannot be quiet till it enjoy God. He that is all-sufficient can

only fill up those crannies and chinks that are in man's heart. But

alas ! if they could satisfy the affections, they cannot satisfy the con-

science ; they cannot calm and lull conscience asleep. There is no

proportion between conscience and worldly things ; these are a covering

too short for us ; there will be trouble, though we have abundance.

[2.] They are not durable and lasting. An immortal soul is for an

eternal good. It is the greatest misery that can be to outlive our

liappiness. We have a soul that will never perish, and why should we

labour after things that perish? When the things are gone, our

affection will increase our affliction ; we shall be the more troubled

because we loved them so much. All things under the sun are there-

fore vexation, because vanity : Eccles. i. 14, ' I have seen all the works

that are done under the sun, and behold all is vanity and vexation of

spirit.' That which is vain and flashy will vex the soul with disap-

pointment ; we can enjoy nothing with contentment but what we

enjoy with security : Isa. xl. 6, 'AH flesh is grass, and all the goodli-

ness thereof is as the flower of the field.' The flower may be gone,

the blustering of the wind and the scorching of the sun may soon

deface the beauty and glory of the flower, and then it remains a rotten

and neglected stalk : Prov. xxiii. 5, ' Wilt thou set thine eyes upon

that which is not? ' The men of the world call them substance; they

think they are the only things, when of all these Solomon says they

are not. How fading are honours ! Haman was one day high in

honour, and the next day high on the gallows. Therefore these things

being so fickle and of such uncertain enjoyment, they cannot give the

soul any quiet.

[3.] They are inferior, and below the soul ; they do not perfect

nature, but abase it ; they suit only with the outward and baser part

of man, and serve only the conveniences of the body. That which

makes a man happy must be something above a man, better than him-

self ; now this is beneath your souls. You would count it absurd to

adorn gold with dirt, or lay on brass upon silver ; it is a stain and dis-

grace, not an ornament to it. One soul is more worth than a whole

world : Mat. xvi. 26, ' What is a man profited if he shall gain the

whole world and lose his own soul ? or what shall a man give in

exchange for his soul ? ' God created the world only with a word, but

Christ redeemed the soul with his blood and sufferings, and why should

you degrade yourselves ? Heaven thought your souls worthy of the

blood of Christ, and you should think them too worthy to be prosti-

tuted to the world. Men do not know the worth of a soul till they

come to die, and then what would a man give in exchange for his soul,

to redeem his soul from the destruction of fears ? Job xxvii. 8, ' For

what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God

312 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

taketh away his soul ? ' Wlien God comes by a fatal stroke or a mor-

tal disease to take away your soul, you will see that a soul once lost

can be redeemed by no price, and how little doth the hypocrite then

think of all his gain that he hath heaped together ? Oh ! then do not

debase your souls. It is dishonourable among men to match beneath

their birth and dignity ; oh ! why will you match your souls, that are

of a heavenly original, to these base outward things?

[4.] All these things which we think increase our happiness do but

add to our trouble, both to our outward, inward, and eternal trouble.

(1.) Many times to our outward trouble. The greater gates do but

open to the greater cares, and the more any are endowed with any

excellency in the world, they have proportionable sorrow and encum-

brances. Moial wisdom is the best of all outward enjoyments, yet

that increaseth our portion of sorrow : Eccles. i. 18, ' For in much

wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth

sorrow.' Many have obseived that never was a man eminent for any

outward endowment, but the joy of it was abated with an answerable

proportion of sorrow and trouble, and their encumbrances have been

every way suitable to their comforts. Those that have been most

famous for outward qualities have come to some dismal end, as Sampson

for strength, Saul for stature, Absalom for beauty, Achitophel for

counsel and parts, Asahel for swiftness, Alexander for warlike prowess,

Nabal for riches ; and God hath made it good by many experiences in

our times ; the wheel of providence hath rolled upon them, and they

have come to some sad end. So for wit and parts. Wit has been

many a man's ruin : Isa. xlvii. 10, ' Thy wisdom and thy knowledge

hath perverted thee.' Many are undone by their own wisdom and

knowledge, and the greatness of their parts, and come to sad accidents.

(2.) For inward troubles. As children catch at painted butterflies,

and when they have taken them, their gaudy wings melt away in their

fingers, and there remaineth nothing but an ugly worm, so we catch at

those things which perish in the using, but the worm of conscience re-

maineth. Many times outward blessings are salted with a curse ; we

never have outward things as a blessing till we have an higher interest

in them : Ps. cxxvii. 2, ' So he giveth his beloved sleep.' Those that

have an interest in God can rest quietly in the bosom of providence ;

and outward comforts are given as a blessing when they are additional

and appendices to the covenant of grace : Mat. vi. 33, ' Seek ye first

the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall

be added unto you.' God doth not say. Seek the world, and heaven

shall be added to you ; but. Seek heaven, and the world shall be

added ; for by seeking of heavenly things first, you drive on two trades

at once — for earth and heaven. But when men cumber themselves

with the world, there is a snare upon the conscience, and they cannot

enjoy the comfort of their condition. It will add to your inward

trouble when God is neglected and the world sought.

(3.) For eternal trouble. These things are temporal, and we hazard

the loss of eternal things for them. We never leave God but with

disadvantage to ourselves : Jonah ii. 8, ' They that observe lying vani-

ties forsake their own mercy.' Whenever you go off from God for a

fleeting shadow, you loose an eternal joy. The comfort of the world

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 313

is but for a time ; but our punishment is for ever. Ea qim ad usum

diuturna esse non possimt, ad supplicium diutuma siint Why should

we look after those things that we cannot use for ever, and so wound

and destroy our souls for ever ? An immoderate seeking after

temporal things will be our eternal ruin. Oh ! that men would be

wise, not to run so great a hazard for so small a pleasure ! Riches are

uncertain, but the love of them brings a sure damnation : Phil. ii. 19,

' Whose end is destruction, who mind earthly things.' Oh ! say then,

Shall I overturn the quietness of my life ? shall I wound my con-

science ? shall I contract guilt and terror for the time to come, for that

which will perish in the using and is uncertain in the enjoyment ? Let

us leave things that perish to men that perish. Shall 1 adventure my

soul upon so vain a pursuit ? Shall I lo.se eternal glory for a little vain-

glory ? Shall I make my children or kindred rich, and be poor to all

eternity ? Shall I bereave my soul of all my hopes, and of those eternal

joys which God hath provided for them that love him, for a possession

that is so uncertain and so ensnaring ?

2. You should deal with your hearts by apt similitudes. The word

will afford you several. Who would dwell in a ditch that may have a

goodly house in a city ? Who would leave treasures and feed off

husks ? Who would refuse a pleasant bride for a company of nasty

harlots ? Or who would sit on the stairs when he is called up to sit

on the throne ? I may enjoy God in Christ, and shall I think it my

happiness to enjoy the world ?

3. By comparisons. Compare the world with heaven. Here you

have the fuller wealth, and but a foretaste of heaven, but the grapes

of heaven are better than the vintage of the world, and these present

enjoyments are sweeter and more sure than all honours and riches in

the world. These things are gotten with care, kept with fear, and lost

with grief. Eeason thus with yourselves : What are these pleasures

to the joys of the Spirit ? These gratify the body, the beast, and are

so disproportionable to reason itself, that when we have sucked out the

quintessence of all earthly delights, they cannot yield a perfect con-

tentment. Therefore Solomon saith, Prov. xiv. 13, 'Even in laughter

the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.' We

see that laughter, by too much extension and dilatation of the spirits,

causeth an aching in the sides ; in the outward expressions of jollity

God would show how painful it is ; you will find carnal delights

always go away, and leave some sad impressions. God's worst is better

than the world's best ; the groans of the Spirit are better than the joys

of the world. The groans of the word never go away, but they leave

a contentment and drop some sweetness; but the joys of the world

never go away but clouds of sorrow are left behind. God's children

rejoice in the midst of their mourning, and a glory hath risen upon

their spirits even when they seem to be disconsolate in the eyes of the

world.

4. By colloquies with God. Either by way of complaint that thou

hast sinned and been ungrateful to God : Ps. Ixxiii. 22, ' So foolish

was I and ignorant ; I was as a beast before thee." Lord, this hath

been my brutishness, to choose outward pleasure before communion

with God, and to prefer the contentments of the world before the

314 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

delights of thy presence. Go and humble yourselves, and say, Lord, I

have traded with vanity, and vexed myself in unprofitable pursuits;

I have lived so long in the world, and have scarce minded the end

wherefore I was sent into the world ; as if I was put into the world

only as leviathan in the sea, to take my fill of pleasure, and bathe my

soul in carnal deliohts. Or else by way of thanksgiving, if the Lord

hath taught thee better ; as David, when he had chosen the Lord for

his portion, Ps. xvi. 7, 'I will bless the Lord, who hath given me

counsel.' My own reason would never have taught me so much ; that

is a dim light ; there were some obscure instincts to sway me to my

happiness in general, but I might have groped about for the door of

grace, but not have found it, but God gave me counsel. As Austin

saith, Errare per me pohti, redire non potui — Lord, I could go

astray of myself, but I could not return of myself ; so we could go

astray fast enough out of the inclination of our own nature, but thou

hast brought home a poor lost sheep on thine own shoulder ; if I had

been left to the counsels of my own heart, what would have become of

me!

5. By soliloquy with your own souls. Expostulate with yourselves

for your former errors and follies : Rom. vi. 21, ' What fruit had ye in

those things whereof ye are now ashamed ? The end of those things

is death.' Why should I melt away my spirit and emasculate my soul

by stooping to such low contentments ? What have I got by turning

away from God, but a wound and disquiet in my conscience ? Then

charge your souls, issue out a practical decree, determine with your-

selves, Well, now I see it is best to cleave to God, I will choose God

for my chiefest good and utmost end. Oh ! my soul, I see, with David,

Ps. Ixxiii. 28, ' It is good for me to draw nigh to God.' Therefore,

farewell my pleasure, that pleased my childish age. When I was a

child, I did as a child ; it shall be my care now to enjoy communion

with God, to be ruled by his word, to live to his glory. Those things

that have intercepted the delight and contentment of my spirit, I will

leave them to the men of the world.

SERMON VII.

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at tJie even-tide. —

Gen. xxiv. 63.

Secondly, I am now to propose to you another object of meditation,

"which is the sinfulness of sin, an argument very necessary and practical.

It is necessary in several respects. Partly to humble us ; we have low

thoughts of sin, and therefore we are but slight in the matter of humi-

liation. Until we understand the evil of sin sufficiently, we do not

think it worthy of a tear or one hearty sigh ; but when the understand-

ing is once opened, the heart is deeply affected : Ps. vi. 6, 'I am weary

with my groaning ; all the night make I my bed to swim ; I water my

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 315

coucli with my tears.' We see such filthiness in sin as cannot be washed

away without a dehige of sorrow. And it is necessary partly to awaken

us to a greater care and conscience. Who would adventure upon a sin

that doth but know and seriously consider what it is ? Gen. xxxix. 9,

' How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ? ' That

will be the issue of such a consideration. The child will thrust his

fingers into the fire that doth not know the pain of being scalded, or

play with a snappish cur that hath not been bitten. Men are the more

bold in adventuring upon sin because they do not know the danger.

And it is necessary partly to urge us to come to Christ ; none look

to the brazen serpent but those that are stung, so none regard sal-

vation but those that have been stung with some remorse in their

consciences for the great evil of sin ; when the poor soul feels the weight

and burden of sin, then it will come to Christ. And it is necessary

partly that we may more loathe ourselves when we come into the presence

of God. Gracious men are most self-abhoring. Elijah covered him-

self with a mantle ; Isaiah said, chap. vi. 5, 'Woe is me, for I am un-

done, because I am a man of unclean lips.' Peter had such a sense of his

sins that he says, Luke v. 8, ' Depart from me, for I am a sinful man,

O Lord ! ' Though there was something of excess and sin in these

dispositions, that is, so far as they do exclude the encouragements of

the gospel, but yet there is somewhat worthy of imitation, so far as they

had a deep sense of their own unworthiness.

It is a necessary argument you see, and of much practical use, but

very large, and will yiiBld great plenty of thoughts ; it will be harder to

to know what we should omit in the consideration of it, than what we

should pitch upon. I shall pursue it in this method —

1. I shall give you some general rules and observations concerning

meditating on the sinfulness of sin.

2. What arguments you should propound to your souls to work your

hearts to a sense of it.

I. For the general observations and rules concerning the sinfulness

of sin.

1. None can know the utmost evil of sin perfectly but God. There

is a kind of infiniteness in sin, because it is committed against aa

infinite object, and therefore a finite and limited understanding cannot

conceive of the evil of it. The greatness of sin is known by the party

offended and the party satisfying ; both are infinite : 1 John iii. 20, ' If

our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all

things.' As if he had said. Your heart doth not suggest half the evil

that there is in sin, for the infinite God knows there is a great deal

more evil in it than you can conceive. What is our light to the eye of

God ? We are the guilty parties, and so are apt to be partial in our

own cause ; but God is the party off'ended, and therefore he can best

judge of the measure of the offence. Again, God's whole nature setteth

him against it ; we have but a drop of indignation against sin, God

hath an ocean ; he is most good, and therefore most hateth what is evil.

The truth is, there is nothing properly an object of divine hatred but

sin ; it is wholly and only carried out against it, and therefore he seeth

more evil in it than any creature possibly can.

2. Man's knowledge of sin is more clear at some times than at others

316 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

When conscience is opened there is not a greater load and burden.

David could say, Ps. xl. 12, ' Innumerable evils have compassed me

about ; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able

to look up ; they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my

heart faileth me.' It is a rule in philosophy, Elemenia non gravitant

in suis locis — Elements are not heavy in their proper place. A fish in

the Avater feeleth no weight, though it would break the back of a man

if that weight of water lay upon him ; so wicked men are in their

element when they are in the heat of their sinful pursuit ; here they

sport and play, and feel not the burden of sin. Sometimes when men

come to die conscience is touched, and then they cry out of the burden

of sin : 1 Cor, xv. 56, ' The sting of death is sin ; ' then their hearts

are filled with a sad despair ; this makes death to be dreadful and

terrible to the soul, and keeps the soul in bondage : Heb. ii. 15, ' Through

fear of death they were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' But cer-

tainly it shall be at the day of judgment, then we shall see the folly of

it ; conscience shall then be extended and enlarged, and the sinner shall

remember the wickedness of his past life. You will then find the devil,

that is now a tempter, will prove an accuser. Oh ! what kind of

apprehensions will you have when the devil shall come forth and plead,

Lord, adjudge this person to me ; I never died for him, I never shed

my blood for him, I could promise him no heaven and glory, yet he

easily hearkened to my temptations ? Taus esse voluit'per gratiam, sit

meus per culpam ; ostende tales tuos munerai^ios, Ghriste. He

Avould not be thine for all the grace and kindness thou didst show him,

and all the rewards thou didst propound and promise to him. Then

all disguises will be laid aside. A little consideration and search, and

prayer for conviction for the present, would help us to the same appre-

hensions. If conscience should be now extended as it will be then, we

should soon be weary of our lives. At least, do not rest in your own

valuation and account, for then the secrets of all hearts shall be

opened.

3. The less sin appeareth, many times it is the greater sins are not

to be measured by the smallness of the matter of them, but by the

offence done to God. The first sin to a vulgar and common apprehen-

sion was but the eating of an apple ; it seemed a small matter if we did

not consider the offence against God. It is an aggravation mentioned

by the prophet, Amos ii. 6, ' They sold the righteous for silver, and

the poor for a pair of shoes ; ' that is, upon so small an occasion, or for

such a contemptible matter they would oppress the poor. The lesser

the occasion and temptation is, the greater the impudence, the impru-

dence and the unkindness ; the greater the impudence that they will

dare God to his face for a trifle ; the greater is the imprudence that we

will hazard our souls for a mean thing ; the greater is the unkindness

that we will stand with God for a little. Sins that are accounted small

in the matter of them have been overtaken with the sad revenges of

God; he that denied a crumb could not receive a drop of water to cool

his tongue. The contempt of God is the greater when we break with

God for a small matter, and transgress his commandments upon every

light occasion. In short, sin is in no case small, but only in regard of

God's mercv and Christ's merits.

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 317

4. None are exempted from bewailing the evil of sin. Though the

children of God shall never feel it, nor have the dregs of God's dis-

pleasure wrung out to them for it, yet they must bewail the evil that

tliere is in sin. The death and merit of Christ doth not change the

nature of sin nor put less evil into it. Why should we look upon it

with a dififerent eye after conversion than we did before? Sin is still

damning in its own merit and nature, and it is still the violation of an

holy righteous law, and an aflfront to the holy God, and an inconvenience

to the precious soul. Sin is the same as it was before, though the

person be not the same. Nay, the children of God are not altogether

exempted from the effects of sin neither ; it is a disease, though not a

death ; and who would not groan under the heat of a burning fever

though he be assured of life ? God hath still a bridle upon you to keep

the soul in awe ; and though the godly can never lose their right in the

covenant, that doth remain, yet they may lose the fruition of it, and

this is enough to make a child of God mourn. Notwithstanding all the

privileges of grace, you may be branded, though not executed ; and

though the Lord hath made them vessels of mercy, yet he doth not use

and employ them as vessels of honour, but they are set aside as useless

vessels. Sin will still be inconvenient, it will bring disgrace to religion

and discomfort to your souls, and furnish the triumphs of hell, and

make Satan rejoice, and eclipse the light of God's countenance ; and

who can brook the loss of God's favour and of intimate communion with

liim without sadness and bemoaning his case ? I may ask you that

question, Job xv. 11, 'Are the consolations of God small with thee? '

Do you make so little reckoning of those rich comforts of the Holy

Ghost ? Though you cannot be damned, for ' there is no condemna-

tion to them that are in Christ,' Rom. viii. 1, yet your pilgrimage may

be made very uncomfortable ; and he that prizeth communion with God

would not lose the comfort of it for the least moment. Besides, if there

were no inconvenience, yet love is motive enough to a gracious person ?

Where is your love ? Christians, you sin against mercy ; the warm

beams of mercy should melt the heart : Ezek. xxxvi. 31, ' Then shall

ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good,

and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for

all your abominations,' As long as there is love in the heart, you can

never want an argument to represent the odiousness of sin. Put the

matter in a temporal case ; it would be ill reasoning for an heir to say,

I know my father will not disinherit me, therefore I do not care how I

offend him. Where is your love to God if you do not hate sin ? Ps.

xcvii. 10, ' Ye that love the Lord, hate evil,' Though your right in

the covenant be safe, yet you should still have the evil of your own

doings in remembrance.

5. Many speak much of the evil of sin in prayers and confessions, yet

loathe it never the more, yea, the less. What should be the reason of

it ? All their thoughts are spent in empty declamations and forms of

satire or anger, and these do not subdue affections. Or else it may be

we only paint sin in our fancies, and that worketh no more than a

picture or image, which doth not allure and draw love so much as a

living beauty; it only pleases and tickles a little. Things foul in their

nature are pleasant in their picture and description. What more

318 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

dreadful than war ? and yet what more pleasant than in a strain of

poetry or rhetoric, or in a lively picture to describe the fury and heat

of battle ? What more ugly than a toad ? and yet a toad painted to

the life pleaseth. So when we merely paint sin by the help of the

imagination or fanc}^ it moves only the lighter part of the soul. It is

good to be rational in our considerations, and wliere there is the less

art, it leaveth the deeper stroke upon the heart. Imagination and

fancy is a great instrument in the work of meditation, but still it must

be wisely ordered and guided by reason. Sound conviction by God's

blessing doth the work, or else they rest in generals ; they are not serious,

particular practical discourses, brought home to their own case against

the sin they are struggling with. Lusts take the throne by turns, and

that our thoughts may fall with the greatest sense and feeling upon

our souls, it is good to bend the strength of our thoughts against our

iniquity. It is good to be particular, to fetch the aggravations of sin

out of thine own heart, or else men soar high, and in affected strains.

To draw an arrow always to the head breaketh the bow. Sin, Christ,

heaven, and hell admit of an hyperbole, but yet a man may strain too

much, that a soul may be discouraged by it, and much hurt may be

done. Men look upon matters of religion as abstracted ideas, and high

strains, and matters of fancy. Certainly the more simple and natural

your thoughts are, the more working. Forced, high-flown arguments,

if they raise the affections, it is but like fire in stubble, that flashes for

the present, not like a fire furnished with fit materials, that yields a

constant heat. Modest arguments fitted to our present state do better.

I will bring it to the matter in hand. Men usually overlash, while

they should set out sin as exceeding heinous, and forget those material

and natural arguments that should work the soul into a hatred of it

That saying of Anselm is justly censured by Mr Fox, Si hie peccati

2oudorem, et illic inferni Iwrrorera, (&c. If here were the filthiness of

sin, and there were the horrors of hell, I had rather be in hell without

sin than in heaven with it. These expressions do not come from a

modest virtue, but the over-daring of fancy, and besides they leave a

snare and temptation upon weak christians. God doth not put us to

that trial to choose hell or sin, and, as Mr Fox urgeth, God in the

gospel will bring sinners though sanctified to glory. Or else if they

use solid reasons and arguments, they rest in their own discourse and

reason, and then it is said, Job vi. 25, 'What doth your arguing

reprove ? '

II. Having premised these observations, I will give you a few argu-

ments whereby you may come to understand a little of that evil that

there is in sin. And they shall be drawn — (1.) From the nature of

sin ; (2.) From the effects of sin ; (3.) From the circumstances and

aggravations wherewith sin may be clothed.

1. From the nature of sin, and so it may be considered as to God

and as to ourselves.

[1.] Consider the nature of sin as to God.

(1.) It is an aversion from God, a turning from the chiefest good to

the chiefest evil. The very nature of sin is punishment enough to

itself ; it is misery enough to depart from God, the centre of rest, and

the fountain of life and blessinjr. It is a dishonour to God and a dis-

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 319

advantage to onrselves. A dishonour to God to prefer carnal sweets

and the satisfaction of sin before the comforts of his presence, and yet

this is the root of every sin : 2 Tim. iii. 4, ' Lovers of pleasures more

than lovers of God.' Every natural man loves the pleasures of sin

more than communion with God. You are angry at Judas for betray-

ing Christ, and at the Jews for preferring Barabbas before Christ, a

murderer before a saviour, and yet you do the same almost every day ;

Job XV. 1, ' Why doth thine heart carry thee away ? and what do thine

eyes wink at ? ' You forfeit the best things for the basest, as children

part with a pearl for an apple or a nut. Nay, I may go higher ; it is

a preferring the devil before God, Sins are called his lusts : John viii.

44, \* Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you

will do ;' and duty is enforced by God's law, and will you gratify the

devil and displease God ? You will find him to be an ill master at

length. He that now tempts will hereafter accuse, and that for this

very thing, that you were so easy to be entreated to leave God and

follow him , as Austin brings him in pleading against us to God,

Though thou didst try him by thy grace, and direct him by thy law,

though thy Son did die for him, yet he would not be thine, and there-

fore let him be mine : I never died, and shed my blood for him, I

could not promise him heaven and glory ; I only brought him the bait

and temptation, and he easily hearkened unto me. When the tempter

shall thus become an accuser, you will know what it is to turn from

God and to prefer the devil before a Saviour. Then it is a great dis-

advantage to yourselves ; you turn your back upon your own happiness.

Sin will make you shy of God's presence, and it will make you hated

of God, that he will not endure your presence ; he will have no com-

munion with you, nor you with him. It is the comfort of G(^d's

children, whatever befalls them in the world, that they can go in secret,

and their eyes can pour out tears to God ; but new God will turn away

from you, God who is the centre of your rest, the God of your

mercies , and then to whom will you unbosom yourselves ? Isa. lix.

2 ' Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and

your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.' They set

yon at a distance from God, and God at a distance from you. Oh !

reason thus with yourselves : Shall I commit that which will cause me

not to endure God, nor God to endure me ? that I shall not care to

have to do with him, nor he with me ? Sin has always been attended

with a casting out from God It cast the angels out of heaven,

where God is present in a glorious manner ; it cast Adam out of

paradise, where God was present by his own image ; and it cast Cain

out of the church, where God was present in his ordinances and wor-

ship , and it will make God cast you out as an abominable branch.

If you are not sensible of this at present, yet you will be sensible here-

after, when God shall say, \* Depart, ye cursed.'

(2.) It is enmity against God. It is not only a turning from God,

but an opposition to and turning against God : Eom. viii. 7, ' The

carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of

God, neither indeed can be.' The more the heart is set upon sin, the

more it hateth God formally or virtually. The soul hates God as a

lawgiver though not as a creator, because he comes in with a restraint

320 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

between us and our carnal desires : Col. i. 21, ' You were sometime

alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works.' In the original

it is 6-)(dpov'i rfj Oiavoia iv roh epiyoa roL<i Trovrjpol^, ' by your mind in

wicked works ; ' because your minds were set upon wicked works, you

were vexed God should restrain your desires ; for we cannot endure

one should restrain the exercise of our carnal affections. Now this

enmity is mutual ; God hates us, and we hate God. On man's part

it is driven on with fury , he doth so hate God that he seeks the de-

struction of his being ; as he that hates another sceketh the destruction

of his goods, life, and honour, so he that hates God seeks to un-God

him. The sinner wishes there were no such being as a God in the

world : Ps. xiv. 1, ' The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.'

The heart is the seat of desires ; these are the fool's wislies ; it is a

sweet pleasing thought to him. Though he cannot get rid of these

impressions of a Godhead, yet he wishes he could. A man that would

live at liberty could wish there was no judge to call him to an account;

he could let loose the reins of vile affections if there were no God ;

were it not for this restraint he could live as he list. Nay, they deny

God in their lives : Titus i. 16, ' They profess that they know God,

but in works they deny him.' Sin in effect doth lay God aside, and, to

put the greater affront upon him, it sets up something base in his

stead ; it sets up the belly for God : Phil, iii. 19, ' Whose god is their

belly ; ' the choicest respects of the soul run out upon the sensual part.

Or it sets up a little wealth for God. Or if sin cannot take away the

being of God, yet it strikes at his honour, and would make him to be

an unjust or an evil God. Sin deprives God of the honour of all his

attributes ; of his omnisciency, for though we are ashamed to sin

before man, yet, though God seeth all things, we do not blush if we

can carry on a wicked design under the veil of darkness, and dig deep

to hide our counsels from the Lord. Doth such a sinner think God is

all-seeing and all-knowing? Jer. ii. 26, 'A thief is ashamed, when he

is found ; ' when the eye of man hath surprised him, but alas I we are

always found of God. It robs him of his omnipotency and power, as

if he were impotent and weak, as if we could make our party good with

him. The apostle useth a smart question, 1 Cor. x. 22, ' Do we pro-

voke the Lord to jealousy ? are we stronger than he ? ' As if he had

said, Man, consider what thou doest ; by sinning thou dost enter into

the lists with God, and art thou able to deal with him ? It is a con-

test with God, as if we could arm our lusts against his mighty

angels. Will you contend with him that can command legions of

angels ? When you go about to sin, you do as it were wage war with

heaven, and enter into combat with God. That is the reason the

Lord by the prophet asketh sinners, What do you think ? Is there

such a thought in thee as if thou wast able to deal with me ? Ezek.

xxii. 14, ' Can thy heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the

day that I shall deal with thee ? ' Are you able to grapple with ray

omnipotent arm, and snatch judgment out of my hands, and oppose

my mighty angels ? Can thy heart endure when my almighty hand

shall seize upon thee, and divine displeasure shall break out against

thy soul ? The angel when contending with the devil ' durst not bring

a railing accusation,' Jude 0. He knew the mighty God would

SEUMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 60. 321

avenge him, therefore he durst not be malicious ; yet we dare enter

the lists with heaven. Thus is sin an enmity against God ; it would

either have no God, or an impotent, unjust, unwise God. Nay,

there is an enmity in sin against every person in the Holy Trinity.

Against God the Son : When Christ came into the world, his great

work was to dissolve the works of Satan : 1 John iii. 8, ' For this

purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the

works of the devil ; ' that he might unravel all those webs which Satan

had been weaving, and you strive as much as in you lies to set it up,

and make his death of none effect . Heb. x. 29, ' Of how much sorer

punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden underfoot

the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith

he was sanctified an unholy thing ? ' You make a low thing of it, tread

it underfoot ; it is an allusion to the sprinkling of the lintels of the

door, but they sprinkled it on the threshold. And it puts an affront

upon the Holy Ghost ; it grieveth and vexeth the Spirit of God ; it is

a setting up lust against lust, and a direct thwarting of his motions

and impulses : Gal. v. 17, ' The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and

the Spirit against the flesh.' You do as it were reproach him, and say

he shall do no good upon your hearts, this shall not gain upon you.

Moses, when .he speaks of a presumptuous sinner, saith, Num. xv. 30,

\* The soul that doth ought presumptuously, the same reproacheth the

Lord ; ' when you do thus deliberately sin, you do as it were reproach

the Spuit of God, Likewise on God's part , he hateth us too, and

though he be full of kindness, yet he cannot give sin a good look : Hab.

i. 13, ' Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look

on iniquity.' God loveth all his creatures, and loveth to look upon

them, but he hateth that which is properly man's creature, and that is

sin ; there is no antipathy greater than between these two natures.

You may sooner reconcile fire and water, light and darkness, cold and

heat, than God and sin. The enmity of all creatures is as their beings

are, finite and limited ; but God's being is infinite ; his whole nature

sets him against sin ; therefore there is no comparison which serves to

set out the indignation the Lord hath against sin, there is no antipathy

like it.

(3.) Sin is a transgression of the law. Do but consider what a dis-

grace sin puts upon the law that forbiddeth it ; it doth in effect

condemn the law, as if it were not good and useful and righteous,

as if it were an idle restraint. There is a notable expression, James

iv. 11, 'He thatspeaketh evil of his brother and judgeth his brother,

speaketh evil of the law and judgeth the law ,' that is, he puts this

affront upon the law, as if it were injurious, as if God were not right-

eous in making such a law agamst passion and evil-speaking. There-

fore Nathan comes to rouse up David's conscience, and tells him his

sin: 2 Sam. xii. 9, 'Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment

of the Lord, to do evil in his sight ? ' In every sin there are some

implicit thoughts by which the law is disvalued and disapproved ; we

secretly tax it of envy, folly, and rigour, as if God had dealt harshly

with his creatures ; they look upon it as a weak and simple law : Ezek.

xviii. 26, ' Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal.' The devil,

when he inspired the first sin, would suggest to our first parents as if

VOL. XVII. X

322 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

God had envied tlie perfection of man by prescribing a law to him :

Gen, iii. 5, ' God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof then your

eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil'

[2.] Consider the nature of sin with respect to yourselves, and so-

the evil of it appears in these respects.

(1.) It is a degradation of your natures, and sets you beneath the

rank of men, and equals you with beasts: Ps. xlix. 12, 'Nevertheless

man being in honour abideth not ; he is like the beasts that perish/

In the original it is, he abideth not for a night. Adam sinned the

very same day that he was created. So Ps. xxxii. 9, ' Be ye not as the

horse or as the mule, that have no understanding ; ' implying that in-

considerate and rash men, that never consider their ways, are like the

horse and mule, which are void of understanding, and are guided only

by their own instinct. To what use do men put their reason that do-

not reflect upon their consciences ? It would be an odd sight to see a

man with the head of a mule or the feet of a horse, yet there is a greater

affinity between the body of a beast and the body of a man than be-

tween a beast and a man's soul ; the former are in the same degree

of being, as material substances.

(2.) It is the defilement of your natures. The scripture, when it

speaks of sin, sets it out by ' filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness,'

James i. 21 ; an allusion to the brook Kedron, where the garbages of

the sacrifices were wont to be cast. So it is called a blot. These

notions are to heighten our souls into a detestation of it. Omne malum

naturam, aut timore, aut 'pndore perf^idit. There is such a filthiness

in sin, that it is ashamed of itself, and therefore it always seeketh for a

disguise. There needeth no argument against it, but to be seen in it»

proper colours ; it either seeketh a show of virtue, or a veil of dark-

ness. Pray why doth the adulterer seek for the twilight (Prov. vii. 9,

' In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night') but

that he is ashamed of sin ? Sin is so moristrous and deformed that it

seeks to hide itself from those that love it most, from the conscience

of the party that committeth it, or from the sight of others. Nay,, there

is such a turpitude in it that some sins beget shame in their very name

and mention. The apostle speaks of a sin that ' is not so much as-

named among the gentiles,' 1 Cor. v. 1 ; and Eph. v. 3, ' But" fornica-

tion, and all uncleanness, and covetousness, let it not be once named

among you, as becometh saints.' Socrates hid his face whenever he

spake against wantonness.

(3.) It is the bondage of your natures. Oh! what worser captivity

can there be than this, for reason to be put out of its empire, and that

you should be under the command of vile afi'ections, a slave to pride,

and a drudge to your lusts and carnal pleasures ? Sin is a bondage

here and hereafter ; here it binds you with the cords of vanity, and

hereafter with the chains of darkness. This is the preposterous judg-

ment of men, that they look upon the service of God as their greatest

bondage : Ps. ii. 3, ' Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away

their cords from us ; ' but then it is otherwise , there is no greater

freedom than to be employed in the service of God, and to be free for

the actions of a holy life : Ps. cxix. 45, ' I will walk at liberty, for I

seek thy precepts.' The bonds of duty are not gyves, but ornaments ;

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 323

and there is no greater bondage than to be a slave to sin : 2 Peter ii.

19, ' While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants

of corruption ; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he

brought into bondage.' What a bondage is this, to be a vassal of hell,

to be at the command of our lusts, a slave to pride and uncleanness, and

we know not how to help it !

SERMON VIIL

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the even-tide. —

Gen. xxiv. 63.

2. Another argument to prove the evil of sin is taken from the effects

of sin. We being in a lower sphere of understanding, know causes by

their effects : Jer. ii. 19, ' Know therefore and see, that it is an evil

thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God ; ' when they

had seen the sad effects of it, their cities wasted and destroyed. And

where shall we not find the sad effects of sin ? Survey the story of sin

since it came into the world.

The first news we hear of sin is in the fall of the angels, and what a

dreadful instance is that ? The angels, that were the most noble part

of the universe, the courtiers of heaven, and as soon as they had sinned,

in a moment from angels they were made devils, and cast down into the

pit of darkness, for one aspiring thought against God's imperial majesty.

If we should see ten thousand princes executed in one day, we would

wonder at the cause of it, and yet this is but a short resemblance of this

case. Think of those princes of the creation, those morning-stars, those

sons of God ; now if one sin cast down these angels, what will become

of us who have millions of sins ? If God be so angry with the nobles,

how may the scullions tremble ? If God will cast angels out of heaven

for one sin of thought, what will become of us poor dwellers in clay,

who are but a little enlivened dust, that may be soon crumbled into

nothing ? Yet Christ was not made an angel for angels, as he was

made a man for me. If you should hear of a drop of gall that should

embitter a whole ocean of sweetness, you would wonder at the pestilen-

tial influence of it ; here one sin of thought embittered the whole ocean

of the angelical sweetness.

The next news we hear of sin is in the fall of man. Who would taste

of that poison that poisoned all mankind at once ? Adam did but taste

of the forbidden fruit, and all his posterity were poisoned ; in the morn-

ing he was God's favourite, and in the evening the devil's slave ; he

slept not one night in innocency. Nay, this is not all, you shall see

the venom of sin went further ; it did not only ruin all mankind, but

it gave a crack to the whole creation. All the creatures groan under

sin : Eom. viii. 20, 21, ' For the creature is made subject to vanity,

not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in

hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage

of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.' When

324 SKRMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

God looked upon the creatures that he had made, he saw all was good,

but when Solomon looketh upon God's works, he seeth nothing but

vanity ; what is the reason of this ? Sin intervened, so that the crea-

tures are not only the monuments of God's power, but of man's rebellion.

The next dreadful instance of sin is in the old world, and there all

mankind except eight persons were swept away at once.

The next news of sin is in the instance of Sodom, and there sin was

of such an evil influence that it made God to rain hell out of heaven ;

as one expresses it, Gehennam misit e coelo : Gen. xix. 24, ' Then the

Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from

the Lord out of heaven ; ' dominus a dommo, the Lord Christ from the

Lord Jehovah, Jesus Christ himself will become the executioner upon

such a wicked people.

Go from Sodom to Sion, and further trace the story of sin. Who

can read the Lamentations without lamentation, or run over the -story

of Jerusalem's sorrows with dry eyes ? There was not such a people

under heaven both for mercies and judgments, the dearly beloved of

his soul given up to a sad ruin ! Lam. iii. 39, 'Wherefore doth a

living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins ? ' What

is the reason of all this but sin ?

Will you go further, and see the effects of sin upon the Son of God

himself, who was the Son of his love, ' the man God's fellow,' as he is

called, Zech. xiii. 7, his associate; they solaced tliemselves mutually

in each other : Prov. viii. 30, ' There was I by him, as one brought up

with him ; I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.' See

what sin did to him that w^as but imputed to him. Look into the

garden, see him in his agonies ; go to Golgotha, see Christ hanging on

the cross, if you would know sin. Gold and silver would not ransom

us, nothing would serve but the blood of Christ. Oh ! come and wonder.

The boundless sea of the Godhead was stopped by the bank of sin. For

a candle to be put out is no such matter, but for the sun to be quenched

and darkened, this is dreadful. So for a poor creature to be forsaken is

nothing, but when the Son of God shall complain that he cannot actu-

ally enjoy the comfort of the Godhead, Avhen the Sun of righteousness

shall complain of an eclipse, and of a suspension of consolation, this is

dreadful. Though the human nature recoiled out of a justabhorrency

of the sufferings he was to endure, and he came to his Father, Mat. xxvi.

39, \* my Father ! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ; ' and

again, ver. 42 ; and again, ver. 44, saying the same words ; yet divine

justice would not bate him one farthing. What then would have

become of us if Jesus Christ had not catched the blow ?

Then survey common experience. If all the charnels in the world

were emptied upon one heap, and all the bones of all that ever died

were laid together, you might say, All these were slain by sin. When-

ever you see sin, you may entertain it as Elisha did Hazael, Thou art

the murderer. All diseases, pestilences, wars, famines, tumults, earth-

cpiakes, these are but the births of sin ; it hath laid houses desolate,

wasted kingdoms, destroyed cities. Sin may say, Zeph. iii. 6, 7, 'I have

cut ojBf the nations ; their towers are desolate : I have made their streets

waste, that none passeth by ; their cities are destroyed so that there is

no man, there is none inhabitant : I said, Surely thou wilt fear me ; '

that which we feel we may fear.

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV, 63. 325

But we may come nearer home. Do but consider the effects of it

within yourselves in the terrors of conscience. What a sorry creature

is man when God arms his own thoughts against him, and sets home

one sin upon liis conscience ! He longs for death rather than life.

Heman, who was a child of God, complains, Ps. Ixxxviii. 16, 17, 'Thy

fierce wrath goeth over me, thy tenors have cut me off; they came

round about me daily like water, they compassed me about together.'

What a sad thing is this, that a man should be magor missahib, fear

jound about, that his own thoughts should be his hell, and wherever

he goes, he carries his hell with him ! When he lies down in his bed,

hell lies down with him ; when he walks out into the field or garden,

hell walks with him ; when he goes about his business, hell goes with

him. Sin is its own executioner ; however it smiles in the first address,

yet afterwards it scourgeth the soul with horror and despair.

Consider the horrors in death. There is a natural abhorrency from

death as an evil to our life and being, but that which increaseth

horror is sin : 1 Cor. xv. 56, 'The sting of death is sin.' Oh ! what

agonies will it raise in our souls when we come to die if we die in our

sins ! Though we were immortal, yet sin is so great an evil that it were

not to be committed ; but when we are to die, and give an account,

how doth it fill the soul with horror and diffidence and shame and

anger! Some wicked men indeed die stupid and careless, at least

doubtful ; and some may be foolhardy ; like a man that fetcheth a leaj)

in the dark over a bottomless gulf he doth not know where his feet

may light. A wicked man is like a tree that grows on the bank of a

river ; he is on the borders of hell, and when he dies, he falls into it.

When they come to die, sin will be accusing, conscience witnessing,

the law condemning, Satan insulting ; heaven will be shut up against

them, and hell enlarging her mouth. Oh ! how will the body curse

the soul for an ill guide, and the soul curse the body as a wicked instru-

ment ! It is a sad parting when these two loving friends, body and soul,

part with curses, and can never expect to meet again but in torment. A

godly man, wlien he dies, takes a fair leave of his body, and says. Fare-

well, flesh ! He goes down to the grave with the covenant of grace in

his hand, My flesh shall rest in hope ; but a wicked man dreadeth it, that

ever his body and soul must be united again ; they part with an expecta-

tion never to meet but in flames.

But all this is nothing to the everlasting estate that follows after it.

Consider either the loss or the pain ; both will represent the evil of sin.

Consider the loss ; by sinning thou losest God and heaven and glory

for a trifle ; for a little dreggy pleasure thou thrustest away eternal

joys. Thou dost as it were say, I care not for heaven, so I may have

carnal satisfaction ; as of Esau it is said. Gen. xxv. 34, ' Thus Esau

despised his birthright ; ' it is not worth a mess of pottage. With ""

what sad reflections wilt thou declaim against sin when thou shalt see

the holy ones of God stand at the right hand of Christ, and thou art

haled to thy own place ! How will thy heart turn upon thee for thy

own folly then ! As one dreamed that his heart was boiling for his sins

in a kettle of scalding lead, and it cried out to him, '£70) aol tovtov

alria, It is I that have been the cause of this. Were it not for sin I

might have had a place in Abraham's bosom, but now I am going to

everlasting torment ; then you will know what sin is. Every sinner is

326 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63-

as a mad gamester ; he ventures a kingdom, the largest and fairest

that ever was, at every throw, and he is sure to lose it too. Then con-

sider the pains of hell ; they will set out the greatness of sin ; and con-

sider them either in regard of God's ordination or appointment, or in

regard of your own feeling. (1.) In regard of God's ordination and

appointment. That the good God, who is meekness and sweetness and

bowels itself, should adjudge his creature to eternal torments ; certainly

there is some cause. We pity a dog if he should be cast into a furnace

for half an hour ; yet those tender bowels of mercy shrink not up at

the sight of sinners, though man be the work of his own hands ; and

though the creature screech and howl under these pains, yet he will

not lessen and take them away. Surely there is some great evil in sin

that hath tied up the hands of mercy. (2.) Consider it in regard of

yourselves and your own feeling. Oh ! for a short temporal pleasure

thou runnest the hazard of eternal pains. We that cannot endure the

scratch of a pin or the aching of a tooth, how shall we endure the torment

of so many thousand years, and yet still to look for more ? Heb. x. 31,

' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' Mark

the attribute, ' the living God,' who lives for ever to see the vengeance

accomplished. As long as God is God, hell will be hell ; there can never

be any hope that God's being can be destroyed, or that there will be

a cessation of those torments and pains. God ever liveth to reward the

godly and to punish the wicked.

3. The third sort of arguments are from the aggravations of sin,

that may enhance it, and show the greatness of it to your thoughts.

[1.] It is natural to us. It is necessary to reflect npon this circum-

stance, because it is the hardest matter in our humiliation to be suffi-

ciently affected with our birth-sin. Evils that come by accident are

objects of pity, but evils of nature are objects of hatred. We pity a

dog that is poisoned, but we hate a toad that is poisonous by nature.

Oh ! how may the Lord hate us that have evil in our nature ! It is not

accidental to us. It is the great fondness of men to make that an

excuse which is in itself the greatest aggravation. Some will say when

they are reproved for sin, I cannot do otherwise ; it is my nature.

This will be the cause of thy ruin without an interest in Christ. The

waters that come out of a pure fountain may be soiled and dirtied, but

they will be clear again ; but a puddle that runneth out of a dung-

hill will be always nasty and filthy. Our sins are not by accident,

but by nature ; they are not like the muddying of a clear foun-

tain, but like the unsavoury liquor that comes out of a dunghill.

Original sin (however you think of it) is the sin of sins ; we are born

with such a sin, and it is worse than any other sin. Actual sins are

but as a transient act, whereby there is a violence offered to one of

God's commandments, but this is a constant, rooted, abiding contra-

riety to God's own nature. Actual sins are a blow and away, but this

is a remaining enmity. Actual sins are like a fit of anger and dis-

])leasure, soon up and soon down, but this is a rooted hatred. This is

the cause of all other sins, the bitter root that diffusetli a poison into

all the branches. All other sins that a man commits are but original

sin acted and exercised. Look, as in the art of numbering, the greatest

number that can be numbered is but one multiplied, so the whole frv

SEUMONS UPON GEN'ESIS XXIV. 63. 327

of actual transgressions is but original sin multiplied, this spawn dif-

fused and spread abroad ; all those traitorous actions that we are guilty

of in the course of our lives are all summed up in this sinning sin.

[2.] Our sins are many. We sin in praying, in eating, in ploughing,

in trading ; and any one of these is enough to undo a world. The

angels became devils for one sin, for one sin of thought, a proud

thought against God's empire and greatness, and for this they were

thrown into places of darkness. What ruin then will a great many

sins procure to thy soul ! If single sins seem light in themselves, yet

what are they all together ? There is nothing lighter than one sand,

and yet nothing heavier than sand in a great quantity. A gnat, a

fly, a locust are poor inconsiderable creatures, yet when they come

in multitudes they are called God's great army, and destroy whole

■countries: Joel ii. 11, 'The Lord shall utter his voice before his army,

for his camp is very great.' If every pore in the body were but pricked

with a pin, the veins would soon be emptied of blood. One sin was

<.leadly, but what are they altogether, when from top to toe there is

nothing but sores and putrefaction ? Herod was eaten up with lice, a

.small inconsiderable kind of vermin, yet the abundance of them destroyed

him ; so though sins seem small in themselves, yet when they come in

<;lusters, how soon will they devour and eat out the life and comfort of

the soul ! Ps. xl. 12, ' Innumerable evils have encompassed me about ;

mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look

up ; they are more than the hairs of mine head ; therefore my heart

faileth me.' And if David may say so, may not we much more ? Nothing

can be little that is committed against the great God. But suppose

them small, yet they are a company. Oh ! this will make your hearts

fail. The little finger of sin is weighty, but when all the loins of it

-are laid upon the soul, how great will the burden be ! Look upon all

the troubles of the servants of God, and you will find they were first

occasioned by a small sin, as Mr Peacock's by eating too freely at a

meal ; but when innumerable evils shall compass you about, that

wherever you look there is sin — if you look on duty there is sin, if you

look on your calling there is sin, if you look on your recreations there

is sin, if you look on the hours of your repast there is sin — oh ! this

will make your hearts fail indeed.

[3.] If they have been such as have been committed against know-

ledge. There is more of the nature of sin in such acts, for the nature

of sin is dvo/xia, a transgression of the law. Now the more we know

the law the greater is the transgression ; according to the sense we

have of the law so the offence is elevated and raised. He that hath

knowledge is magis paiiiceps legis, the law is a piece of himself ; it is

impressed upon his conscience, and he offereth violence to the prin-

ciples of his own bosom. This is the reason why the children of God

use this aggravation ; as David : Ps. li. 6, ' In the liidden part thou

shalt make me to know wisdom.' God had taught David wisdom and

some spiritual skill, and yet he sinned against him. So Christ : John

XV. 22, ' If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin ; '

that is, none in comparison. According to the proportion of light, so

the rate of sin riseth ; the more you know of the law, the more you sin

against the law. It is sad to put the finger in nature's eye, but it is

328 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

worse to sin against the light of the word, that will make sin rise high

indeed. Then there is more of enmity and malice in it. When a

man will break through the convictions and restraints of conscience,

it is a sign a man does love sin, and sins for its own sake ; which is

sensibly and clearly discerned in apostates, who are carried on with

most wilful malice and rage against the truth which once they pro-

fessed. Aposfafce sunt maximi osores sui ordinis. Hosea v. 2, 'The

revolters are profound to make slaughter.' Forward professors, when

they revolt, turn violent persecutors. They set themselves against the

light. Alexander was once a disciple, yet he ' made shipwreck of the

faith,' 1 Tim. i. 19, 20 ; and he is the man that must set on the multi-

tude against Paul : Acts xix. 33, ' And they drew Alexander out of the

multitude, the Jews putting him forward.' The same man is intended,

for by the epistles to Timothy we learn that he dwelt at Ephesus, where

Timothy was when those epistles were directed to him. Now the Jews

set him up as the fittest accuser of Paul ; ' he knew his doctrine, and he

must appear to turn all the blame of the uproar on the christians.

Once more we read of this Alexander as a desperate adversary to the

truth : 2 Tim. iv. 21, ' Alexander the coppersmith did me much hurt.'

Certainly their rage and malice is the greater because of the abundance

of light which they have forsaken. No vinegar is so tart as that which

is made of the sweetest wine ; so when knowledge is once corrupted, it

fills the heart with most rage : Prov. xxviii. 4, ' They that forsake the

law praise the wicked.' They not only commit sin, but like it in

others ; they are the most violent and forward men to defend wicked

Avays and unjust courses. Sins against knowledge have the greatest

marks of the divine vengeance and displeasure. When men abuse

knowledge, God giveth them up to sottishness, madness, hardness of

heart, or despair. To sottishness : Kom. i. 21-23, ' Because that when

they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful ;

but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was

darkened : professing themselves wise, they became fools, and changed

the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corrupt-

ible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things'

Heathens, that had some common knowledge of the divine nature, when

they sinned against their light, God darkened their hearts and made

them more foolish. The heathens that were most civil and had most

light were given up to the most beastly errors about the nature of

God. The Eomans worshipped fevers, j^assions, and paltry gods ; the

Egyptians, thunder and the sun. Or else the Lord gives them up to mad-

ness. The most moral heathens were the sorest persecutors, as Severus,

Antoninus ; they abused their light, and therefore God gave them up

to fury and madness against his ways. Or else they are given up to

hardness of heart. Iron oft heated and oft quenched groweth harder.

God justly punisheth contempt of light with obduracy ; when a man

hath had frequent convictions, and still he quencheth them, he grows

the harder. Or else the Lord gives them up to a sad despair God

opens their consciences, and makes them to see how they have gone

against their own light. Much knowledge not digested is like meat in

tiie stomach, that, being not concocted, breedeth the colic ; it breedeth

sad gripes in the conscience.

SEKMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. G3. 329

[4.] If they are committed against love. It is sad to sin against God's

laws, it is more to sin against God's love. Suppose it be but against

common love, against God that giveth us food and raiment, rain from

heaven, and fruitful seasons. The apostle calls this a ' despising the

goodness of God,' Rom. ii. 4, either by emploj^ing it to vile uses, or else

by a careless slighting and not taking notice of it. You that slight

the kindness of God do as it were say, God shall not gain me to his

ways for all this. Every sin is not committed against knowledge, but

every sin is against love and bowels. Christ may say to every sinner,

as he said to the Jews, John x. 32, \* Many good works have I showed

you from my Father ; for which of those works do you stone me ? '

Tims the Lord may plead, I have given you protection and provision,

and food and raiment, for which of these do you violate my law and

put such an affront upon me ? It is I that have been so liberal to you,

in giving you the fruits of the earth, the fish of the sea, the fowls of

the air ; it is I that have caused your sheep to bring forth thousands,

and your fields to yield meat ; and will you return upon me with my

own weapons ? Malefactors are punished in the same things in which

they ofi'end, and you seek to do me despite by my own blessings, as if

I did you wrong when I did you good. But much more if you sin

against special love. You that are Christ's favourites, every sin of yours

is as a stab at the heart of mercy ; as when the multitude forsook him,

says Christ to his disciples, John vi. 61, 'Will ye also go away?'

That went to his heart. God reckoneth upon you that he shall have

much service and obedience from you, and disappointment is the worst

kind of vexation : Gen. xviii. 19, ' I know Abraham, that he will com-

mand his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep

the way of the Lord ; ' Isa. Ixiii. 8, ' Surely they are my people, children

that will not lie.' That which in others is but single fornication in

you is adultery ; others sin agaiust common mercies, but you against

the bowels of Christ ; they are not thankful for a piece of bread, nor

you for the bread of life. As Absalom said to Hushai, 2 Sam. xvi. 17,

\* Is this thy kindness to thy friend ? ' so is this the fruit of all those

tender loves and mercies which God hath meted out to you ? It is

unnatural, as if a hen should bring forth the egg of a crow.

[5.] If it be against vows and covenants, against frequent and reit-

erated promises and purposes. By such sinning you break double

chains — God's and your own. It is not a simple sin, but treachery ;

Judah hath dealt treacherously : Jer. iii. 7, ' Her treacherous sister

Judah saw it.' You commit a sin under the show of friendship. Obed-

ience is due, though it were never promised, but it is a help to our

weakness that we vow. It is God's condescension to make a cove-

nant ; his laws bind, though we do not seal and subscribe to them ; they

bind as a law though not as a covenant ; but vows and promises make

the covenant more explicit. A lawful thing vowed and dedicated to

God could not be alienated without sin. Ananias was smitten dead

for receding from his purpose : Acts v. 4, ' Whilst it remained, was it

not thine own ? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power ?

why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart ? thou hast not lied

unto men, but unto God,\* But much more in vows in things necessary

that are not in your power. When you have promised obedience, you

330 SEKMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

have promised a thiiii^ necessary. God might require duty from you,

and punish you for the violation of his law, whetlier you vowed or no.

It was never left to your pleasure to deal falsely in your covenant with

men ; it is the sin the Lord doth always avenge. Such solemn obli-

gations should be sacred and inviolable ; what then is it to break

vows with God after we have solemnly renewed our covenant with

him ?

[6.] If it be against former experiences, and that either of the sweet-

ness of grace or the evil of sin. (1.) Of the sweetness of grace : The

Lord takes it ill that you should sin against him after ' you have tasted

his good word,' Heb. vi. 5. It is a mighty affront to Jesus Christ to

go off from him after we have had experience of the sweetness of his

ways. The apostle calls this a ' denying the Lord that bought them,'

2 Peter, ii. 1 ; that this, in foro ecclesice, in the court of the church,

and with respect to the outward covenant that is between the Lord and

every church member. An apostate doth as it were proclaim to the

world that Jesus Christ is no good master ; that, after he hath made

trial of both, the devil is a better master than Christ, for be seemeth to

have known both masters. So we find the Lord contests with his

people about their provocations : Jer. ii. 5, ' What iniquity have your

fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked

after vanities, and are become vain ? ' You have gone far from me,

and departed from my ways ; what is the matter ? Did I ever do you

Imrt ? have I ever been a land of darkness to you, or a hard master ? So

Micah vi. 3, ' my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein

have I wearied thee ? testify against me.' When we go off from God,

we do as it were proclaim that we have found just discouragement in

the ways of Christ, as a man that goeth off from you showeth his

expectation is deceived in you. (2.) If you have done it after experi-

ence of the evil of sin. When a man hath found the bitterness of sin,

suppose it be of drunkenness or auger, when it hath weakened his body

and broken his peace, and yet he runs into it again, it is a sad aggra-

vation ; as that king that would adventure another captain and his fifty

when one captain and his fifty were consumed with fire from heaven,

2 Kings i. 10, 11. When we will be tampering with the carnal sweets

again which have cost us so much trouble, when we have found the

hand of God meet us in a carnal way, yet we will venture again, and

enter into the lists with him, and set ourselves against him, it is as the

breaking of a bone in the same place : James iv. 2, ' Ye lust, and have

not, yet kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain ; ye fight and war, yet

ye have not.' This is a plain contest with God, when, after ye have been

broken in pieces, you will again gather and associate yourselves, as

it is Isa. viii, 9, ' Associate yourselves, ye people, and you shall be

broken in pieces ; and give ear, all ye of far countries ; gird your-

selves, and ye shall be broken in pieces ; gird yourselves, and ye shall

be broken in pieces.' Thus the children of Israel argued with the Eeu-

benites and Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh : Josh. xxii. 17, 18,

\* Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed

until this day (though there was a plague in the congregation of the

Lord), but that ye must turn away this day from following the Lord ? '

[7.] If sin has been committed against a special relation, as suppose

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. G3. 331

that of a magistrate or a miuister, this doubles the oflfence. Your sins

are imitated ; you should be fountains of religion and justice, and you

poison the fountains. You are as the first sheet that is printed ofi",

and all others are stamped after your copy. It was a sad title that

was given to Jeroboam, that ' he made Israel to sin ; ' so when you do

not show forth a special strictness of religion according to your place,

it is a great aggravation.

SEKMON IX.

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the even-tide. —

Gen. xxiv. 63.

Thirdly, The matter I am now to propose to you is the excellent con-

trivance of the gospel as a subject for your meditation ; an argument

that challengeth all our reverence and thoughts and wonder, a mystery

of mysteries, the fairest draught and picture that ever came out of the

workhou.'^e of God: 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'And without controversy great

is the mystery of godliness.' This is a depth that cannot easily be

fathomed ; here are miracles enfolded in miracles, and mysteries within

mysteries ; God would astoniiJ mankind, and save it at the same time.

Christ is called the wisdom of God : 1 Cor. i. 24, ' Christ, the power

of God and the wisdom of God ; ' not only as the treasures of wisdom

and knowledge are hid in him, and through him conveyed to the

creatures, but because herein is God's wisdom most discovered by di.s-

posing and putting our salvation into the hands of Christ ; not only as

a fountain of wisdom, but as a map of wisdom, as discovering the

excellent contrivance of God, and the curious variety that is in his

counsels. God showeth wisdom in all things: Ps. civ. 24, '0 Lord,

how manifold are thy works ! in wisdom hast thou made them all'

Every creature is disposed into apt cells and storehouses, and contri-

butes to the glory of their creator. But here God would discover the

curiosity of his wisdom. The world is his work, but the gospel is

liis plot. And therefore in your solemn and most deliberate thoughts

you should take a view of it. It is the great duty of saints : Eph. iii.

18, 19, ' That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the

breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of

Christ, which passeth knowledge.' This should be your continual task

and search. There are two great mysteries in the world — Clirist and

antichrist, the mystery of the gospel and the mystery of iniquity. It

is the great advantage of christians to discern the mystery of iniquity,

and to meditate upon the mystery of godliness ; to observe antichrist's

cunning, and to consider the contrivance of the gospel. Oh ! then

exercise your thoughts herein, and study the excellency of God's

design ; bring hallowed and reverend thoughts, that by a deliberate

gaze you may raise your souls into an holy wonder and admiration.

332 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

1. I shall lay down some preparative considerations.

2. I shall come to the work itself.

I. To prepare you to consecrate your thoughts for the entertainment

of so great a mystery, consider these things —

1. Wlien you have done your utmost, your thoughts will still fall

short : Isa. xl. 28, ' There is no searching of his understanding.'

There is an excess in every attribute above all human thought and

conceit, and though we follow on after God, yet we cannot find him

out to perfection. Now among all his attributes none is more hidden

from us than his wisdom, as children that are only busied in puppets

and baubles cannot imagine what it is to govern a commonwealth.

Power is obvious, but our foolish spirits cannot trace the wisdom of

providence, much more his wisdom discovered in the gospel". One of

the names of Christ is Wonderful, Isa. ix. 6. It is a point that we

should always be studying, and yet Vv'e can never come to the bottom

of it, and therefore what is wanting in thoughts must be supplied by

wonder. When we have done all, we must cry out, Rom. xi. 23, ' O

the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !

how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! '

As if he had said, I have done as much as I can, I have discovered as

much as I am able ; but I must leave off disputing, and fall now

to wondering. The light of the scripture doth not discover him

fully : 1 Cor. xiii. 9, ' We know in part, and we prophesy in part.'

Full knowledge is our portion in heaven ; these are but partial disco-

veries we have even in the word of God. However this is no excuse for

negligence and barrenness. Not for negligence, for we must ' follow on

to know the Lord,' Hosea vi. 3. It is the fault of christians that they

keep always to their milk and first childish thoughts and apprehensions ;

we should rise higher in our considerations and admirations of the love

and wisdom of God. It is notable that Moses his first i-equest to God

was, ' What is thy name ? ' Exod. iii, 13. and then, ' I beseech thee

show me thy glory,' Exod. xxxiii. 18. We must follow on from con-

sidering God's name to clearer sights of his glory. Not for barrenness ;

empty thoughts void of argument and discourse beget a confused stupor,

not a wonder ; the thoughts are only stayed, not raised.

2. Not only men, but angels themselves are at a loss in this great

mystery ; they study it as well as we, and cannot come to the bottom

of it : 1 Peter i. 12, ' Which things the angels desire to look into.'

The word irapaKinlrat signifies to bow down and bend the body ; it is

an allusion to the cherubim, that were pictured over the ark stooping,

and as it were bending their bodies, as prying into the mysteries of the

ark. The mysteries of the gospel are so sublime that the angels which

do continually behold the face of God cannot perfectly comprehend

them ; they are learning and improving their knowledge by learning

and improving the dispensations of God to the church : Eph. iii. 10,

' To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly

places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God ; '

that they may know the curious contrivances of God's wisdom by

observing the revelations that are made, and the dispensations God

hath used towards l>is church. And possibly this may be the meaning

of the apostle in that expression, 1 Tim. iii. 16, ' Seen of angels ; ' that

SERMONS IJPOX GENESIS XXIV. €3. 333

is, with reverence, admiration, and wonder, to see Christ stoop so low,

to be clothed with flesh, to condescend to a nature so much beneath

their own. This is the work of angels, either they desire to know

more of Christ, or they delight themselves in beholding of that they

know. Oh ! we should never be weary of searching into these holy

mysteries, and acting our thoughts upon them.

3. They wonder most at the contrivance of the gospel that have

most interest in it ; to others it is but a cold story or naked plot. Con-

cernment sharpeneth invention and aftection, a man doth then more

seriously consider of it ; their eyes are open, and they have moi'e of

sense and feeling. And that is the reason why the enjoyments of the

t^aints have notes of wonder annexed to the expressions of them ; as

Phil. iv. 7, ' The peace of God, which passeth all understanding,' &c.

1 Peter i. 8, ' Joy unspeakable and full of glory ; ' they that have a

taste of it know what it is to enjoy a calm and serene conscience

through the application of the promises of the gospel. They can best

wonder at the contrivance of the gospel, who are ' called out of darkness

into his marvellous light,' 1 Peter ii. 9. They wonder in their thoughts

that God and Christ should design their heaven, be plotting and con-

triving their salvation before all. worlds, how they may be vessels

filled up with glory. marvellous light ! wonderful, unutterable joy !

These are the apprehensions of God's children ; others may look upon

the gospel as a probable truth, but they have found it a comfortable

truth, therefore their hearts are raised in wonder.

II. I come to the work itself. You may manage it three ways — (1.)

By observations ; (2.) By arguments ; (3.) By comparisons.

1. By observations. Observe what is beautiful and excellent in the

gospel,

[1.] God did not contrive to save the fallen angels : Heb. ii. 16,

\* For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him

the seed of Abraham.' He was not made an angel for angels, as he

Avas made a man for men. Lord ! thou sawest angels sinning, but

not returning ; in them thou didst discover the severity of thy justice,

but in us the riches of thy mercy. God would not so much as treat

with fallen angels, but plotted a way to recover man. In the election

of angels mercy is not so much glorified as in the election and calling

of men ; there was grace showed in the election of angels, but not mercy ;

none of the fallen angels were saved, but fallen man is called to grace

in Clurist. Certainly whatever the causes were, there was much of

wisdom and mercy in it. Whether it be for this cause, that when Adam

sinned the whole human nature fell, but the whole angelical nature

did not fall, but only a part of it ; the kind itself needed not to be re-

paired, but all the mass of mankind was poisoned ; or whether this

be the cause, merely the will of God, certainly there is much of mercy

in it. Love after a breach is more glorious ; it is more to be reconciled

than to be confirmed. Pcenitens, the penitent, have more cause to

glorify God than tnnoc€7is, the innocent ; those that are received to

mercy than those that are confirmed by grace. Or else was this the

cause ? Because the angels sinned out of their own motion. Angels

had no other temptation but their own ambition and aspiring thought,

but man sinned by the devil's suggestion. Certainly it is more to be a

334 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

tempter than a sinner, and he thatsinnetli himself doth not offend God

himself so much as he that made Israel to sin. However it be, we have

cause to bless God that he hath revealed his justice against them and

his mercy to us.

[2.] Observe God's wisdom fetched a large compass and circuit ;

and those things which we count the ruin of man were through the

wisdom of providence his preservation. The fall of angels, the fall of

man, those crooked things which seemed to be the destruction of the

creature, through the overruling of God made for the manifestation of

his glory. Gregory called the sin of Adam foelix sceJus, because it occa-

sioned the coming of Christ. Providence hath many creeks and turnings,

but all concur to the beauty of the whole frame. The apostle calls it

7roX,u7r6t/ci\o9 ao(f)La, ' the manifold wisdom of God,' Eph. iii. 10. There

fore we are not to judge by present sense. God's mending is better

than his making ; he would have all fall to pieces to discover more of

his mercy. Man must commit a shameful act, and Christ must suffer

a shameful death, and all this to advance his own glory. As a vessel

that is cracked and soldered is the stronger there, or a leg that has been

broken, and set again by a skilful hand, is the stronger ; so the Lord

w^ould first have man to fall and ruin himself, that he might be the

better established by his own grace.

[3.] Observe again, that God should pitch upon this way of sending

his Son. God was not limited or bound up ; he could have done it by

an angel, or of his own will have released the creature of his offence ; but

' it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell,' Col. i.

19 ; it was God's will that salvation should be brought about this way.

In the whole business of salvation God would proceed by choice, not

necessity. I confess, supposing the determination of the divine decrees,

no creature was qualified to do us good ; the angels do but their work,

they could not so fitly supererogate for us ; but if God would send his

own Son, he might have come as a king in glory and triumph, and

wrestled with Satan, and rescued all the elect out of his hands. But

the Lord would not now discover power, but love ; he had discovered

power in creation : Eom. i. 20, ' For the invisible things of him from

the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the

things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead ; ' Liiit in

redemption he discovered his wisdom ; every attribute of God was to

be discovered in its season. Again, the Lord would meet with the sin

of men and angels. The angels had lost their holiness out of a desire

of greatness, they would be over all, and under none ; and man was

sick of the same disease, and did desire to be rather great than good.

Adam would be as God ; Adam fell by pride, and to counterwork this,

Christ was to restore mankind by humility. When he cometh to save

mankind, he lays aside his majesty, and puts on a humble garb ; he

would not save mankind by power, but by suffering ; the Lord's de-

sign was by the quality of the remedy to show the nature of the

disease.

[4.] Observe, man or angel could not have found out such an excel-

lent plot or design as this is. It could not have come into our heads

or hearts, and therefore it came merely from the breast of God ; it was

devised by Father, Son, and Holy Ghost : Eom. xi. 34, ' Who hath

SEllMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 335

known the mind of the Lord ? or who hath been his counsellor ? '

What creature did prescribe to God, or direct him to such a way ?

The apostle showeth it could not enter into the creature's thoughts :

1 Cor. ii. 9, ' Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered

into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them

that love him.' You will find by the context he speaks of the doctrine

and contrivance of Christ crucified ; neither sense, nor fancy, nor reason

could suggest such a thing to the creature. There are some seeds of

the law in nature, but not the least seeds of the gospel. We see in

other nations they cannot so much as think of a way of a recovery :

Isa. Ivi. 19, ' He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there

was no intercessor, therefore his arm brought salvation unto him ; ' it

is chiefly understood of the everlasting salvation by Christ. If the

Lord had tarried till man had devised a way for his own comfort, we

had been miserable to all eternity.

[5.] Observe, God discovered this design before it was accomplished

in the fulness of time : Isa. xlii. 9, ' Before they spring forth I tell you

of them.' This love was too big to be contained in his heart, but he

must open his mind. The prophecies and promises of the Old Testament

were the eruptions and overflows of God's love ; his heart was so full

of love, that it could not be contained within the bounds of secrecy.

He openeth his heart, and gives vent to his love in the midst of anger.

As soon as man had displeased him, God drops out the promise that

the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head.

[6.] Observe again, God discovered this by degrees, first in types,

then in truths ; first in promises, then in performances. God spake

to his people formerly not so much by words as by things. We teach

children to fight with puppets, and in the oriental nations it is their

genius to be taken with allegories and figures. God would prepare the

world by degrees, as the day groweth till it cometh to high noon ; to

us he hath opened all liis good treasure. And further, it was for our

instruction, that wickedness should be perfectly discovered. And

besides the former ages needed restraints more than comforts. Every

age had sufficient revelation for what God required of them.

2. Follow this meditation by arguments. There could not have

been a better way to save the creature, whether we respect God's glory

or the creature's comfort and profit.

[1.] If we consider God's glory.

(1.) It was the best way to commend his love : Rom. v. 8, ' But God

commended his love tovv^ards us, in that, while we were yet sinners,

Christ died for us.' Herein was the commendation of the divine love,

that God would give up the Son of his own love and bosom to die for

us that were sinners. As the apostle saith, Heb. vi. 18, ' When God

made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he

sware by himself.' So when the Lord could give us no greater gifts,

he gave us his Son. David seems to be amazed with wonder when he

considers the power of God in making such creatures as the moon and

stars, much more when he considers the love of God in framing of

man : Ps. viii. 3, 4, ' When I consider the heavens, the work of thy

fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained ; what is

man, that thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man that thou

336 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. («.

visitest him ? ' But here the Son of God himself is become man for

us. Oh ! that Jesus Christ should stoop so low ! that he that fills all

things should be shut up in the narrow straits of the virgin's womb !

that Christ should disrobe himself of all his glory, and submit to the

greatest abasement ! John iii. 16, 'For God so loved the world that

he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should

not perish, but have everlasting life,'

(2.) Hereby his justice is discovered. One attribute is not to be exer-

cised to the wrong and prejudice of another. Now in this excellent con-

trivance God did glorify his mercy so as his justice was no loser, that

being sujB&ciently satisfied in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore justice,

which in itself is our dread, is in Christ the ground of our comfort and

support, and that attribute which would discourage sinners doth now

invite and draw unto Christ ; 1 John i. 9, ' If we confess our sins, he is

faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all un-

righteousness.' So Eom. iii. 25, 26, ' Whom God hath set forth to be

a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness

for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God ;

to declare at this time, I say, his righteousness, that he might be just,

and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.' God would dispense

acts of grace with the greatest advantage to his justice. This is the

beauty of his design, he would be just jn justification, and those acts

which to us are acts of mere grace, are now made acts of righteousness.

(3.) Hereby the authority of the law is still preserved. God in

innocency had written a law in man's heart, and he was to preserve

the honour of it. Man transgressed this law. Now by appointing

Jesus Christ to die for us, the dignity of the law is kept up. Impunity

maketh sin to be lightly esteemed ; when laws are relaxed there must

be some commutation or recompense, or else their authority is not

preserved : Mat, v. 18, ' Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one

little shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.' The

omission of punishment would detract from it, therefore Christ must

be made under the law : Gal. iv. 4, 5, ' But when the fulness of time

was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the

law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive

the adoption of sons.' Christ endured the severity of it.

(4.) Hereby God's essence is discovered, even the whole Trinity,

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The doctrine of the Trinity was but

darkly revealed in the Old Testament till Christ came in the flesh.

One of the main designs of our redemption was to discover God the

Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, There is a God that

must be satisfied, there is a God that must satisfy, and there is a God

that must seal up all this to the soul. At Christ's baptism, when he

was solemnly inaugurated into the mediatorship, there was a discovery

of the Trinity, the Father in a voice, the Son in person, and the Holy

Ghost in the shape of a dove.

[2.] If we consider the creature's comfort, it was the best way to

establish that.

(1.) Here is excellent provision made against the infiniteness that is

in sin by the infiniteness of Christ's sufferings ; for though sin be but

a temporary act, yet it is infinite because of the object, being committed

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. C3. 337

against an infinite majesty ; so Christ's sufferings were but a temporary

act, yet they were infinite, he being a person that was both God and

man. Therefore as sins receive a vakie from the person against whom

they are committed, so Christ's sufferings receive a value from the

person by whom they are performed. The apostle puts a ' how much

more ' upon the blood of Christ : Heb. ix. 14, ' How much more shall

the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself

without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve

the living God ? ' His Godhead did put a value and merit upon his

blood to expiate the guilt of sin, and therefore the blood of Christ is

called the blood of God : Acts xx. 28, ' Feed the church of God, which

he hath pm-chased with his own blood.' So that if sin did abound,

grace had superabounded ; if sin be put into one scale, put the blood

of Christ into the other. The great purpose and design of God was

to give us triumph over the clamours of our own conscience. Sin is

expiated and done away by the blood of the Son of God.

(2.) There is an excellent provision made for all that the creature

stands in need of There are three things which ti'onble the creature,

and they are only accomplished and made good in this great contri-

vance of God — the bringing of God and man together, the bringing of

justice and mercy together, and the bringing of comfort and duty

together. How God and man are brought togetlier, who were separate

by sin : 1 Peter iii. 18, ' Christ also hath once suffered for sin, the just

for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.'" To unite man fallen

to God, there is mortal and immortal, greatness and baseness, finiteness

and infiniteness brought together. There is God and man in one

person, that there might be a commerce between us and God ; our

nature, as it were, grafted and planted into the person of Christ, that

our persons might have social commimion with God. Then justice

and mercy are brought together. The great inquiry of nature is, how

to have a satisfaction for justice, that mercy might have a free course ?

"What shall we do to recompense justice ? Creatures would sacrifice

themselves, and all they have : Micah vi. 6, 7, ' Wherewith shall I

come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God ? Shall I

come before his face with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old ?

Will the Lord be pleased with thousand of rams, or with ten thousand

of rivers of oil ? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the

fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ? ' But it is not our first-born,

but God's first-born. So also comfort and duty are sweetly united

together, the Lord having provided a merit against our defects, and a

spu'it against our weaknesses ; the Lord is at peace with us, and we

are enabled comfortably to serve God.

[3.] If we consider the profit of the creature.

(1.) This way serves to represent sin. You have nowhere such a

sight of sin as upon Mount Calvary, when you see the Son of God

stretched out upon the cross, and crying out, ' My God, my God, why

hast thou forsaken me ? ' When the punishment of our sins was laid

upon Christ, God showeth how displeasing sin was to him.

(2.) To wean us from vanity. We make great matters of trifles,

and are apt to idolise every petty and vain thing in the world ; there-

fore in Christ the Lord would show us the highest self-denial when he

VOL. XVII. Y

338 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

took the human nature on him, and endured the wrath of the Father.

The whole world wondered after the beast, and the disciples wondered

at the goodly stones of the temple, Mat. xxiv. 1 . Oh ! what will you

do at the Son of God, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily ?

This should beget a special veneration and reverence towards God.

(3.) To overcome us by love. Tbere is a great engagement laid

upon a sinner hereby. When the king of Moab was pressed hard by

Israel, ' he took his eldest son, that should have reigned in his stead,

and offered him for a burnt-sacrifice upon the wall,' 2 Kings iii. 27,

according to their superstition, who were wont in extreme dangers and

desperate cases to sacrifice their children, whereupon they raised the

siege, and went home. God hath taken his own Son, and sacrificed him,

that we might leave off fighting against heaven. God would overcome

sin by the highest act of goodness and kindness imaginable, hereby he

would shame and overcome the heart of a poor sinner.

(4.) That we might have a high and glorious pattern of obedience.

We are referred to angels, and to Christ himself, who would leave us

a more glorious example.

3. Magnify this great contrivance of your salvation by comparisons.

Compare it with creation, with other deliverances, and with the works

of nature.

[1.] Compare it with creation. The Lord discovered much of his

glory in making the world out of nothing, but he discovered more of

his glory when Jesus Christ was born of his own creature, a vine out oi

the berry or grape. This was his masterpiece and grand design, in

which he purposed to gain to himself most honour and glory. The

world was made with a word, but redeemed with a serious plot and

contrivance. The world was made for man and woman, but Christ

was made out of a woman. In the creation God made us like himself,

but here the Lord made himself like us. In the creation all things

were made out of nothing, here order came out of confusion. In the

creation man was made out of the earth, but here God was made man.

In the creation God went the high way to do us good, in redemption

he came the lower way ; Jesus Christ abased himself for our sakes.

[2.] Compare it with other deliverances. It was a great thing to be

delivered out of Egypt and Babylon, but it is far greater to be delivered,

out of hell, and from damnation and wrath to come. Bead the story

of the children of Israel's deliverances, Ps. cvii. They were delivered

from the oppression of Pharaoh, but we from Satan. God gave them

food, and satisfied the longing soul, and filled the hungry ; but Jesus

Christ incarnate is made bread and food to the soul. They had deli-

verance from diseases, but we from sin, the sickness and disease of the

soul, and from the vanity of our own spirits. Then he goes on to the

wonders in the deep, but we may see the depth of mercy swallowing

up the depth of sin, and the glorious love of God breaking out in such

a wonderful deliverance by Jesus Christ, that we may well cry out with

them, ver. 31, ' Oh ! that men would praise the Lord for his goodness,

and for his wonderful works to the children of men.'

[3.] Compare it with the miracles of nature. There are strange

things among the creatures, yet there may be some footsteps of reason

seen ; but it cannot enter into the heart of man to conceive of this

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 339

glorious salvation brought about by the Son of God. Therefore bless God

for the revelation, and complain of thyself for not thinking of these

things with serious admiration, scarce vouchsafing to look into these

things, but are more pleased with every bauble and vain contrivaace

than the great and serious plot of the gospel.

SEEMON X.

And Isaac loent out to meditate in the field at the even-tide. —

Gen. xxiv. 63.

Fourthly, The object which I shall now propose is providence, a large

field, and full of useful matter. It is a draught which God hath been

plotting from all eternity, and accomplishing these thousands of years.

Take it altogether, and it is a continued contexture or concatenation

of decrees, actions, and events, from the creation to the day of judg-

ment. It is our duty to understand it for the present, and it will be

our happiness to understand it perfectly hereafter : Ps. cvii. 43,

' Whoso is wise, and will observe those things, even they shall under-

stand the loving-kindness of the Lord.' It is an excellent piece of

wisdom to be able to link events together that we may see the wisdom

and love of God in the usual occurrences that happen out. We being

of short narrow thoughts, fail most herein. Power is such an attribute

as is visible and obvious to a common and careless eye ; the heathens

knew it : Kom. i. 20, ' For the invisible things of him from the crea-

tion of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that

are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.' But to find out the

beauty and wisdom of God's work, there needs the light of faith and

some acquaintance with God himself; therefore it is said. Job xi. 5, 6,

' that God would speak, &c., and show me the secrets of wisdom,

that they are double to that which is.' Power is obvious to sense and

reason, but wisdom is scarce discernible to faith. There is an outside

and an inside in aU divine dispensations ; the outside is full of beauty,

but that is but dark to the inside, to the secrets of wisdom. God's

works are full of mysteries as well as his word, and we cannot under-

stand them unless God himself be our teacher ; we are blind and see

not, and then we murmur. But the full knowledge of the mysteries

of providence is reserved for our portion in heaven, when we shall know

as we are known : 1 Cor. xiii. 12, ' Now we see through a glass darkly,

but then face to face ; now I know in part, but then I shall know even

as also I am known.' We shall view all the passages of providence by

which we have been brought to glory, and see the beautiful order and

links of them. Now ' we have known God, or rather are known of

God,' Gal. iv. 9. God knoweth what is the meaning of such a provi-

dence, what is in the womb of such a dispensation. Here there is a

handwriting upon the wall, but we, as Belshazzar, cannot read it.

As when we see a woman with child, we cannot tell what it will prove ;

but when we are on the top of the mount, we shall look back, and see

340 SICRMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. C3.

how many are the crooked lanes we have passed, the uphill and down-

hill we have trod, and God knew us all along, and did not only lead

us in, but lead us out ; then we shall know the multitude of his

thoughts, and what the great number of them is. I confess by narrow

observation we may discern a little for the present ; as David : Ps.

cxxxix. 17, ' How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, God !

how great is the sum of them ! ' When he looked back, how God had

carried him through many difficulties, and brought him to rule his

people, and watched over him with a careful eye of providence, and

ordered every event for his comfort. Some general view and knowledge

we may have for the present.

Now, to direct your meditations upon the providence of God — (1.)

I will show what it is ; (2.) That it is ; (3.) I will give you some

observations ; (4.) I will press you to treat with your own hearts about

the use and comfort of it.

I. To open the nature of it, what it is. Consider — (1.) The grounds

of providence ; (2.) The acts of providence.

1. The grounds of providence ; it is founded in God's nature and

attributes, three especially — omniscience, wisdom, and power.

[1.] God's omniscience, or knowledge of all affairs in the world.

God, like the sun, is all light and all eye : Prov. xv. 3, ' The eyes of

the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good ;' in the

congregation, in the closet, in the shop, the eyes of the Lord are every-

where, and do not only behold the evil and the good person, but the

evil and the good action. But chiefly God's eyes are upon his children ;

they fall under his special care : 2 Chron. xvi. 9, ' The eyes of the

Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong

in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him.' God minds

their whole condition, takes notice of their wants and dangers and

troubles, and will show himself strong in their supply and deliverance.

He doth not only know their persons, but their way : Ps. i. 6, ' The

Lord knoweth the way of the righteous.' God takes notice of every

particular step he takes and every case he is in ; by one intuition all

things are present to God. Therefore when Christ would comfort his

disciples, and fence them against worldly care, he saith. Mat. vi. 32,

' Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things.'

God takes an exact and particular account of all your wants and

necessities. So the psalmist : Ps. Ivi. 8, ' Thou tellest my wanderings ;

put thou my tears into thy bottle ; are they not in thy book ? ' There

is not a tear you shed but it is treasured up in God's bottle ; not a weary

step you take for his name's sake but it is recorded in God's book. He

speaks of those weary steps he took through the two forests of Ziph

and Hateph. But if this be not full enough to commend the particu-

larity of God's care, he goes higher : Isa. xlix. 16, \* Behold, I have

graven thee on the palms of my hands ; thy walls are continually be-

fore me.' When we are apt to forget, we fix a memorial on our hands ;

and if we forget a thing recorded in our book, we shall not forget what

is imprinted on our hands.

[2.] God's wisdom. He knoweth their wants and ordereth their

deliverance. There is something of counsel in all that the Lord doeth :

Eph. i, 11, ' Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will/

SEPwHONS UPON GENESIS :^X1V. 03. 3il

Therefore his will is called his counsel : Acts iv. 28, ' For to do what-

soever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done/ There

is not only a mighty hand seen in all the dispensations of God, but a

wise counsel. So these two attributes are coupled : Job ix. 21, • He

is wise in heart and mighty in strength.' We are rash and precipitate,

carried on with more resolution than reason ; our desires beget an heat

that oversetteth us ; but whatever God doth it is with exact judgment.

If we have eyes to see it, we should see that all the circumstances of

providence are disposed with much art.

[3.] God's power to execute and administer that which his wisdom

hath devised. God's counsels and purposes are always followed with a

shall be, or shall not be , he hath infinite power to accomplish them.

His power is as it were the midwife to his blessed decrees ; he con-

ceiveth all things in the womb of his will, and then he educeth and

bringeth them forth by his mighty power : Ps. xxxiii. 9, ' He spake

and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast.' 'Let it be' was

sufficient to make the world, and ' I will ' is enough to preserve it. God

pleadeth this as the privilege of the Godhead : Isa. xliv. 7, ' Who, as

I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me ? ' that is,

that can by calling ordain or create. Therefore Christ, when he would

discover the power of his godhead, cured by a word of omnipotency :

Mat. viii. 3, ' I will ; be thou clean.' Now this power of God is dis-

covered in providence three ways — by his ability and sufficiency to work

without means, by unlikely means, or by contrary means.

(1.) By working without means. God is not bound to the road of

nature, or tied to the course of second causes ; he can create where he

doth not find ; therefore when God is represented as an object of trust

to his people this expression is used : 1 Peter iv. 19, ' Wherefore let

them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of

their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator ; ' as one

that is able to create where nothing is found. So God promiseth, Hosea

i. 7, ' I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and will save them by

the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor

by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.' These were the only means

they could pitch upon to re-establish themselves, but, saith the Lord,

I have a purpose to save them, but it shall not be by these. God would

do it by an invisible sway and turn of things, that they should enjoy

the mercy but not see the means. So Isa. xlviii. 7, ' They are created

now, and not from the beginning ; even before the day when thou

heardest them not, lest thou shouldst say. Behold, I know them.'

Sometimes God by an immediate sovereignty will help us : Mat. iv. 4,

' Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth

out of the mouth of God.' Sometimes God will not reach out a supply

by the ordinary means, but by the powerful word of his providence or

commanded blessing.

(2.) By working with unlikely means. There is nothing so evil or

FO inconsiderable but God can work by it. In the story of Joseph

(which is one of the fairest draughts of providence), a lie cast him into

prison, and a dream fetched him out ; so evil a thing as a lie, and so

inconsiderable a thing as a dream. So the Lord makes use of the

neglect and errors of men. Possidonius hath two remarkable stories

342 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

in the life of Austin ; one was that in travel he lost his way and

found his life, for he escaped an amhush of the Donatists. At another

time, being to preach, he forgot both his text and matter, and fell upon

that which through the blessing of God converted Firmius. Omni-

potency needeth no outward advantage. So in public deliverances.

God's instruments are usually despicable, A straw is as good as a

spear in the hands of omnipotence. Most of the judges that rescued

Israel were taken from the plough and sheepfold. So for judgments ;

God by weak means punishes sinners. Egypt was plagued with flies

and lice ; they were strong to execute God's word.

(3.) By working with contrary means. Christ used clay and spittle,

that one would think should put out the eyes, to restore sight to the

blind man. Joseph was first made a slave and then a favourite ; his

brethren first sell him and then worship him ; he is cast into the

dungeon to be preferred to court. There are strange contrivances and

contrarieties in providence ; the way seemeth contrary to the aim,

and the means disproportionable to the end. When we see great con-

fusions in the world, we wonder how this should tend to God's glory

and the church's good, and are apt to say, as Joshua, chap. vii. 9,

' What wilt thou do unto thy great name ? ' and as the prophet, Amos.

vii. 2, ' By whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small ? ' We wonder

how God means to save when Babylon destroyeth, and how confusion

and mischief can end in order and beauty. But God knows the suffi-

ciency of his own power, and is able to bring about these things, to

bring light out of darkness, and one contrary out of another.

2. The acts of providence ; they are three — conservation, guberna-

tion, and ordination.

[1.] Conservation, conserving and keeping all creatures in their

being. Therefore the apostle saith, Heb. i. 3, ' He upholdeth all things

by the word of his power ; ' Isa. xxii. 23, 24, ' I will fasten him as a

nail in a sure place, and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's

liouse, and they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house.'

If God should take away the shoulder of his providence, all things

would return to their first nothing, and vanish and disappear ; as a

seal upon the waters, the impression is defaced as soon as the seal is

gone. Providence is a continual creation ; everything that is kept in

working and being is, as it were, newly born, newly brought forth,

newly produced. Nay, Chrysostom saith it is /juei^ov re, something

greater than creation. As it is more to support a burden long in the air

than to raise it up from the earth, so it is more to keep all things from

returning to nothing than to educe and bring them out of nothing.

That is the reason why the Holy Ghost speaks in the present tense :

Ps. civ. 2, ' Who stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain ; ' and Isa.

xl. 22, ' It is he that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and

spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.' It is not in the future tense,

because God is always a stretching them out. So our Saviour : John

V. 17, \* My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' Though there be a

cessation of work in regard of new kinds, yet there is a continuation

of work in regard of their preservation and God's providential influence.

The power which raised from nothing must still preserve from nothing :

Kom. xi. 36, ' For of him, and through him, and to him, are all

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV C3. 343

things.' 'This Solomon intends when he saith, Prov. xx. 12, ' The

hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them.'

He doth not mean spiritually, but naturally ; he doth not only give

the faculty, but the exercise ; as he gives the eye, so the seeing, and

as he gives the ear, so the hearing : this could not be done without

new acts of providence, assistance, and supportation from God. There-

fore we read Hagar did not see the well of water till the Lord opened

her eyes: Gen. xxi. 19, 'And God opened her eyes, and she saw a

well of water.' So the disciples: Luke xxiv. 31, \* And their eyes were

opened, and they saw him.' When the Lord suspended his influence,

the fire could not burn the three children. God did not destroy the

property of the fire, but only suspended the eflacacy of it. No creature

can put forth itself in a way of operation without a new providential

assistance from God.

[2.] Gubernatipn, or governing all things according to his will and

pleasure. All things keep their course, for God sitteth at the helm

«nd steereth all : I)an. iv. 35, ' He doth according to his will in the

army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ; and none

can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou ? ' God doth all

according to his pleasure ; he is not confined by any external law, nor

straitened by the course of nature, but acts with a great deal of sove-

reignty and freedom, and sometimes inverts the order of second causes.

God's will is sometimes called 6r]\fxa, sometimes evhoKla ; his pleasure

is all. There are indeed some standing ordinances of nature, as the

ordinances of sun and moon and the covenant of day and night : Jer.

xxxi. 35, ' Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by

day, and the ordinances of moon and stars for a light by night ; ' and

Gen. viii. 22, ' While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and

cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not

oease.' God can alter the course of these, as in Joshua's time and at

Christ's death ; there were three days' darkness in Egypt : Mat. v. 45,

\* He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth

rain on the just and on the unjust.' There is nothing so casual but it

is governed by God, and falls under the ordination of his wise counsel.

It is said, 1 Kings xxii. 34, ' And a certain man drew a bow at a ven-

ture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness.'

It was a mere chance as to him, but God directed it into the sides of

the king. So Exod. xxi. 13, ' If a man lie not in wait, but God deliver

him into his hand ; ' compared with Deut. xix. 5, ' As when a man

goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand

fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head

slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour that he die.'

God slew him. There is nothing so casual but it is directed by the

wise ordination of God : Prov. xvi. 33, ' The lot is cast into the lap,

but the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord.' There seems to be

■nothing so trivial and casual as the casting the lot into the lap, yet it

is overruled by him ; he doth not only permit, bnt govern. God

governs all his creatures ; in such a throng of stars there is no interfer-

ing. We wonder at strange events when the great sway is discovered.

The sea is higher than the earth, yet it doth not transgress its bounds

and limits. We live and breathe as the Israelites did in the midst of

the Red Sea ; this is a daily miracle.

344 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63,

[3.] Ordination. All tilings are overruled by God's great sway;

it is not as tlie creature will, but as God will ; and many times the

creatures are serviceable to tbe designs of God contrary to their inten-

tions : Isa. X. 6, 7, ' I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and

against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the

spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of

the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think

so, but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few/ The

king of Assyria was moved with a principle of ambition, rage, and

cruelty, but the Lord sent him on his work. So Augustus his covet-

ousness in taxing the whole world God orders it for the occasioning

Christ's birth at Bethlehem, Luke ii. The actings of the creature are

disposed and carried on besides the purpose of the creature to another

end. He discovers his wisdom by man's folly, and his righteousness

by man's sin. Look, as in a ship some sleep, and some walk contrary

to the ship's motion, so in the world some men are negligent, others

keep bustling and stirring and seek to resist the designs of God, but

the ship goes on : Acts iv. 28, ' For to do whatsoever thy hand and

thy counsel determined before to be done.' The devil thought to ruin

all mankind by seducing of Adam, yet that made way for Christ,

Herein is the great beauty and order of providence seen, that God can

make hindrances to be helps, and while men seek to cross his will most,

they do but accomplish and fulfil it.

II. That there is such a thing as providence. Heathens granted it,^

though they had but a dim sight of it ; and therefore Tully saith, Dii

magna curant, parva negligunt — The gods take care of great things,

but neglect little things. We count them atheists that deny a provi-

dence, as well as they that denied a God.

That there is a providence may be proved from the being of God :

there is a God, therefore there is a providence. His wisdom and his

goodness enforceth it ; he is so wisely good : Ps. cxix. 68, ' Thou art

good, and thou doest good.' The divine wisdom ordereth all things

for an end, and the divine power governs all things in order to that

end. "VVe read it in the order of the world and the sense of our own

conscience; if there were no providence, the devils would soon overturn

all things, honesty would be folly, a title without substance, labour

without reward : 1 Cor. xv. 19, ' If in this life only we have hope in

Christ, we are of all men most miserable.' The godly would have no

relief ; they would not call God to witness, nor acquaint him with

their sorrows, which is their great solace : Job xvi. 20, ' My friends

scorn me, but mine eye poureth out tears unto God.' God's works

discover it. Who feedeth the beasts ? Job xii. 7-9, ' But ask now the

beasts, and they shall teach thee ; and the fowls of the air, and they

shall tell thee : or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee ; and the

fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all

these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this ? ' His judgments

show it : Ps. Iviii. 10, 11, ' The righteous shall rejoice when he .seeth

the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked :

so that a man shall say. Verily there is a reward for the righteous,

verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth,' Some men's sins are

open beforehand, and God keeps a petty sessions before the general

assize cometh.

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63. 345

The sreat objection that is against providence is because all things

come alike to all ; but that which seemeth the blemish of providence

is the beauty of it. The prosperity of wicked men complieth with

God"s ends; that there is such a checker- work of providence is for

the exercise of the godly, as the stones that are for a temple are hewed

and squared ; and hereby wicked men are left without excuse ; they

have prudence, but not grace ; and they cannot complain, having

common mercies.

III. I will give you some observations.

1. Providence reacheth to the least and most inconsiderable things,

as the flight of a sparrow, the falling of a hair : Mat. x. 29, 30, ' Are not

two sparrows sold for a farthing ? and one of them shall not fall on the

ground without your Father ; but the very hairs of your head are all

numbered,' God takes particular accotmt of every concernment and

circumstance of your lives : Ps. cxlvii. 4, ' He telleth the number of the

stars.' It is much that God should be at leisure to tell the stars ;

much more that he should take particular notice of the hairs of your

head.

2. Though providence extends to all things, yet it is chiefly exercised

about the most noble creatures, men and angels. The psalmist saith,

Ps. xxxvi. 6, ' Lord, thou preservest man and beast ; ' but chiefly man.

For mark it, these are not only governed by God, but by themselves.

Other things, that are void of understanding, are only guided by an

external principle without the knowledge of an end, as arrows shot

out of a bow ; but rational creatures have a principle of their own,

viz., prudence, which is a shadow of divine providence. In these

providence is most discovered. Man's will is rebellious ; it is harder

to rule a skittish horse than it is to roll a stone. God challengeth

this as his own prerogative : Jer. x. 23, ' Lord, I know that the w^ay

of man is not in himself ; it is not in man that walketh to direct his

steps.' He can bridle, rule and restrain the hearts of men, and turn

them as he pleaseth : Prov. xxi. 1, ' The king's heart is in the hand

of the Lord ; as the rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he

will.' The hearts of kings, those that seem to be most led by will

and passion, God can turn them, and rule them at his pleasure.

3. Though the providence of God chiefly concerns man, yet the

chiefest care of providence is about the good of the elect : Mat. vi. 26,

' Behold tlie fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap,

nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them : are ye

not much better than they? ' 1 Tim. iv. 10, 'We trust in the living

God, who is the saviour of all men, especially of those that believe.'

He is a saviour in this sense in regard of providential administration,

but all dispensations towards his people are more exact, and have

more of care ; God particularly looks after them : Amos ix. 9, ' For

lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all

nations like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain

fall upon the earth.' Mark, above all nations God would have a care

of Israel ; whatever becomes of the cbaff", God watcheth over the corn.

The elect are the darlings of providence ; the world is continued for

their sakes, that all the elect may be gathered in : Isa. xliii. 3, 4, \* I

gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. . Since thou

346 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

■wast precious in my sight, tliou hast been honourable, and I have

loved thee ; therefore I will give men for thee, and people for thy life.'

All the rest of the world are but as dust and refuse, which God will

give up to his justice. If justice must have an object whereon to

exercise itself, I will give up Seba and Ethiopia and Egypt to justice ;

a thousand of them shall perish rather than my people. So ver. 14,

' For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all

iheir nobles.' God will stain the glory of all the world for the elect's

sake. If God throw them into the furnace, he sitteth by the furnace,

prying and looking after his metal : Mai. iii. 3, ' And he shall sit as

a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi,

and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord

an offering of righteousness.' The fire shall not be too hot, that nothing

be lost.

4. Providence must not be considered by pieces, but all together.

You must consider the way of God with the aim of God, and the means

with the end. You must not measure things by present feeling : Eom.

viii. 28, 'All things shall work together for good to those that love God,

to those that are the called according to his purpose.' A single part of

providence taken out of the frame is odd and unseemly. Providence is a

draught of many pieces ; there is the manifold wisdom of God in it.

All the links of the chain of providence are not of one size. If you

would think aright of providence, you must take in your own case and

God's aim. (L) Consider your own case ; not what is absolutely good,

but what is respectively good for you. Gold absolutely is better than a

draught of water, but not to Sampson, who was ready to die for thirst.

Cutting a vein is in itself ill, but good in a fever ; so such or such a

providence, though not good in itself, may be better for you. (2.) You

must take in God's aim with your own case ; the single links of provi-

dence are not all of a sort ; like Nebuchadnezzar's image, partly gold,

partly iron, partly brass, and partly clay. To an observant eye there

is a wonderful beauty in the providences of God. There is no beauty

in the parts of a building till they be set together ; no more is there

in the several pieces of providence till you consider them together and

compare one with the other. The first dashes of a picture are uncomely,

therefore do not look on God's work by halves, but all together.

5. God doth manage and govern all things without labour and diffi-

culty. It is much for us to spread a small net ; the care of a family

and the care of a congregation is too great for our shoulders, but the

Lord governs all the world without difficulty and pain ; he is not bur-

dened with the multitude of cares ; it costs him no more to govern

angels than to govern ants, to govern palaces than cottages. Look, as the

sun doth as easily shine upon a thousand places at one time as upon one

field, so the Lord doth as easily manage the affairs of the whole

world as of any one place in the world ; his care is without trouble, his

work is without pains. Lucian scoffs at God's running here and there.

No ; all things are represented to him in one view.

6. God's providence is conversant about sin, yet without sin. God

doth avvepyelv, work with us, but he doth not o-vvaixapTavetv, come

into the fellowship of our sin or guilt. As the sunbeams may shine

upon a dunghill, and in a filthy place the warm sun draweth forth

SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. Co. 347

stinking vapours, but tlie sun is not stained hereby. The apostle saith.

Acts xvii 28, ' For in him we live and move.' We are moved by him ;

but as the lameness of the horse is no blemish to the rider, so neither

is the defect of the creature to be imputed to the providence that doth

support it.

7. Providence doth not take away either the industry or the liberty

of the creature : Acts xxvii. 22, compared with ver. 31 ; it is said, ver. 22,

' There shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship ; '

and j-et, ver. 31, ' Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved.'

"We must plough though the clouds drop fatness ; still there is a place

for human industry, and human counsel and deliberation : Ezek.

xxi. 21, 'For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at

the head of the two ways to use divination,' &c. There were two ways ;

one way led to his country, the other way led directly to Jerusalem.

God had determined which way he should go, yet freely out of his own

spirit he is moved to take the way he went ; still there was place for

human counsel and human deliberation.

8. Observe the providences of God to yourselves, in the womb and

from the womb : Ps. cxsxis. 12, ' How precious also are thy thoughts

unto me, God ! how great is the sum of them ! ' Gen. xxxii. 10,

' With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two

bands.' Broad rivers come from a small fountain : Job viii. 7, ' Though

thy beginnings were small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.'

9. The great aim of providence is God's glory and the salvation of

the elect. God's glory : Eom. xi. 36, 'For of him, and through him,

and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever, Amen ; ' Ps. cxix.

91, ' They continue this day according to thine ordinance, for all are

thy servants.' The salvation of the elect : Eom. viii. 28, ' All things

shall work together for good to them that love God, to them that are

called according to his purpose.' The world would soon shatter to

pieces, but that God had some elect to gather out of it.

lY. When you have meditated, and taken some view of providence,

treat with your own hearts about the use and comfort of it ; either

about the providences of God in general, or to yourselves in particular.

1. About the providences of God in general. Consider of the care

which God hath over all creatures. Urge the providences of God

against your fears. Is it fear of man's policy ? Oh ! consider divine

providence is above human prudence : Job v. 13, ' He taketh the wise

in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried head-

long.' Suppose they be able to contrive mischief, yet God can hinder

the execution of it, that they cannot find their hands for their enter-

prise. Or do you fear the cunning of Satan ? Consider providence is

chiefly exercised for this end, to defeat the power of Satan. There is a

providence over the swine, much more over the flock of Christ ; and as

TertuUian saith, He that has told the bristles of swine hath much more

numbered the hau's of the saints. Urge your hearts with the provi-

dence of God to encourage your trust in God for outward provision.

When you are humbled with straits, and pinched for maintenance of

your families, consider there is a providence. The world is God's great

common, and he doth not overstock his own common. All things wait

upon God ; how do the beasts live but upon providence ? Ps. civ. 27,

348 SERMONS UPON GENESIS XXIV. 63.

' These all wait upon thee, that thou inayest give them their meat in

due season.' Who is it that feeds the ravens ? Ps. cxlvii. 9, ' He

giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry ; ' and

Ps. cxlv. 16, ' Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every

living thing.' Compare it witli ver. 19, ' He shall fulfil the desire of

them that fear him ; he also will hear their cry, and will save them.'

Urge your hearts herewith to patience under miseries. Not a sparrow

falls to the ground without a providence, therefore certainly your crosses

fall under the wise dispensation of God : Ps. xxxix. 6, ' Surely every

man walketh in a vain show ; surely they are disquieted in vain.' Again,

urge your hearts to thankfulness for mercies; look upon the first

cause, and acknowledge the providence of God in all that you enjoy.

2. Consider the providences of God to yourselves in particular, for

thou art a little world. Consider how the providence of God watched

over thee in the womb ; when he took thee out from thence, how he

provided two bottles to sustain thee ; how he hath borne thee up from

the womb hitherto ; especially how he took care of thee when thou hast

been in distress. Oh ! it is sweet when we can say, as David, Ps. xxxiv.

6, ' This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out

of all his troubles.' I have been in these and these distresses, yet the

Lord hath heard and delivered me. Especially if he hath blessed thee

from small beginnings, and increased thy substance, urge thy heart to

trust in him for the future : 1 Peter v. 7, ' Casting all thy care upon

him, for he careth for thee.'

Fifthly, The next object of meditation is the excellency and happi-

ness of our estate in heaven. (See this subject treated on in a sermon

on Titus ii. 13, ' Looking for that blessed hope.')

SERMONS

ON

SEYEEAL TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE.

PART II.

THE EPISTLE DEDICATOET.

To THE Lady Bawdon.

Madam, — It needs no apology that I have prefixed your ladyship's

name to this part of the late Keverend Dr Thomas Manton's works,

since the memory of the author is so precious with you, by whom you

and your children were baptized into the christian faith, under whose

ministry you were brought up in the knowledge of the mysteries of the

gospel, and whose works published both before and since his death,

have been so highly valued by you. But your ladyship has a more

especial title to these sermons, because a great part of them being

committed to my care to publish, the preparing them for the press was

performed in a great measure under your ladyship's roof, when the

providence of God called me there in my attendance on your honoured

mother, the Lady "Wharton, in the last scene of her life.

The duty I owe to the memory of that great person obliges me to

testify to the world what I, as well as others who had the honour of

knowing her, observed in her. She was one whom God had endowed

with more than common gifts and graces ; one of a piercing judgment,

quick apprehension, great presence of mind, useful in all her relations.

But that which adorned all was her eminent godliness, which was

visible in the whole course of her conversation. She had a great

understanding of the mysteries of the gospel ; and though she abounded

in good works, yet she knew how to account all things loss and dung

for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus her Lord. She was

often in the admiration of the riches and freeness of God's grace in

Jesus Christ ; and all her hopes, trust, and confidence were in his merits

and righteousness. She had a very high valuation and esteem of the

ordinances of God ; and when her long sickness had for some time

hindered her from a public attendance on the worship of God, she would

often complain of it, that she was as a leper shut out from the sanctuary

of God. She was of a noble, generous, and charitable frame of spirit ;

and her charity was dispensed with great prudence. I cannot but mention

one branch of it, viz., the relieving of sick persons, especially providiag

and giving medicines to the poor who had no money to buy them ; and

God did wonderfully own her with great success herein.

In her latter days God was pleased to exercise her with gi'eat trials,

her sickness was loDg and tedious, her pains great and sharp ; but under

all, her steady adherence to God showed the strength of her faith and

the truth of her patience. I have often heard her say — this one thing

352 THE EriSTLE DEDICATORY.

silenced all complaints — It is God wlio liatli done it. All the breaches

God made upon her made no breach between God and her soul. In

her languishing hours, when her strength failed her, she expressed the

inward tranquillity and repose of her mind ; it being almost tlie last

words she said, 'All is well, all is well.'

Thus she lived and thus she died, and is now joined to that great

assembly of glorified saints who are always praising, blessing and

adoring God, where she is always beholding the face of her God in

glory, and fully understands the meaning of all the dark providences of

God towards her in the latter part of her life.

I mention not these things to renew your ladyship's grief for so great

a loss, and to make your w^ounds bleed afresh, but to provoke you to a

holy imitation of so great a pattern, and to be a follower of her, as she

was of Christ. Good examples have a powerful influence upon us, for

we are led more by pattern than by precept, especially the examples of

those we love, for such we are prone to imitate ; but more especially

of those who are in nearest relation to us, for there nature sides with

grace. And what an advantage your ladyship has had in having such a

precedent before your eyes appears by the fair transcript you have been

of so fair a copy.

Madam, God hath been pleased to exercise 3'our ladyship also with

great trials, but you have had your comforts and supports. God hath

taken away some of your nearest relations, but he hath continued others

to you. What a blessing hath God bestowed upon you in those

excellent daughters that have sprung from you ! But, alas ! we are too

apt to pore on our losses and overlook our enjoyments, to make our

afflictions the grave of our mercies. God hath given your ladyship a

better frame of spirit, and taught you how to see his love in the losses

you have sustained and the blessings j^ou enjoy. But were it worse

with you as to outward comforts, yet ' the foundation of God standeth

sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his.' And

certainly there is more in God, and a covenant relation to him, to

support your joy, than there can be in any outward affliction to cause

grief and sorrow of heart ; and a due sense of God's afflicting hand is

not inconsistent with a holy rejoicing in him. Now that God would

fill you more and more with the joys and comforts of his Holy Spirit,

and multiply his blessings upon yourself, and those that have descended

from you, is the prayer of, honoured madam, your ladyship's most

obliged, and most humble servant,

William Taylor.

February 9, 169|.

SEEMOJfS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31,

SEEMON I.

And Tie said, Nay, father Ahraham : hut if one loent iinto them from

the dead, they lo'dl repent. And he said, unto hira. If they hear not

Moses and the prophets, neither loill they he pei'suaded thoiighone

rose from the dead. — Luke xvi. 30, 31.

It hath been a question whether this is a parable or a history. A

parable, surely, for otherwise many incongruities would be asserted ;

for it supposeth body and soul already in hell : ver. 23, ' And in hell he

lift up his eyes, being in torment.' And it would suppose charity, and

care of conversion of others in hell, therefore it is not a history. The

scope of this parable is to teach us three lessons —

1. To show that the godly poor are blessed, and the unmerciful rich

are in everlasting torments. Desideravit guttam, quinon dedit micam —

He desired a drop of water that would not give a bit of bread.

2. The irreversible estate of the damned : ver. 26, ' Between us and

you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence

to you cannot ; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.'

3. That tlie direction oi the holy scriptures is the only means to

escape these lurments.

This latter is represented in a dialogue between Dives and Abraham.

Dives would have one sent from the dead to his father's house, suppos-

ing that would work on them to repent. Christ's parables do imper-

sonate our thoughts ; we always dislike the present dispensation which

God useth to reclaim us, and would have extraordinary means, and then

we presume we should believe and repent ; these are our thoughts. But

Abraham thinketh otherwise, or rather Christ, who is the author of the

parable : ' If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they

be persuaded though one rose from the dead.'

By ' Moses and the prophets ' are meant the whole scriptures of the

Old Testament and the New. These are mentioned because these only

were then written and received by the Jews ; and these include the

rest, the same truth being carried on in all the books, though more

explicit in the latter.

Doct. That the word of God is a more conducible means to persuade

us to repentance than if one should come from the dead.

There are two ways of proof of this doctrine, and therefore let us

see what may be said for and against one coming from the dead.

VOL. XVII. Z

354 SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31.

First, If one coming from the dead be presumed to be a more effec-

" tual means to bring men to repentance and conversion to God, it must

be either because he can bring a more necessary doctrine, or could urge

better arguments, and more persuasively, or propound these truths with

more certainty, or could by his own strength convey a power with his

words, or rationally expect a greater concomitancy and co-operation of

grace than is ordinarily dispensed by the word. One or other of these

things it must be, or else the conceit is vain and frivolous. But now,

proceeding from one consideration to another, I shall show you that the

word of God hath clearly the pre-eminence, and is a far more accom-

modate instrument to work upon the hearts of men than any extra-

ordinary dispensation whatsoever.

1. One coming from the dead, angel or man, cannot bring a doctrine

more necessary, there being in the scriptures sufficient direction about

the way to true happiness, for which we have not only express testi-

mony, but apparent reason and sensible experience.

[1.] Express testimony, which should sway with christians : 2 Tim.

iii. 16, 17, ' All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable

for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ;

that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good

works.' A man of God, or minister of the gos])el, thoroughly furnished,

hath from the scriptures full out enough to guide man to the enjoyment

of God ; nothing is wanting for information as to doctrine, convic-

tion, arguments of quickening or exhortation, for instruction or direc-

tions concerning the whole duty of man. And —

[2.] Apparent reason. If God be a sufficient teacher of divine things,

and if we suppose him willing to inform the creatures (neither of which

can be denied without blasphemy), then surely, supposing the scriptures

to be the word of God, as all christians do, and in this debate it is fit we

should suppose, then certainly we have enough in the scriptures, and

need not that the rest of the dead should be discomposed that there may

be a fit messenger found out to invite us to return to God. If it need

proof, who can teach us the way to blessedness more than the blessed

God ? Ps. cxix. 12, ' Blessed art thou, Lord ; teach me thy statutes.'

Who more willing to show man what is good than the good God ? Ps.

cxix. 6, 8, ' Thou art good, and doest good ; teach me thy statutes.' The

blessed God needeth not to envy us the perfection of knowledge, as the

devil insinuated : Gen. iii. 5, ' God doth know that in the day ye eat

thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, know-

ing good and evil.' Wherein is his happiness lessened by our perfection ?

And the good God, who is so full of goodness and love to mankind,

would give us a suflScient direction, especially since his Son appeared

in human nature, and became his messenger. Would God reveal him-

self to any one from the dead, yea, to an angel, more than to his own

Son ? Or could he see, feel, or hear more than God hath made known

to Christ ? or be presumed to have a greater charity to mankind than

the Lord hath, whose creatures they are ? No, no ; it cannot be : \* He

hath showed thee, man, what is good,' IMicah vi. 8. Abide by that,

and thou hast enough.

But let us confirm it. Compare the provisions of the word with

your own necessities. What ! would you have a rule ? Then see if

SEEMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31. 355

you have it not in the holy scriptures : Titus ii. 11, 12, ' For the grace

of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us

that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly,

righteously, and godly in this present world/ By ' the grace of God '

is meant the gospel ; and what doth the gospel teach us ? To ' live

soberly, righteously, and godly ;' to enjoy God, to live with man, and

the government of ourselves. We have enough if we have all this.

But we have all this in as ample manner as heart can wish for, and

therefore he that cometh from the dead must either preach the same

doctrine, and then it is needless and supeirfluous, or contrary things,

and then how shall we believe him, who are forewarned ? Gal. i. 8,

' But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto

you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.\*

Christ enters a caution against them.

2. Better arguments cannot be urged, nor more persuasively. The

gospel is ' the wisdom of God/ 1 Cor. i. 24; and surely God knoweth

all the wards of the lock, and what kind of keys will fit the heart of

man. He hath laid forth the riches of wisdom and grace upon this

blessed design, and hence it is that we have such mysterious doctrines,

such dreadful threatenings, such sweet promises, such .strong obligations

from the death and incarnation of the Son of God, from the example

of Christ, which doth secure our direction and encourage our practice.

Out of what rock was man hewn if all this will not work upon him ?

What must God do ? provide a better heaven, a hotter hell, another

Son to die for us ? or a more forcible and encouraging example than

that of Jesus Christ ? What is the matter that the wicked sinner will

not be allured and made tame, charm the charmer never so wisely ?

What do we need more to move us ? Shall God pipe to you in a

sweeter strain than that of gospel grace or gospel promises ? Is the

giving himself and his Christ a price too cheap to purchase your

hearts ? or must he thunder to you in a more dreadful accent than

the horrors of everlasting darkness ? Are these but poor and mean

scarecrows to tell you of a pit without a bottom, of a worm that never

dieth, of a fire that shall never be quenched ? Or what is the

matter that the sinner stirreth not ? Is the scripture a dead letter ?

and needeth it to be actuated and enforced by a living voice ? God

hath provided us apostles and prophets to write scriptures, so pastors

and teachers to explain and apply scriptures : Eph. iv. ].l, ' He gave

some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pas-

tors and teachers ; ' men who are concerned as well as ourselves, the

value of whose credit we know by their faithfulness in other things,

that have the same temptations, affections, and necessities as we have ;

men with whom we may more familiarly converse, and with less fright,

than with one from the dead. Oh ! but one that cometh from the

dead is supposed to testify his own sight and knowledge, and so to

speak more feelingly. And have not God's messengers some exper-

ience ? Cannot they say, We declare to you the things which we have

seen and heard and felt ? Have they not been scorched by the spirit

of conviction, tasted comfort, felt a change in their own hearts ?

What can any messenger from the dead say that hath not been told

you over again and again a thousand times ? Would he say that all

356 SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31.

shall die ? — that you see with your eyes. That presently after death

Cometh judgment ? — that you pretend to believe already. That the

torments of hell are terrible and insupportable ? — this Grod hath told

you over and over ; and \* if we receive the witness of men, the witness

of God is greater,' 1 John v. 9. That you must repent and be con-

verted ? — this is that that is sounded in your ears every day. Therefore

we are better provided already than to need the horror of an apparition

or a warning from one among the dead.

3. It is not because he could propound these truths with more cer-

tainty, for these things are already propounded to our understandings,

and we have sensible confirmation.

[1.] They are propounded to our understandings with a fair and full

credibility. The holy scriptures have in themselves a self-evidencing

light, by which they make it out to the consciences of men that they

are of God. Everything that hath passed the hand of God discovereth

its author ; all God's works have his signature and impression upon

them, which is legible and visible to every attentive beholder : Rom. i.

20, ' For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are

clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his

eternal power and godhead ; so that they are without excuse ; ' Ps.

xix. 1, \* The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament

showeth his handiwork.' Not a pile of grass but showeth its maker —

Frcescntem refert qucelihet lierha Deum ; and surely his word, which he

' hath magnified above all his name,' Ps. cxxxviii, 2, is not altogether

without such an impress and stamp of God upon it, therein being

revealed things most worthy of the truth, wisdom, goodness, and holi-

ness of God, and suitable to that wisdom and truth that is in us, so far as

there is any in us. What shall I speak of the most satisfactory way of

reconciliation with God, the fairest draught of moral perfection, far

beyond all that which is of mere human recommendation ? Here is no

dead fly in this box of ointment, but all pure and holy, without mix-

ture ; nothing so accommodate to the necessities of man, and fit to bring

us to the enjoyment of that which the reasonable nature aimeth at.

What shall I speak of the majesty of the style, the genuine simplicity of

the narrations, the harmony of the parts, the sublimity of the doctrines,

the impartiality and purity of the precepts, the overflow of God's love

in the promises, the glorious rewards, the certainty of the prophecies ? —

all which are so many innate characters and evidences of the divine

authority of these writings, by which they clearly insinuate themselves

with wonderful force and power into the consciences of men : 2 Cor.

iv. 2, ' But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walk-

ing in craftiness, not handling the word of God deceitfully ; but by

manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's

conscience in the sight of God,' There was an evidence in the truth

itself preached by the apostles, so there is in the word written by the

apostle, for the voice could add nothing to it, and the writing take

nothing from it. A man of art and judgment discovereth himself in

every book he writeth. Aristotle's writings show him a person of great

knowledge. Can a book have God for its author, and have nothing to

discover its author ? It is unreasonable. Masters in writing or paint-

ing show their hand ; the scripture doth not stand or fall to the

SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31. 357

courtesies of man. Well, then, if these things be so (as certainly

they are so), we have more certainty by the word itself than possibly

we can have by a messenger from the dead, yea, or a voice from

heaven, for it hath such a signature of God upon it that we need go no

further : 2 Peter i. 18, 19, ' And this voice which came from heaven

we heard when we were with him in the holy mount, who have also

^e^aiorepov \6yov, a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do

well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place,

until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.' What

greater confirmation could the apostles expect than that voice from

heaven, ' This is my beloved Son, in Avhom I am well pleased ? ' Mat.

xvii. 5. Yet Peter who heard that voice telleth us that comparatively

we have greater security from and by the written word ; not in itself,

but as it is given in evidence to us, so that there is no compare between

it and one from the dead.

[2.] We have sensible confirmations. We are wrought upon by

sense. Now is not ordinarily the word as sensibly confirmed to us as

it would be by a vision or apparition from the dead ?

(1.) There is the holiness of professors : 1 Cor. xiv. 25, ' And thus

are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so, falling down on liis

face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth ; '

1 Peter iv. 4, ' Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with

them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.' Is it not more

wonder to see a living man that hath not divested himself of the

interests and concernments of flesh and blood to deny himself for

things to come, than to hear a tale from a dead man ?

(2.) There is the constancy of the martyrs, that have ratified this

truth with the loss of their dearest concernments : Kev. xii. 11, ' And

they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their

testimony ; and they loved not their lives unto the death.' It is pos-

sible a man may suffer for a false religion, and sacrifice a stout body

to a stubborn mind. But is there no true gold because there hath

been some counterfeit coin ? The devil's martyrs have not been so

many for number, nor for temper and quality, so holy, so wise, so meek,

as the champions of the truth. The christian religion can show you

persons of all ages, young and old ; of all sexes, men and women ; of

all conditions of life, noble and of low degree ; of all qualities, learned

and unlearned. (See Sermons on John xvii.)

(3.) Then there is the inward feeling of God's children ; they find a

power in the word, convincing, changing, comforting, fortifying their

hearts. These can speak of what they hear, feel, and taste, as well as

one that cometh from the dead. They have answerable impressions on

their hearts : Heb. viii. 10, ' I will put my laws into their mind, and

write them in their hearts ; ' 2 Cor. iii. 3, ' Ye are manifestly declared

to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but

with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshly

tables of the heart.' All this stamped upon the heart in legible

characters. A true christian is the lively transcript of his religion ;

the scriptures are the original, and every believer is the copy ; it is gone

over again in his heart.

(4.) Those that have no experience of this have a secret fear of the

358 SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31.

power of the word : John iii. 20, ' For every one tliat doetli evil hateth

the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.'

He will not come to the light because he is afraid of the majesty of

God shining forth in the scriptures. Men dare not muse upon and

seriously consider the doctrine therein contained. Atheism lieth in

the heart, the seat of desires: Ps. xiv. 1, ' The fool hath said in his

heart, There is no God.' Men question the word, because they would

not have it true ; they are willing to indulge their lusts, and therefore

they are afraid of the word that forbiddeth them ; as Ahab was loath

to hear Michaiah, because he prophesied evil. Strong lust maketh us

incredulous. A malefactor desireth to destroy the records and evidences

that are against him.

(5.) There are also outward effects of the power of the word ; its

propagation throughout all the world within thirty years or thereabout ;

The doctrine itself, contrary to nature ; it doth not court the senses

nor woo the flesh ; it doth not make offers of splendour of life or

pleasures and profits, but biddeth us deny these things and expect

troubles. The drift of it is to teach men to row against the stream of

flesh and blood, to renounce our lusts, deny our interests. And this

was done by a few fishermen, who had no long sword, no public interest

or authority to back them, and that in the face of the learned world,

when all civil disciplines were in their a/c/iT? and height. The word

prevailed against ancient customs ; the ark was to be set up in the

temple that was already occupied and possessed by Dagon.

(6.) Then consider the many sensible effects of the word, as the

accomplishment of prophecies, promises, threatenings, and answer of

prayers. God's providence is a comment upon scripture. It is an

authentic register, and infallible prognostication and calendar. We

need not have one come from the dead to tell the truth of it ; it is

fulfilled before our eyes every day.

4. Or else they can convey a power, or expect that God will co-oper-

ate more with their report than with the holy scriptures. Surely they

are finite creatures though passed out of this life. Nothing can convert

and turn the heart of man but the infinite power of God ; all the angels

in heaven cannot pluck one sinner out of the state of nature. We read

one angel could destroy one hundred and eighty-five thousand in

Sennacherib's host, 1 Kings xix. 35 ; but all the angels cannot convert

one soul.

But will God co-operate ? Alas ! when all prejudices are removed,

men are nothing the better till the Lord puts in his grace. The Jews

suppose Moses and the prophets to be of God ; they were confirmed by

notable miracles, the fame of which continue among them. But the

matter is about God's efficacy. But now God concurreth with his

instituted course ; common means of God's appointing have a singu-

lar efficacy annexed ; as reading. Acts viii. 32, hearing, Mark iv. 24,

meditation, Acts xvii. 11. Christ died to sanctify ordinances, Eph.

V. 26 ; and there if ever shall we meet with the power and grace of

God.

Secondly, Against it. There are more rational prejudices that lie

against any other way than this way that God hath taken. As to

instance in the matter in hand.

SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31, 359

1. It is no mean scruple about the lawfulness of hearkening to one

that should come from the dead, since they are out of the sphere of our

commerce, and it is a disparagement to the great doctor of the church.

Against consulting with the dead, see Deut. xviii. 10-12, with 14, 15,

' There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or

his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an

observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a channer, or a con-

suiter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer ; for all that

do these things are an abomination unto the Lord, and because of these

abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

For these nations which thou shalt possess hearkened unto observers

of times, and unto diviners ; but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath

not sufi'ered thee so to do. The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee

a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me ; unto

him ye shall hearken.' It would make religion ridiculous, like a

story of hobgoblins and bugbears, wherewith we fright children, or like

the fond superstitions of the heathens, that held the world under the

servility and bondage of scrupulous fears

2. It is not so sure a way. How could we trust or believe any one

that should bring a message from the dead, since impostors are so rife ?

Satan can turn himself into an angel of light. What security can we

have against delusions ? how miserably we may be deceived by stories

from the dead is to be seen in popery. Therefore it is a favour that

we have such a sure rule ! Gal. i. 8, ' But though we or an angel

from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that we have

preached unto yoU; let him be accursed.' We shall never be free from

evil designs.

3. It is not so effectual a course as some think. The great doctor

of the church arose from the dead, which was confirmed by five hun-

dred witnesses ; nothing so credible, and yet they would not believe

and repent for all that.. The Jews would not believe LazaruS; when,

after he had been four days dead, he was raised up again.

4. It is not so familiar a way, and therefore not so fit to instil faith,

and reduce men to God's purpose by degrees, as the written word, to

which we may have recourse without afifrightment, and that at all times.

This spirit must be supposed to appear but rarely ; for if it were fre-

quent, and settled into a constant converse, the way would be contemned.

But here we may view and review the counsel of God in our most

deliberate and serious thoughts, and by searching come to know the

mind of God. Faith groweth in a rational way : Acts xvii. 11, ' These

were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the

•word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily,

whether these things were so.'

Use 1. Information.

1. That man is apt to indent with God about believing and repent-

ing upon terms of his own making : Mat, xxvii. 42, ' If he be the king

of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe

him;^ Ps. Ixxviii. 19, ' Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? '

Mat. iv, 3, ' If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be

made bread.' Many require miracles or new apostles, that maketh

them turn seekers ; or a testimony from the dead, a spirit or a vision,

360 SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31.

and that maketli them turn atheists ; or an infallible interpreter, that

should solve all questions, or excuse them from the ]) lins of study and

prayer, and that maketh them turn papists. Thus foolishly would we

give laws to heaven, and prescribe to God how he shall reveal his mind

to men. God will not always give sensible confirmation.

2. There lie more prejudices by far against any way of our devising

than against the course which God hath instituted for the furthering

of our repentance. Man is an ill caterer for himself. The people

slighted Moses, and would hear God himself speak ; but when he

thundered upon the Mount, then they say, let us no more hear the

voice of God, for then we shall die : Exod. xx. 19, ' And they said

unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear ; but let not God

speak with us, lest we die.' All God's institutions are full of reason,

and if we had eyes to see it, we could not be better provided for.

3. God in giving the scriptures hath done more for us than we could

imagine, yea, better than we could wish to ourselves. He hath cer-

tainly done enough to leave us without excuse. You think if one came

from the dead this would be better, but you have more , and therefore,

if you be damned, it will not be for want of power, but want of will ;

you have more than if one came from the dead. Try what you can

do with Moses and the prophets. It is a great mercy to have a rule

by which all doctrines are to be tried, to have a standard and measure

of faith, and that put into writing to preserve it against the weakness

of memory and the treachery of evil designs, and that translated into

all languages. That we have such a rule, and so thoroughly finished,

is a great mercy.

4. That we are apt to betray present advantages by wishes of

another dispensation, as that we may have oracles and miracles. It is

but a shift to think of other means than God hath provided. They

that believe not the word will not believe one that should come from the

dead. Extraordinary means will not work upon them upon whom ordi-

nary do not prevail. Whatever dispensation God uses, man is man still :

Ps. Ixxviii. 22-24; ' They believed not in God, and trusted not in his sal-

vation, though he had commanded the clouds from above, and had

opened the doors of heaven, and had rained down manna upon them to

eat, and had given them the corn of heaven,' There were unbelievers and

carnal wretches when there were miracles, and so there would be still.

Though there were never so sufficient proof yet such is our perverse-

ness, that we shall slight God's counsel. Man is ever at odds with the

present dispensation. It is a sign the heart is out of order, or else any

doctrine that is of God would set it a-work.

5. Those that like not the message will ever quarrel at the mes-

senger ; and when the heart is wanting, something is wanting. We

have means enough to believe ; it is our own carelessness and obstinacy

that we do not : Mat. xi. 18, 19, ' John came neither eating nor drink-

ing, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and

drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a

friend of publicans and sinners.' There is always one exception or

another.

6. How credulous we are to fables, and how incredulous as to

undoubted truths ; spirits and apparitions, these things are regarded by

SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31. 361

US, but the testimony of the Spirit of God speaking in the scriptures is

little regarded.

Use 2. To exhort ns to improve the scriptures to repentance. This

is the great work.

Here I shall show you — (1.) What repentance is ; (2.) What the

holy scriptures ofifer to work us to repentance ; (3.) How we may improve

these.

I. What repentance is. It is a turning of the whole heart from sin

and Satan to serve God in newness of life ; or a turning from sin

because God hath forbidden it, to that which is good because God hath

commanded it. There are in it, as in every action, two terms — a quo

and ad quern.

1. The terminus a quo, that from which we are to turn. We turn

from something ; from sin : Acts viii. 22, ' Kepent of this thy wicked-

ness ; ' a-iro ri]^ KaKiaq, from thy wickedness. From dead works : Heb.

vi. 1, ' Eepentance from dead works.' And Satan is sometimes made

the term from which, because the sinner falleth to his share : Acts xxvi.

18, 'To turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan

to God.'

2. The terminus ad quern, the term to which we are to turn, that is, to

God : Acts xx. 21, ' Eepentance towards God ;' to the truth : 2 Tim.

ii. 25, ' If God peradventure will give them repentance e/? eir'vyvoiaLv

ak7]6ela<;, to the acknowledgment of the truth.' To holiness and new-

ness of life : Kom. vi. 4, ' Even so we also should walk in newness of

life.' To life : Acts xi. 18, ' Then hath God also to the gentiles granted

repentance unto life.' According to which terms there is a double

action required of us — humiliation and reformation ; humiliation or

compunction, and a due remorse for sin ; reformation, or a change of

course. Which answereth to the double work of God upon the soul —

mortification, or the subduing of sin ; vivificatiou, or the infusion of life.

So suitably there are aversion from sin and a conversion to God and

the things of God ; which is expressed by two duties — confession of sin,

and entering into covenant with God. Serious confession of sin is morti-

fication acted ; entering into covenant with God is vivificatiou acted, or

the desire of grace expressed. Confession of sin is required, that a man,

laying aside all extenuations, evasions, and excuses, may take shame to

himself, givins; crlory to God. Enterins; into covenant with God is

required that a man may be under a firm obligation ot obedience, and

be cautious over his own heart and ways ; the one respects sin past, the

other sin to come.

First, Let us speak of the first act, the terminus a quo, turning from

sin. Supposing the judgment enlightened and the heart made tender

by grace, the work doth mainly discover itself in the affections of fear,

shame, grief, and indignation. True humiliation is begun in fear, con-

tinued in shame, carried on by sorrow, and endeth in indignation. And

so sin is renounced, and the power of it broken. And indeed, when-

ever we renew our repentance upon special occasions, these are the affec-

tions that are to be exercised. They all have a proper ground and

consideration to set them at work. (1.) Fear leadeth the rank. That

tremble th at the wrath of God and judgment to come ; an accusing

conscience telling us that we are in a state of damnation. (2.) Shame

362 SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 3L

looketh upon sin not only as hurtful but filthy and brutish. It is <^o/3o9

BiKalo -^vyov, a fear of just reproach for the filthiness and folly of sin.

(3.) Sorrow looks upon God's goodness and sin's unkindness, laraenting

that ever we should lose the favour of such a God as this is, who hath,

made us, and kept us, and gave his Son to die for mankind ; now that

we should forfeit his favour ! (4.) Indignation is stirred up by the

unseemliness and disproportion of sin to the nature of man, much more

to grace infused, or that interest we have or would have by Christ. In

short, fear looketh upon sin as damning, shame as defiling, sorrow as

offensive to God ; indignation is misbecoming our present resolutions,

hopes, and interests. The guilt of sin causeth fear ; the stain, shame ;

the unkindness, sorrow ; the unsuitableness, indignation. By this means

did we come to be divorced from sin, and by these means it is daily

weakened.

1. The first awakening of the soul is by the sense of the wrath of

God, and everlasting woe denounced on impenitent sinners. You have

done that which in its own nature deserveth you should suffer eternal

torments, and be separated from the Lord, and be cast forth with the

devil and his aogels. And then the sinner, being under a fear of being

condemned, crietli out, Oh ! what shall I do to flee from the wrath to

come ! I am undone and lost unless God help me. I say here the work

beginneth ; punishment is soonest felt, and the first notion that we

have of sin is the guilt of it, which causeth fears and terrors with

respect to the wrath that is to ensue. So it is said of those converts,

Acts ii. 37, ' That they were pricked at their hearts ; ' they were

troubled about their condition. It requireth a quicker and more tender

sense to be sensible of the folly and filthiness of sin. A man that is

covered with noisome boils and sores, the first thing that affecteth him

is the pain, though he also abhorreth the sight and smell of them.

First we tremble at the thought of God's judgments, before we are

ashamed of sin or grieve for it. In renewing our repentance this is an

ingredient. It is not against the liberty of the gospel to make use of

threatenings ; we are sluggish, and need all kind of helps.

2. There is shame and self-loathing, which ariseth from an appre-

hension of the odiousness of sin : Ezek. vi. 9, ' They shall loathe them-

selves for the evils which they have committed in all their abomina-

tions ; ' Job xlii. 6, ' I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'

So Ezra ix. 6, ' my God ! I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face

to thee, my God.' They are ashamed to look God in the face, they have

dealt so unworthily with him. This is to hate sin as sin, when a man

is not only afraid of it, but ashamed of it, as it is against the revealed

will of God ; not only as it bringeth misery, but as it crosses God's

will ; not only for the evil after sin, but the evil in sin ; that you

have polluted your souls, defiled your natures, defaced the image of God,

become as a beast before him : Ps. Ixxiii. 22, ' So foolish was I, and

ignorant ; I was as a beast before thee.' Oh ! what a fool I was to turn

my back upon God ; to imagine that any good could come of sin, which

God hateth, and to practise a thing so unbefitting the reasonable nature !

3. Sorrow and lamentation to the Lord, which ariseth from a thought

of the Lord's goodness and sin's unkindness : Zech. xii. 10, ' They shall

look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him ; '

SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31. 363

Luke vii. 47, she wept much because ' she loved much.' Sin will

aflfect the heart most when the wrong done to God is considered, who

never showed any backwardness to our good, but who gave his Son to

die for us. He made us at first, and how soon can he take from us

that which he hath given us. He hath obliged us with a multitude

of benefits : Isa. i. 3, ' I have nourished and brought up children, and

they have rebelled against me ; ' Kom. ii. 4, ' Or despisest thou the

riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing

that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ? ' And shall we

use all these as weapons of unrighteousness ! food, raiment, peace,

plenty ? Ah ! but his Christ above all ! Oh ! never any sinned as I

have done. The devdl sinned, but Christ never died for him, as he did for

me. Judas sinned, but he was never pardoned, as I have been. Achan

sinned, but he had not that light and knowledge of the gospel that I

have had ; he did not live under such means as I have enjoyed. We

content ourselves with a hasty sigh. Oh ! but it is a deep sorrow that

is required, and an active pungent grief, ' rending the heart,' Joel ii. 13 ;

' Afflicting the soul,' Lev. xvi. 29 ; Mat. xxvi. 75, ' Peter wept bitterly.'

When we are touched with a sense of our unkindness to God, we shall

mourn.

4. Indignation, which is an act of our hatred against sin, hatred

quickened into a zeal against it. Indignation is the soul's expulsive

faculty, when we heartily renounce it, as unsuitable to our present

resolutions, professions, and hopes : Isa. xxx. 22, ' Thou shalt cast them

away as a menstruous cloth ; thou shalt say unto them, Get ye hence.'

So Hosea xiv. 8, ' Ephraim shall say, AVhat have I any more to do

with idols ? ' The soul saith first when it is convinced, Oh ! what have

I done ? and then. What shall I do ? and then, What have I any

more to do ? If a christian did remember what he is and what he

hopeth for, these questions would be more rife with him. Eepentance

is not a bare purpose to leave sin, but to leave it with a hatred and

deep displeasure against it.

SERMON IL

And lie said, Nay, fatlier Abraham : hut if one ivent unio ihem from

the dead, they will repent. And. he said, unto him, If they hear

not Moses and the prophets, neither ivill they be persuaded though

one rose from the dead. — Luke xvi. 30, 31.

Secondly, I now proceed to the next term, which is the terminus ad

quern, turning to God, which is done in two things —

1. A settled purpose and solemn dedication of ourselves to his use

and service, which is a resolution taken up upon debates of conscience :

Luke XV. 17, 18, ' And when he came to himself, he said. How many

hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I

perish with hunger ; I will arise and go to my father.' First he came

to himself, then I will go to my father. This ariseth out of a sense of

364 SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31.

God's mercy in Christ : Eom. xii. 1, ' I beseech you, brethren by the

mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,

acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service/ Lord, accept me

for thine ; and is the fruit of supernatural grace : James i. 18, ' Of his

own will begat he us with the word of truth ; ' and is accompanied with

shame that God so long hath been kept out of his right : 1 Peter iv. 3,

' For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will

of the gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine,

revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries ; ' and a purpose to

serve him with all our might.

2. It is seconded by a real performance : Mat. iii. 8, ' Bring forth

therefore fruits meet for repentance ; ' Acts xxvi. 20, ' That they should

repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." Without

these he is a liar, and deceiveth his own soul, if the heart be not more

watchful over itself, afraid to ofi'end God, and grieve his Spirit, more

tender of the least sin, more careful to please God in all things, more

close at work in the business of eternal life. These are fruits worthy

of repentance ; this is that irepicTGov rt, that which we do more than

carnal hypocrites, fruits suitable to the power of grace working in us,

and to our professions of respect to God. This is the sum of the

doctrine of repentance.

II. What doth the scripture offer to persuade us to this work ?

1. It clearly layeth down the absolute and indispensable necessity of

it in grown persons, or such as are come to years of discretion : Acts

iii. 19, ' Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be

blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence

of the Lord ; ' Luke xiii. 5, ' Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise

perish ;' Ezek. xxxiii. 11, ' Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord

God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the

wicked turn from his way, and live : turn ye, turn ye, from your evil

ways, for why will ye die, house of Israel ? ' One way or the other,

turn or die : it is no mootpoint or matter of controversy. There are

many controversies about other things, but in this all is clear. Many

will say, There is such a doubtfulness, that every one bringeth scripture,

and maketh a nose of wax of it, ductile and pliable to his own fancy.

But in points of absolute duty it is fully clear, and in the marks of one

that shall go to heaven or to hell, especially in the doctrine of repent-

ance. Make use of the scriptures, and practise conscientiously according

to your light, and God will clear up his mind to you. By study and

prayer and practice you will come to an increase of knowledge : John

vii. 17, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine

whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.'

2. It doth not only call for repentance, but a speedy repentance :

Heb. iii. 7, 8, ' Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith. To-day, if ye will

hear his voice, harden not your hearts ; ' Joel ii. 12, ' Therefore also

now saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart.' God

standeth upon now. If the season were not determined, yet the nature

of the thing would bear it. A necessary work, that is to be once done,

should not be left to uncertainties. But because men are loose and

arbitrary, and think they may make use of repentance at their leisure^

therefore the scripture is as peremptory for the time as for the thing :

SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31. 365

\* Now, and to-day, if you will hear liis voice, harden not your hearts.'

As soon as you are convinced of your sinful estate. Why not now ?

Sin is such an evil that you cannot he rid of it too soon. Sin is as a

poison in the bowels, a fire in a building. Now who will say, We

will get an antidote next week ? or quench the fire hereafter ? Sin is

a wound, and shall we let it alone till it fester and rankle ? No wound

so dangerous as that which destroyeth body and soul ; no fire so dread-

ful as the wrath of God ; no poison so hurtful as that of sin ; it robbeth

us of eternal life. God hath not given us leave for a day, nor for a

moment If a man were banished by proclamation, and it were death

whoever should entertain and harbour him after ten days, till the time

were out there were no danger ; but God saitli noiv. When we are

in any trouble, we cannot brook any delay : Ps. cii. 2, ' In the day

when I call, answer me speedily.' We must have a present answer;

and shall God stand waiting when there is danger of his dishonour ?

Therefore now while it is to-day turn unto God. To-morrow is a

very uncertain thing. Besides if you were certain of to-morrow, it is

folly to lie under the wrath of God any longer. If really you are con-

vinced of a sinful state, why do you not repent and return to God now ?

In every sinful action thou art laying thy soul at pawn, and one sin

more may fill up the measure of your iniquity. Besides, every day

will make you more unfit to turn to God ; and it is base self-love to

think of indulging the flesh longer, provided at length you can be

saved.

3. The scripture showeth the profit of it.

[1.] What a remedy it is against sin : Ezek. xviii. 30, ' Kepent, and

turn yourselves from your transgressions ; so iniquity shall not be your

ruin.' Every man is a sinner, but every man shall not die by sin.

There is in sin reatus, culpa, poena, macula. (1.) Beatus, the guilt

that is blotted out : Acts iii. 19, ' Repent, and be converted, that your sins

may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the

presence of the Lord.' Sin is written in two books, one in God's keep-

ing, the other in our own. He doth not say that we may blot out our

sins out of God's book ; that is not the debtor's, but the creditor's work

to cross the book : Isa. xliii. 25, ' I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy

transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins"

There is a handwriting against us, but it is blotted out when we

repent. Oar own book is the book of conscience : Heb. x. 22, ' Having

our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.' The worm of conscience

gnaws us till we repent, then the Spirit blotteth it out of our hearts.

(2.) Macula, the stain ; the more a man sinneth, the more he is inclined

to sin, as a brand that hath been once in the fire is apt to take fire

again. We lose tenderness by every act of sin, and the smart of repent-

ance is a means to kill the sin, as breaking up the fallow ground doth

destroy the weeds : Jer. iv. 3, ' Break up your fallow ground, and sow

not among thorns.' (3.) Culpa, the blame. God will not upbraid us

with former sins : Mark xvi. 7, ' Go tell my disciples and Peter.' It is

judged in one court already ; not a word of Peter's miscarriage : Tell

him, I am risen. (4.) Pcena, the punishment ; that is done away by

repentance ; we may look for days of refreshment.

[2.] The comfort it will bring. God hath comforts for his mourners :

366 SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31.

Mat. V, 4, 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.'

Never such sweet revivings as after godly sorrow : 2 Cor. vii, 10, ' For

godly sorrow worketli repentance to salvation never to be repented of.'

Many have repented of their carnal mirth, but never any of their godly

sorrow ; you will never curse the day of your new birth.

4. The scripture ofFereth grace and help of God to work this in us :

Ezek. xi. 19, 20, ' I will give them one heart, and I will put a new

spirit within you ; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and

will give them an heart of flesh ; that they may walk in my statutes, and

keep mine ordinances, and do them ; and they shall be my people, and

I will be their God.' Men will say they cannot repent ; come and wait

upon God, and he will give you to repent: Acts xi. 18, ' Then hath

God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life.' God doth not

only give occasions of repentance, time of repentance, means of

repentance, but power to repent, yea, repentance itself: Acts v. 31,

' Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a

saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.' So

that if we would turn wrangling into prayer, and bemoan ourselves,

and say, Jer. xxxi. 18, ' Turn us, Lord ! and we shall be turned.'

If we would follow him close, we need not be discouraged.

5. The scripture layeth down powerful arguments to quicken us to

repentance, which have a marvellous tendency and influence that way.

I shall single out three — The death of Christ, the day of judgment,

and the torments of hell.

First, The death of Christ. A serious consideration of the death of

Christ will further humiliation and reformation.

[1.] Humiliation.

(1.) Here is the highest instance of the love of God, and the purest

fountain of tears is God's love. Mary wept much, because much was

forgiven her. Nothing thaweth the heart more than the warm beams

of mercy. Wrath causeth sorrow to flow like water out of a still by

the force of fire ; but love gently melteth the heart, and causeth it to

run out at the eyes in a flood and stream of tears. Here is the highest

instance of God's love. Christ is the greatest gift that ever he gave

the world. When he gave us life, and breath, and all things, though

he gave them to us, yet he gave us nothing from himself ; but now out

of his bosom he gave us Christ, that is love : John iii. 16, ' God so loved

the world that he gave his only-begotten Son.' It cannot be told, it

can only be wondered at : Kom. v. 8, ' But God commended his love

towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'

So great a person for such vile creatures ! How can an ingenuous

heart think of this ! I have sinned against God that gave his Christ :

I have grieved his Spirit, that loved me, and died for me. Saul had a

hard heart, and yet he wept when David told him how he had spared

him when it was in his power to kill him, 1 Sam. xxiv. 16. Had God

done no more for us but spared us, that should melt us ; but he com-

mended his love that Christ died for us.

(2.) Here is the truest spectacle of sin ; for all that was done to

Christ, sin did it. What could men or devils do ? Men could do

nothing : John xviii. 6, ' As soon as he said unto them, I am he, they

went backward, and fell to the ground.' Poor dust and ashes swooned

SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31. 367

at the breath of his mouth. Not devils ; he could cast them out with

a word. Not God's justice ; that hath no place against innocencv.

No ; it was we, not Judas, nor Pilate, nor the Komans, nor the Jews,

but we that have pierced him : Zech. xii. 10, ' Thej shall look upon me

whom they have pierced.' This will give us the truest spectacle of sin.

The old world was a sad spectacle, but that is no wonder ; a filthy

world to be washed with a deluge. Sodom was another sad spectacle ;

hell was rained out of heaven ; but it is no wonder to see combustible

matter burn. But Christ was a gi-een tree, the Son of God, holy and

undefiled, who was made sin only by a voluntary susception ; but when

he was made sin, God spared him not. Now the heinousness of sin

appeareth — (1.) In the value of the sacrifice: (2.) The extremity of

his sufferings.

(1st.) In the value of the sacrifice. Nothing could expiate sin but

the blood, and shame, and agonies of the Son of God. A man would

have thought that a word of Christ's mouth would have pacified Gt)d ;

but so great was the offence, that though he cried with strong cries,

God would not hear him till he had endured hLs wrath. Christ prayed,

Mat. xxvi. 39, ' my Father ! if it be possible, let this cup pass from

me.' But God would not bate him a farthing. If you would know

sin, go to Golgotha.

(2d.) The extremity of his sufferings. His outward sufferings were

much. If you consider the majesty of his person, he was the great

God, that filled heaven and earth with his glory, and yet was sold for

thirty pence, the price of a slave. His back was mangled with whips,

his body nailed to the cross, he was scorned in all his offices, a variety

of sorrow was poured in by the conduit of every sense — seeing, smell-

ing, tasting, hearing, and feeling. If you consider the excellency of his

constitution, his body, being framed by the Holy Ghost, was of a more

exact temper, his senses more lively ; they that enjoy life in a higher

measure than others, the more dehcate the sense, the higher the pain ;

the back of a slave is not so sensible of strokes as of one that is nicely

and tenderly bred. His senses were kept lively and in their full

vigour ; he refused the stupefying cup that was given to him. He kept

his strength to the last ; this appeared by his strong cry when he gave

up the ghost ; Luke xxiii -16, ' And when Jesus had cried with a loud

voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spiirit ; and

having said thus, he gave up the ghost.' But what is this to what is

inward, the agonies of his soul under the curse and wrath of God due

for sin, his desertion of the Father. It is more to see the sun eclipsed

than to see a candle put out. He complained that '' his soul was exceed-

ing sorrowful, even unto death," Mat. xxvi. 38. His soul dwelt with

God in a personal union. \* Christ knew how to value his Father's

wrath : he had an excellent judgment and tender affections. AYhen he

sweat drops of curdled blood, he needed support from an angeL Now

put all these circumstances together, and see if sin be a light thing.

Object. But many think this lesseneth sorrow. Chi-ist hath endured

so much, what need they be troubled ?

A71S. (1.) These know not what faith and love meaneth. Can a man

love Christ, and not mourn for that which was the cause of his

sufferings ? Thou art the man that laid all this upon Christ. (2.)

368 SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31.

Sliglit thoughts of sin are a disparagement of Christ's sufferings : you

make nothing of that which cost him so dear. (3.) Christ's death doth

not nullify our duty in this kind, but ratify it. He died not only to

expiate the guilt of sin, but also to show the heinousness of it. God

might have taken another course. This for humiliation.

[2.] As to reformation. The death of Christ furthereth this —

(1.) By way of obligation : Gal. ii. 20, ' I am crucified with Christ :

nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life

which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who

loved me, and gave himself for me.' The great argument that quick-

eneth us to the spiritual life is that it is a thing pleasing and acceptable

to him. If we knew anything pleasing and acceptable to a man that had

redeemed us out of a miserable thraldom, we would do it. They are

unthankful wretches that dare to deny Christ anything.

(2.) By way of purchase. Our liberty from sin was bought at a

dear rate ; not with silver and gold. You disparage your redeemer

and seek to put him to shame, if you live in sin, for you go about to

make void the purchase, and to overturn the whole business which

Christ hath been establishing with so great a cost. He paid dear for

that grace which you slight ; you tie the bonds which he came to

loosen.

(3 ) By way of conformity to the purity of our sacrifice. He was

without spot and blemish. A carnal christian dishonoureth his head,

and puts him to an open shame, as if the church were but a sanctuary

for naughty men, and Christianity a design to make us less careful and

holy. What a spotted Christ do we hold forth to the world ! We are

to look upon Christ crucified so as to be crucified with him.

Secondly, The day of judgment. The serious consideration of that

day is an help to repentance: Acts xvii. 30, 31, ' He hath commanded

all men everywhere to repent ; because he hath appointed a day in

which he will judge the world in righteousness.' As hell worketh on

fear, so this on shame. It helpeth humiliation and reformation.

[1.] Humiliation. It is a means to prevent the shame of that day ; if

we do not call sin to mind, God will call it to mind : Ps. 1. 21, ' I will

set thy sins in order before thee.' The book of conscience shall be

opened, and not only ours, but God's book too. Now it will cost us

grief to look upon our sins, then grief with desperation ; terms of grace

are ended, and we can have no hope. A sinner now blots the book that

is in his own keeping, but then he cannot. We will not own the con-

victions of the word when it showeth our face, but then, Jude 15, ' He

will convince all that are ungodly of all their ungodly deeds that they

have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly

sinners have spoken against him.' Confession now is neglected, but

then all shall be brought to light out of our own reins : 1 Cor. iv. 5,

' Judge nothing before the time imtil the Lord come, who both will

bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest

the counsels of the hearts ; and then shall every man have praise of

God.' Let us take shame before it be imposed on us. Sins repented

of will not be mentioned to our confusion, but only to the glorifying of

the riches of the Lord's grace. They that repent, their sins shall be

then blotted out : Acts iii. 19, ' Eepent and be converted, that your sins

SEKMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31. 369

may be blotted out when the days of refreshing shall come from the

presence of the Lord.'

[2.] Eeformation. It includeth faith and obedience, (1.) Faith.

Let us get our discharge before that day cometh ; then we shall have

boldness : 1 John ii. 28, 'And now, little children, abide in him, that

when he shall appear we may have confidence and not be ashamed

before him at his coming.' The members of Christ's mystical body

need not be afraid of Christ's judgment ; their advocate shall be their

judge ; their hearts are sprinkled with his blood, as the door-posts

against the destroying angel. They that are not careful to be found in

Christ, surely they do not believe that God will make inquisition for

sinners. Is the day of judgment a fable ? Scripture and conscience

saith the contrary. Or are we innocent? Or hath God provided

another way than Christ ? (2.) Obedience. Everything is written, and

must be reviewed. If things were forgotten as soon as we forget them,

we need not revise our acts or be so careful of our conversation. Oh !

but we must come to an account : James ii. 12, ' So speak ye, and so

do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty ;' Ps. i. 5, ' There-

fore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the

congregation of the righteous.\* What a shameful story will there be pro-

duced against careless sinners ! All the business of our lives is to stand

in the great congregation, and to appear with confidence. Would a

man give way to vain thoughts if he knew he were to give an account ?

or to vain discourse if he thought every idle word would be brought to

judgment ? or to carnal actions, though never so secret, if he thought

that all these would come to a review ? or neglect the duties of his

calling if he knew he were to give an account of his stewardship ? or be

unmerciful to the poor if he did think of. Have you fed ? have you

clothed ? or that he should be examined upon these questions ?

Thirdly, The consideration of hell, or the dreadful punishment of sin ;

for this is the matter in this text. This is useful to think of hell that

we may shun it. Presumption is a coward : Mat. iii. 7, 8, ' gener-

ation of vipers ! who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come ?

Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.' There is a forced

repentance ; they that do not weep for their sins for a while here, shall

there mourn for ever with a fruitless repentance. It is peace upon

earth. What is hell ? (1.) There is ^cena damni, the punishment

of loss ; a separation from the presence of God, and everlasting exile :

• Depart from me, ye cursed,' Mat. xxv. 41 ; Luke xiii. 25, 26, \* When

once the master of the house is risen, and hath shut the door, and ye

begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord,

open to us ; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know ye not

whence ye are ; ' and ver. 28, \* When ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac,

and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you your-

selves thrust out.' When God turned Adam out of paradise, it was

sad, but then he clothed him, made him coats of skins. Adam was a

rebellious child, and was turned out of doors, but God had a care of

him, would not turn him out of doors without his garments, gave him

the promise of the seed of the woman, hopes of a better paradise. This

is the worst part of hell, to have a glimpse of God, the remembrance

of which shall remain with them for ever, and then to be shut out

VOL. XVII. 2 A

370 SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31,

Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but not taste it ; as a prodigal

reduced to rags goeth by the lands and houses he hath sold with a

sad heart. (2.) The pcena sensus, the punishment of sense, the worm

of conscience and the fire of God's wrath. The worm of conscience ;

the sting of conscience when we think of our folly and imprudence.

A man may run away from his conscience now by sleeping, reading,

working, drinking, sportiug, as Cain built cities and Saul called for

music ; but in hell there are no such diversions, not a thought free day

nor night, but memoria lorceteritorum, the remembrance of what is

past, slighted means, abused comforts, wasted time, and sensus prcesen-

tium, a sense of what is present ; the understanding maketh heaven or

hell ; and metus futurorum, a fear of what is to come for ever and ever.

O blind fools ! that we did not think of these things aforehand. The

pleasures of the world for a thousand years will not countervail one

minute's torment. And then the fire shall never be quenched : Heb.

X. 31, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'

Do but make trial, and put your finger in the candle, and see how you

can bear it : Isa. xxxiii. 14, ' Who among us can dwell with the

devouring fire ? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings ? '

III. How to improve the scriptures to repentance.

1. Believe them as you would an oracle or one from the dead. Con-

sider the authority and veracity of God. The authority of God : God

commandeth men to repent ; charge the heart in the name of God, as

it will answer to him another day. If God had bidden thee do some

greater thing, wouldst not thou have done it ? Will you contradict

your maker ? The veracity of God ; these things are true. If you

had heard a voice from heaven, as Abraham, or had a vision, or

a messenger sent out of the other world, you would believe. You

would think him to have a very hard heart that is not warned by an

oracle or frighted by an apparition. God himself hath spoken in his

word, and is not he of credit ? You would fly in the face of him that

should give you the lie, and will you give the lie to the God of truth ?

We should be ashamed that the word, which is a greater and surer

revelation than oracles or apparitions, should prevail no more with us,

and that all those arts of grace which are used in the scriptures do not

persuade us to obedience and amendment of life. There is more reason

to persuade a rational man that the scriptures are true and worth the

heeding, than to persuade him of the truth of any voice from heaven or

message by one from the dead. There you are warned that if you are

unbelieving, unholy, or uncharitable, you shall go to hell, and as Lot

seemed to his sons-in-law ' as one that mocked,' Gen. xix. 14, so we are

looked on as if we were in jest, and it were a matter of course to make

one another sad by repeating of matters mournful and lamentable. If

thou hadst seen a ghost this last night, or a devil had appeared to thee

in man's shape, thou wouldst have been terrified ; and shall not the

threatenings of the word startle thee ? So when you are spoken to

concerning the joys of heaven, it should not seem wa-el \77po?, as an idle

tale ; as it is said, Luke xxiv. 11, ' And their words seemed unto them

as idle tales, and they believed them not.' The report of Christ's

re surrection was an idle tale. If an angel had told you that within

such a compass of years you should be in another world, he would have

SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31. 371

been credited ; but you have a more sure word of prophecy ; we tell

you the same from God's word, and yet we are not regarded, as the

Israelites did not believe the spies.

2. Urge thy heart with it ; recollect yourselves : Rom. viii. 31,

' What shall we then say to these things ? ' Come to yourselves :

Luke XV. 17, 'And when he came to himself.' The prodigal came to

himself before he thought of returning to his father : Ps. xsii. 27, ' All

the ends of the earth shall remember, and return unto the Lord.'

Think with yourselves, Whence am I ? whither am I going ? what

have I done in the work of repentance ? what will become of me to all

eternity ? Here in the scriptures Grod himself hath told me what I

must look for, and will God deceive me ? Oh ! let me take God's

directions for the saving of my soul.

I might take occasion hence to press you to bless God for trans-

mitting such a doctrine to us, and to give you caution not to look after

other revelations ; there are none, or, if there were, none can be so cer-

tain and so sufficient as this. And whatever is pretended as a message

from God, bring it to the scriptures : Isa. viii. 20, ' To the law and to

the testimonies ; if they speak not according to this word, it is because

there is no light in them.' Some cry up the church ; some the Spirit,

in contradiction to the scriptures. Do you take the middle course ; go

to the word opened and dispensed in the church, and wait for the

Spirit's teaching ; and whatever is pretended, if it be not according to

this, there is no light in it ; and if there be no light of knowledge, there

will be no light of comfort, and no light of happiness.

SERMON UPON HEBREWS XIII. 20, 21.

Now the God of peace, that h'ought again from the dead our Lord

Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the hlood of the

everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good loorh to

do his loill, working in you that lohich is well-pleasing in his

sight, through Jesus Christ ; to whom be glory for ever. Amen. —

Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

The words carry the form of an apostolical blessing or prayer for those

christian Hebrews to whom he wrote. Consider in them — (1.) The

person to whom he prayeth ; in which the grounds of audience are

implied, ver. 20 ; (2.) The matter which he prayeth for, ver. 21.

I. The person to whom the prayer is directed ; who is described —

1. By a proper title, 'The God of peace.'

2. By his great work, ' He brought again from the dead our Lord

Jesus Christ ; ' who is set forth —

[1.] By his office, ' The great shepherd of the sheep.'

[2.] By his merit and satisfaction, ' Througli the blood of the ever-

lasting covenant ; ' which may relate —

(1.) To God's title ; he is become 'the God of peace through the

blood of the everlasting covenant.'

(2.) To God's work, ' Through the blood of the everlasting cove-

nant,' ' he brought him again from the dead.'

(3.) To Christ's office, ' Through his blood shed for sinners ' he is

become the ' great shepherd of the sheep.'

II. The matter which he prayeth for ; the continued sanctification of

man once regenerate ; set forth by both its parts — the will, and the

deed, Phil. ii. 13. First, the will or remote power, ' Make you perfect,'

or fit you ' for every good work to do his will ; ' secondly, the deed, or

actual assistance, ' Working in you that which is well-pleasing in his

sight.' We have both by Jesus Christ, for it is added with a doxoiogy,

' Through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.'

The text is long ; I must give you but short strictures upon it, and

I will begin with the second branch, the matter prayed for ; and there-

fore let me observe —

Doct. 1. That the beginning, progress, and accomplishment of every

good work is from God through Jesus Christ. This appeareth plainly

from the 21st verse, which may be reduced to two heads —

1. The expressions which concern man's duty, which is to be ' per-

fect in every good work,' that we may do God's will, and that which is

pleasing in his sight.

374 SERMON UPON HEBREWS XIII. 20, 21.

2. The expressions which concern God's power to enable us for this

duty ; there are two words, perfecting and icorking. The first relateth

to his habitual grace, the second to his assisting grace.

I. The first expressions which import man's duty are four — (1.)

Perfecting; (2.) Every good work; (3.) Doing his will; (4.) So as

may be pleasing in his sight.

1. We must be made perfect, or the begun work of grace must be

carried on to perfection. We all come short of that perfection which is

attainable in this life, therefore those that have attained some good

measure of grace should not rest satisfied with it. We need to be more

able for duties, more fortified for trials. A man groweth till he be fit

for all manly actions ; and a christian groweth and must be made more

perfect till he be fit for every good work. An artisan must be so long

learning his trade till he be fit for all those functions which belong to

his trade. A sick or wounded man is under the hand of the physician

or chirurgeon till he be perfectly cured. So is a christian under the

care of his spiritual physician till he be fitted for all the parts and duties

of a christian. Here upon earth, ' Christ by one ofioring hath perfected

for ever them that are sanctified,' or dedicated to God, Heb. x. 14 ; but

now he is in heaven, he perfecteth us by degrees. The sacrifice needeth

not to be repeated, but his intercession is continual, because we still

need new influences of grace. Absolute perfection is not attainable in

this life ; but the perfection of sincerity is here required, that we should

mortify all our lusts, and serve God in every good work, and please him

by an universal and impartial obedience : Phil. iii. 12, ' Not as though

I had already attained, either were already perfect ; but I follow after,

if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ

Jesus ; ' that is, I aim at that which Christ aimed at, that I may be

thoroughly and exactly perfect.

2. 'In every good work.' Not in one, but all. Many will do some

good, but are defective in other things, and usually in those which are

most necessary. They cull out the easiest and cheapest parts of reli-

gion, such as do not contradict their lusts and interests. We can never

have sound peace till we regard all : Ps. cxix. 6, ' Then shall I not be

ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments." Shame is

^o/So9 BiKaiov -ylrojov, fear of a just reproof. This reproof is either from

the supreme or the deputy judge. The supreme judge of all our actions

is God. This should be our principal care, that we may not be ashamed

before him at his coming, nor disapproved in the judgment. But there

is a deputy judge which every man hath in his own bosom. Our con-

sciences do acquit or condemn us as we are partial or sincere in our

duty to God ; and much dependeth on that : 1 John iii. 20, 21, ' But

if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth

all things. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we con-

fidence towards God.' Well, then, that our hearts may not reprove or

reproach us, we should be complete in all the will of God. Alas !

otherwise you will never have evidence of your sincerity.

3. The next expression is, ' That you may do his will.' The rule of

man's duty is the will of God. The will of God signifieth two things —

either his decree concerning them, or else that law which he hath given

concerning our duty. This last is intended. The works of man are

SERMON UPON HEBREWS XHI. 20, 21. 375

tbe actions and operations of a reasonable creature subject to the laws

of God. If his actions be conformable to his law, they are good ; if

not, they are eviL Therefore a man cannot be a good christian with-

out doing God's will. If it be the will of God he should forbear such

a practice, custom, or evil action, he dareth not go forward: Jer. xxxv.

6, ' We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Kechab, our father,

commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons

for ever.' If it be the will of God he should do such a thing, he will

do it ; he dareth not omit it, how cross soever to his inclinations and

interests : James iv. 17, ' Therefore to him that knoweth to do good,

and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' This is the reason of all reasons :

1 Thes. iv. 3, ' For this is the will of God, even your sanctification ; '

1 Thes. V. 18, ' In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God ia

Christ Jesus concerning you ; ' 1 Peter ii. 15, ' For so is the will of

God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish

men.' Well, then, it is not enough that we should well and thoroughly

understand the will of God, but we should do it. And I will add this

one consideration : the more we do it, the more we will understand it :

John vii. 17, ' If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doc-

trine whether it be of God.' It is doing that God looks at and we must

most regard ; not who can acutely plead or eloquently declaim about

it, but readily frame his heart to do the will of God ; for the pre-

cepts of God are given, not to try our wit or memory, but prac-

tice.

4. We must do it so as may be ' well-pleasing in his sight ; ' where

note —

[1.] That all that we do is done in the sight of God. Ho observeth

who break and who keep his law. and nothing can escape his view and

knowledge : Luke i. 75, ' In holiness and righteousness before him.'

AYe are ever in his eye, and he is our witness, approver, and judge :

' Will he force the queen,' saith Ahasuerus, ' before my face ? ' Esther

vii. 8. Will ye, God looking on, be vain, foolish, and carnal ?

[2.] This must be our great aim and scope, ' to please God.' It is a

well-tempered religion that beginueth and endeth in God. Man-pleas-

ing is the hypocrite's religion, but God-pleasing is sincere and true reli-

gion : Col. i. 10, ' That ye may walk worthy of the Lord unto all

pleasing.' And the apostle often inculcateth this as the right end of

all our duties : ' Not as pleasing men, but God.'

[3.] Our work must be so ordered as it may be ' pleasing and accept-

able to God ; ' for every slight thing will not please him, but when it

is agreeable to his will. Therefore it is not enough to do what is for

the matter good, but what is for the manner pleasing to him ; that is

to say — (1.) It must come from a right principle, love to God : 2 Cor.

V. 14, ' The love of Christ constraineth us ; ' and faith in Christ : Heb.

xi. 6, ' Without faith it is impossible to please God.' Not as forced,

nor as a mere natural act, but as depending on the Redeemer for our

acceptance. We are sinners ; we are not exact. (2.) Then for the

manner, it must be with seriousness : Heb. xii. 28, 'Wherefore we

receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have gi-ace, whereby

we may serve God acceptably, with reverence, and godly fear ; ' so as

will become so great a majesty with tliat diligence which our aim at

376 SERMON UPON HEBREWS XIII. 20, 21.

perfection calletli for: 1 Thes. iv. 1, 'Furthermore then we beseech

you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus Clivist, that as you

have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please Grod, so ye would

abound more and more.'

II. The words which express the necessary concurrence of the divine

power ; they are two —

1. The first is, ' Make you perfect.' He prayeth not now for framing

the new creature, but for perfecting it. God, that maketh man, new

maketh him, and then he perfecteth him. God is wonderful in the first

creation, in raising such a beautiful piece out of the dust of the ground

as the first man was ; and in ordinary generation David telleth us, Ps.

cxxxix. 14, ' I am fearfully and wonderfully made.' So God is wonder-

ful in re-making or regenerating us : Eph. ii. 10, ' For we are his

workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works ; ' Eph. iv. 24,

' And tliat ye put on the new man, which after God is created in right-

eousness and true holiness.' There is much of the wisdom, goodness,

and power of God seen in the new creature, to enable a man to capti-

vate those lusts which the generality of the world are mastered by, and

to live a divine life in the flesh. He is also wonderful in perfecting us

till we grow up to our full stature in spiritual things. As it is not in

man's power to make himself or regenerate himself, so it is not in man's

power to perfect himself No ; but the Spirit of regeneration abiding

in us doth renew us more and more. Well, then, it is not meant of

regeneration when we are created to good works, but of the increase of

his sanctifying grace, which is to regeneration as preservation and pro-

vidence is to creation. God, that begun the work, must continue it and

strengthen it, otherwise we shall be unfit for every good work, or as a

member that is out of joint, as the word importeth which is there

used.

2. ' Working.' God doth continually co-operate and work in us and

with us, without which we cannot fulfil his will, or do anything that

will please him. So will and deed are joined together : Phil. ii. 13,

\* For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do.' God

worketh in us a power to will, and maketh us actually to will ; and a

power and strength, or ability to do it. The new creature dependeth

absolutely on his influences from first to last : 2 Peter i. 3, ' According

as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life

and godliness.' He giveth us spiritual life, and he giveth us godliness.

He first giveth supernatural faculties, and then the use and exercise

of them in our walk or conversation ; the first motions, and then the

flowing forth of these motions into acts suitable.

Use 1. To establish our dependence. In doing any good we must

depend on God, both for the power given at first and continued unto

us. Will and deed come from him, and they come from him through

Christ, who purchased and conveyeth this power to us by his constant

intercession and the influence of his Spirit. Of unwilling he maketh

us willing, and causeth us to do what he would have us to do. He

doth not only give us the will, that is, the desire, and purpose, but the

grace that we may do that good which we will and purpose. These

are distinct ; many may have assistance in one kind, not in anothei-.

Paul showeth us that willing and doing are different : Kom. vii. 18>

SERMON UPON HEBREWS XIII. 20, 21. STT"

' For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good,

I find not.' To will is more than to think, and to exert our will into

action is more than both. In all we need God's help, both to think a

good thought or conceive a good purpose, much more to perform a good

action. Man is mutable, and here is much opposition.

Use 2. Exhortation to several duties.

1. Let us shake off carnal security and laziness. Here is not only

God's grace represented, but man's duty. God's doing all doth not

warrant us to lie upon the bed of ease, but stir us up to diligence :

Phil. ii. 12, 13, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,

for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good

pleasure.'

2. We are not to neglect the motions of the Spirit lest we grieve

him : Eph. iv. 30, ' And grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby we are

sealed to the day of redemption.'

3. We are to use the means, and God will bless our endeavours :

1 Peter ii. 2, ' As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word,

that you may grow thereby.' We are to attend upon the word and fre-

quent the sacrament.

4. We must pray earnestly, for a twofold reason — (1.) That we may

humbly own our wants : James i. 5, ' If any man lack wisdom, let

him ask it of God.' (2.) That we may express our desires and long-

ing for grace : Mat. v. 6, ' Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after

righteousness, for they shall be filled.'

5. We must improve our talents, lest we be accounted evil and sloth-

ful servants, that receive grace in vain : 2 Cor. vi. 1, ' We beseech you

that you receive not the grace of God in vain,'

Doct. 2. That the continued sanctification and perfecting of man

once regenerate cometh from God as the God of peace.

This is the blessing prayed for, and when the apostle prayeth for it,

he calleth God ' the God of peace.' So elsewhere ; 1 Thes. v. 23,

' The very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray God your

whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the com-

ing of our Lord Jesus Christ.' He prayeth there for the whole progress

of sanctifying grace, till it hath attained its end and final perfection,

and giveth God the same title.

Here I shall open to you these five things — (1.) In what sense God

is said to be the God of peace ; (2.) The ground and foundation of this

peace; (3.) The evidences how it appears that God is pacified; (4.)

The conveyance of it to us, or how we come to be interested in this

peace ; (5.) The reasons why all increase of grace cometh from him as

8uch.

I. What is the meaning of this title ? God is called ' the God of

peace' in two respects —

1. With respect to union and peace with men, especially our fellow-

christians. God is the God of peace as he is the author and approver

of this peace : 1 Cor. xiv. 33, ' For God is not the author of confusion,

but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints ; ' 2 Thes. iii. 16,

' Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always, by all means.'

2. With respect to our reconciliation with himself after the breach

that was between us. Heaven and earth are at an accord, and the great

378 SERMON UPON HEBREWS XIII. 20, 21.

quarrel between us and God is compromised and taken up. In one

place the angels come to proclaim ' peace on earth,' Luke ii. 14. -At

another time, when Christ solemnly entereth as the Messiah into

Jerusalem, they cried out, Luke xix. 38, ' Peace in heaven, and glory

in the highest.' One of the parties at variance is in the earth, the other

in heaven. The angels, the inhabitants of the other world, proclaim

peace on earth ; and men, that dwell here below, echo to them again

peace in heaven, and that when they gave Christ the honour of the

Messias, showing that his great business was to make reconciliation. It

is not a primitive original peace, but a reconciliation after a breach, a

restoring of peace when it was lost. We had all broken with God, and

God was angry with men for sin ; now while God was angry and

offended there was no hope to receive any gift of grace from him ;

therefore with respect to this is God called ' the God of peace.'

II, The grounds and foundation of this peace ; and that is \* by the

blood of the everlasting covenant,' which is the only propitiatory

sacrij&ce which could appease God, and give his justice full satisfaction

and recompense for our offences. Before this peace could be made

and this woful breach repaired, there were two things to be removed

which stood in the way — God's wrath, and our rebellious nature. The

righteous wrath of God is- appeased by the blood of Christ ; our rebel-

lion is cured and healed by his Spirit. The latter is but a consequent

of the former. The first foundation for this peace was laid in the blood

of Christ : Col. i. 20, ' And having made peace through the blood of

his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself ; ' Isa. liii. 5,

' The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we

are healed.' The enmity had been irreconcilable and impossible to be

removed, unless God had taken this way, unless the Son of God had

died for a sinful world, that by the merit of his obedience he might

give satisfaction to a provoked God for the wrong we had done him.

III. The evidences that God is pacified. Here are three mentioned —

1. The bringing back of Christ from the dead. This showeth that

God was propitiated, that he hath accepted the ransom that was given

for souls. Christ's resurrection is called by the prophet a being ' taken

from prison and from judgment,' Isa. liii. 8. While Christ was in the

state of the dead, he was in effect a prisoner, under the arrest of divine

vengeance ; but when he rose again, then was our surety let out of

prison. The expression is notable in the text, ■' Brought again the

Lord Jesus from the dead.' The force of the word may be explained

with allusion to that carriage of the apostles when they were cast into

prison : Acts xvi. 35, 37, 39, ' And the magistrates sent to let them go.

Nay, verily,' say they, ' but let them come themselves and fetch us out ,

and they came and brought them out of prison.' So was Christ

brought again. Though Christ had power to rise, yet was he rather

raised. The Lord sent an angel to remove the stone, not to supply

any lack of power in Christ, but as a judge when he is satisfied sendeth

an officer to open the prison doors. Though Christ had power to rise,

yet not authority, till the angel rolled away the stone. He did not

break prison, but was brought again from the dead. Neither did he

perish in prison ; then we could have no assurance of our discharge ;

but as ' he died for our offences, so he rose again for our justification,'

SERMON UPON HEBREWS XIII. 20, 21, 379

Eom. iv. 25, as having perfectly done his work. As the Father

delivered him to death, so he brought him back again from the dead.

The apostle lays a great weight upon this : Eom. viii. 34, ' Tea, rather,

that is risen from the dead.' There is some special thing in Christ's

resurrection comparatively above his death, which hath influence on

our justification. Was not Christ's death enough to free us from sin?

Yes ; but the visible evidence was by his resurrection. It is as it were

an acquittance from those debts of ours which he undertook to pay ; as

Simeon was dismissed when the conditions were performed, and Joseph

satisfied with the sight of his brother : Gen. xliii. 23, ' He brought

Simeon out unto them.'

2. Christ's office is allowed, so that he is ' the great shepherd of the

sheep ; ' that is, the blessed Saviour into whose hands God hath put

his flock, to be justified, sanctified, and saved, and from whom we may

expect all that comfort which a flock hath from a good and faithful

pastor. We are put into his hands as he is Mediator, not by way oi

alienation, for they are in the Father's hands still : John x. 29, ' My

Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to

pluck them out of my Father's hand ; ' but an oppignoration laid at

pledge in his hands. A shepherd is not lord of the flock, but as a

servant to take care of them. They are not his as Mediator by way of

original interest and dominion, but in point of trust and charge. He

hath an office about them, and giveth an account of them at the last

day. He is sometimes called simply, without any addition, \* The

shepherd,' 1 Peter ii. 2.5, 'Ye are retiu\*ned unto the shepherd and

bishop of our souls.' Sometimes Troifirjv 6 /ca\o9, The ' good shepherd,'

as John x. 11 ; and here, ' The great shepherd ; ' and ' The chief shep-

herd,' 1 Peter v. 4, because of the dignity of his person and office.

And surely if we put ourselves into the hands of this shepherd we can

lack nothing : Ps. xxiii. 1, ' The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not

want.' We may look for all manner of supplies from Christ.

3. God is so far appeased that there is a new covenant procured and

constituted, called here ' the everlasting covenant ; ' partly because it

shall never be repealed, and continueth unalterable, and the called

obtain by it the title and possession of an eternal inheritance : Heb. ix.

15, ' They which are called may receive the promise of eternal inherit-

ance/ And partly because Christ's blood is the foundation of this

covenant, and the virtue of it never ceaseth ; therefore this covenant is

everlasting also, and made eftectual and able to obtain its ends, which

is the eternal salvation of sinful man once converted and reconciled to

God. This covenant also is called the covenant of God's peace, because

it is a pubUc demonstration that God is pacified : Isa. liv. 10, ' But

my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of

my peace be removed ; ' Ezek. xxxvii. 26, ' I will make a covenant of

peace with them.' Partly because in this covenant this peace and

reconciliation is published, and offered to us, that man may not stand

aloof from God as a condemning God. So it is said, Eph. ii. 17,

\* Christ came to preach peace to those that are near, and to those that

are afar ofl" ; ' Acts x. 36, ' The word which God sent unto the children

of Israel, preaching peace by Christ ; he is Lord of all.' Partly because

in this covenant the terms of this peace between us and God are stated.

380 SERMON UPON HEBREWS XIII. 20, 21.

God bindetli himself to sinful man to give him remission of sins, and

eternal life begun by the Spirit, and perfected in heaven upon the con-

ditions of faith . Rom. v, 1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace

with God ; ' and repentance : Acts iii. 19, 'Repent and be converted,

that your sins may be blotted out ; ' at our entrance and new obedience

as to continuance . Heb. v, 9, ' He became the author of eternal salva-

tion to all that obey him.'

lY, How we come to be interested in this peace and reconciliation,

or the conveyance of it to us ; for this peace may be considered as ta

the impetration and application of it.

1. As to the impetration and laying down of the price ; that was

done by Christ on the cross. Therefore it is said, 2 Cor. v. 19, ' God

was in Christ reconcilmg the world to himself Then was God pro-

pitiated, and the merit and ransom interposed, by virtue of which we

are pardoned and reconciled.

2. As to application, when God is actually reconciled with us, and

we enter into his peace, and are restored unto his favour. This may

be considered either as to the fij'st gift. God is never actually recon-

ciled to us, nor we to him, till he give us the regenerating Spirit ; that

is our 'receiving the atonement,' Rom. v. 11. It was made on the

cross, but received at our conversion and regeneration. Or else it may

be considered as to the further measure of his sanctifying grace, called

here, ' Perfecting us for every good work, and working in us that which

is pleasing in his sight.' This is given with respect to our reconciled

estate, as we are actually at peace and in covenant with God : 2 Cor.

V. 17, 18, ' Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature :

old things are passed away, behold all things are become new ; and all

things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.'

The sum is this : at the death of Christ there was such a foundation

laid that we need no other ransom nor propitiation. He hath so far

satisfied divine justice that he hath obtained the new covenant. The

first grace is given us merely with respect to the merit of his sacrifice ;

for Christ purchased the mercies promised, and power to perform the

conditions. Further grace is given us because we are already recon-

ciled unto God, which is a ground of the greater joy and confidence ;

for our actual reconciliation giveth us a title to all consequent acts of

friendship which can be expected or received, for in God's way we shall

have further sanctification, and after that salvation.

V. The reasons why all increase of grace comes from God as the

God of peace.

1, From the giver. God will not set us up with a new stock of

grace till satisfaction be made for the breach of his law. We must

not look upon him as 'pars qfensa, the offended party, but as rector

mundi, the governor of the w^orld. Private persons may forgive offences

as they please, but the governor and judge of the world would not pass

by the offence of man till the ends of government be secured, or that

the law fall not to the ground, which it doth not whilst God standeth

upon the satisfaction of Christ and the submission of the sinner. The

right of passing by a wrong, and the right of releasing a punishment,

are diflerent things ; because punishment is a common interest, and is

referred to the common good, to preserve order, and for an example to

SERMON UPON HEBREWS XIII. 20, 21. 381

others. Certainly punishment doth not belong to the wronged party

as such j then every one would have a right to punish, and so invade

the power of the magistrate. A private person hath a right of seeking

restitution or compensation for the wrong done to him, unless higher

reasons of charity forbid him, but not a power to compel them to pun-

ishment unless satisfaction be given. But the case is different ; here

God punisheth non qua Icesus, sed qua rector, not as the offended party,

but as a governor. Now the government of the world requires God's

holiness should be demonstrated, and his laws vindicated, and a brand

put upon sin.

2. From the gift, which is the sanctifying Spirit, which, being the

gift of his love, must needs be the fruit of his peace and reconciliation

with us - Eom. v. 5, ' Because the love of God is shed abroad in our

hearts by the Holy Ghost.' Other things may be given us during his

anger, for God showeth himself placable in the whole course of his

providence. Yea, they may be given in anger, but the regenerating

Spirit is never given us during his anger or in anger. Sanctifying

grace doth evidence his special favour. Look, as the payment of the

ransom was testified by the visible pouring out the Spirit, Acts ii., so

is our particular reconciliation by the gift of the Spirit to us.

Use 1. Is of instruction.

1. How we are to look upon God in our prayers, as the God of peace,

reconciled to us by Jesus Christ. When we pray to him, we look upon

him as a God of grace : 1 Peter v. 10, ' But the God of all grace, who

hath called us,' &c. This showeth his propension and inclination to

communicate his grace freely to unworthy sinners. We also pray to

him as the God of power : Rom. xvi. 15, ' Now to him that is of power

to establish you according to my gospel.' But here we are directed to

look upon him as the God of peace, as pacified in Christ, which is a

greater ground of confidence. If a socinian were to pray to him, he

could only use the plea of Benhadad to Ahab, ' We have heard the kings

of Israel are merciful kings ; ' so we have heard the God of Israel is a

merciful God. If the papist would pray with confidence, he thinketh

he must appease God by himself, by his penal satisfactions and costly

offerings ; as Jacob would appease Esau by sending gifts to him, Gen.

xxxii. 20 ; but the penitent believer is reconciled to God by Christ :

Eom. v. 1, 2, ' Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with

God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by

faith,' &c. He cometh to God in his name, and no other : John xvi.

23, 24, ' In that day ye shall ask me nothing ; verily, verily, I say

unto you. Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will

give it you. Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name ; ask and

you shall receive, that your joy may be full.' He runneth to the horns

of the altar, accepteth of the peace published in the gospel, devoteth

himseK to God, and rests upon Christ's mediatorial sacrifice as suffi-

cient. Here is his hope and confidence.

2. How careful we should be that no breach fall out between us and

God, lest we stop grace at the fountain-head. Continued sanctifica-

tion cometh from the God of peace, as well as the first renovation of

the heart. The giving the Spirit is a sign of God's love, and the with-

holding of the Spirit is a sign of his anger and displeasure ; the one is

382 SERMON UPON HEBREWS XIII. 20, 21.

the greatest mercy, the other the greatest misery. In his internal

government, the one is the highest reward, the other the greatest

punishment. As a reward it is spoken of Prov. i. 23, ' Turn you at

my reproof : behold I will pour my Spirit upon you ; I will make

known my words unto you.' As a punishment : Ps. li. 10-12, ' Create

in me a clean heart, God, and renew a right spirit within me ; cast

me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me :

restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free

Spirit.' The one is to be sought : Luke xi. 13, ' How much more will

j'our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ? '

the other to be deprecated : ' Take not thy Holy Spirit from me ; ' Ps,

li. 11. Therefore take heed the Spirit be not grieved, but obeyed.

3. What ground of thankfulness to Christ —

[1.] That he hath made our peace with God at so dear a rate. All

your repentings, if you had wept out your eyes for sin, would not have

made your peace with God, nor have satisfied his justice, nor procured

pardon and life for you. Now God is appeased, Christ having ' slain

the enmity by his cross,' Eph. ii. 16.

[2.] That the new covenant is procured, wherein pardon and salva-

tion is offered to you, as sealed by the blood of Christ, who hath paid

our debts: Luke xxii. 20, 'This cup is the new testament in my

blood, which is shed for you.' There had been else no place for your

repentance, faith, prayer, or hopes.

[3.] That such free and easy conditions of mercy, with power to per-

form them, are propounded in the gospel : ' Lord, thou wilt ordain

peace for us, for thou also hast wrought all our works in us,' Isa.

xxvi. 12.

[4.] That he should call us, and have such favourable thoughts to

us, who for a long time were dead in sin, and in hostility against him :

Kom. V. 10, ' For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God

by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be

saved by his life.'

PREACHED ON A DAY OF PUBLIC

THANKSGIVIiNG.

But Hezekiah rendered not according to the benefit done unto him; for

his heart loas lifted up : therefom^e ivraih ivas upon him, and upon

Judah and. Jerusalem. — 2 Chron. xxxii. 25.

That I may not detain you in a preface, let me tell you the words

hold forth —

1. A sin, ' But Hezekiah rendered not according to the benefit done

unto him.'

2. The proof and argument of it, ' For his heart was lifted up.'

3. The sad effects and punishment of it, both as to his own person

and the people under his government.

Let me explain these branches, and then come to observe something

in order to the work of the day. I know, christians, you look not for

things luscious, but savoury.

1. In the sin there was a benefit done unto him, and Hezekiah's

fault is that he ' rendered not accordingly.' The benefit done him

implieth a complication of mercies ; not only his miraculous recovery

out of sickness, and fifteen years added more to his life, but also the

destruction of his enemies the Assyrians ; mercies which fell out near

about the same time ; though I dare not say, with the Jewish Avi-iters,

that three days before the slaughter of the Assyrians this sickness and

recovery fell out ; yet certainly they were near together, as appeareth

from 2 Kings xx. 6, ' And I will add unto thy days fifteen years, and

I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria.'

The report of which flying abroad, all the princes round about him

stood in awe of him ; his neighbours sent him presents ; his treasures

were increased ; yea, nations remote, and those of no small power, as

the king of Babylon, reckoned to be seven hundred mUes distant from

Jerusalem, sent congratulatory embassies to his court. Well, then,

Hezekiah was looked upon as one highly in favour with God, honoured

of men, coiu'ted on every side with costly and precious presents, and so

grew full of treasure and wealth. When such strong winds fill the

sails, it is hard to steer right. This was the benefit done to him ; all

things fell out according to his heart's desire, and concurred to the lift-

384 SERMON PREACHED ON A DAY OF PUBLIC THANKSGIVING.

ing up his heart : ' Hezekiah rendered not according.' How can that

be ? He was a holy man and a thankful man. He penneth a psalm

of thanksgiving, and sung it yearly as a memorial of God's mercies to

him ; Isa. xxxviii. 9, ' The writing of Hezekiah, king of Judah, when

he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness.' God will not be

complimented with. It is not words and ceremonies, formal acknow-

ledgments and days of thanksgiving, that God standeth upon, but holy

and humble carriage under mercies ; and therefore Hezekiah, though

he rendered somewhat to God, he ' rendered not according.' There was

a defect which is here charged as his sin. He should have carried it

more humbly, as holding his life and kingdom and everything of the

grace of God.

2. The proof and argument. How doth it appear that he rendered

not according ? ' His heart was lifted up.' There is a twofold lifting

up of the heart — in a way of zeal and encouragement in the Lord's

ways. So it is said of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xvii. 5, 6, that he had

' presents, and riches, and honours in abundance ; and his heart was

lifted up in the way of the Lord : moreover he took away the high

places and groves out of Judah.' This is a good lifting up, when a

man groweth cheerful and undaunted in the Lord's work, and therefore

falleth a-reforming, whatever it cost him. He knoweth the God of his

mercies will bear him out. But there is a carnal lifting up of the heart,

in a way of pride and vainglory, or daring violence and oppression.

Thus it is said of Amaziah, after he had smitten the Edomites, 2 Chron.

XXV. 19, 'That his heart was lifted up to boast ; ' and this was in part

Hezekiah's sin. Indeed it is not easy to state the kind of his pride.

[1.] Whether the pride of arrogancy or self-ascription, or taking

God's part to himself, as if the blessings were merited by him ; a

disease incident to the creature when exalted : Deut. ix. 4, ' Speak not

thou in thine heart after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out

from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought

me in to possess this land ; ' and therefore God puts in a caution

against it.

[2.] Or else conceit, musing upon and admiring his own greatness ;

as the king of Babylon strutteth and vaunteth, 'Is not this great

Babylon, which I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might

of my power, and for the honour of my majesty ? ' Dan. iv. 30. Pride,

of all sins, puts men upon vain musings : Luke i. 51, \* He hath scattered

the proud in the imaginations of their hearts.' Proud men, of all

others, are subject to imaginations, or self-admiriug thoughts. His

heart was too much tickled. In the story it is said, when Merodach

Baladan sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, Isa. xxxix. 2, ' He was

glad of them;' wherein the secret intimation of his spirit was discovered.

Or else —

[3.] The pride of security or self-dependence. When we are well,

God is forgotten ; good men are apt to sleep upon a carnal pillow or

bolster, and dream many a pleasant dream, till God taketh it away

from under their heads: Ps. xxx. 6, 'And in my prosperity I said, I

shall never be moved.' Carnal confidence is very natural. Or —

[4.] The pride of vainglory or ostentation. He seemeth to be tainted

with a spice of that vanity by showing his treasure to the ambassadors

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SERMON UPON A DAY OF PUBLIC THANKSGIVING, 385

of the king of Babylon : ' He showed them the house of his precious

things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious oint-

ment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was in his treasures ;

there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiali

showed them not,' Isa. xxxix. 2. Whether one or more, or all, I will

not determine ; they are all branches of the same root. Certainly, vain

men are apt to be puffed up in all these kinds, that have had deliver-

ances far less strange than was this of Hezekiab.

3. Come we now to explain the punishment and sad effects of this

great failing : ' Wrath was upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

[1.] Upon his particular person, ' Wrath was upon him.' There is

a near link between pride and wrath. His ' heart was lifted up,' and

presently ' wrath was upon liim : ' Prov. xmi. 12, ' Before destruction

the heart of man is haughty.' It is a sure sign of the loss of our com-

forts, parts, estate, children, authority, when we grow proud of them.

It is a sin that God deeply detesteth, and will severely chasten it, even

in his own dearest children : \* Wrath was upon him ; ' sentence was

passed, but execution respited. All was well for the present. Wrath

is said to be upon us as soon as sentence is passed. Men think not so,

but God judgeth so : ' Wrath was upon him.' Doth it stay there ?

No.

[2.] Upon his people. It followeth, ' And upon all Judah and Jeru-

salem.' The whole land smarts for the sins of magistrates. Delirant

reges, kings offend. 'Hezekiah's heart was lifted up.' Pleduntur

Achi'vi, the people are punished. Judah and Jerusalem are obnoxious

to the stroke of God's vengeance. But how can this stand with the

Lord's justice? 'What have these sheep done?' as Dcivid said in a

like case, 2 vSam. xxiv. 17. I answer — They had done enough to ruin

them long since. Hezekiah's sin was not the main cause, but one great

occasion of hastening the judgment. Sometimes God takes occasion

to punish magistrates for the people's sin : Prov. xxviii. 2, ' For the

transgressirn of a land many are the princes thereof.' The government

is often altered, and they are tossed from hand to hand as a just pun-

ishment. At other times the people are punished for the magistrates'

sins : Zech. x. 3, ' Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and

I punished the goats.' A great oak cannot fall but all the little shrubs

about it suffer loss. On the other side, when the burning beginneth at

a cottage, it may increase till it come to the palace. If the dispensa-

tion seem harsh, remember that God would involve us in one another's

judgments, to make us more careful of one another's duties ; that when

magistrates transgress, the people may mourn, and, with that modesty

which will suit with the duty of theh place, give warning of the danger.

And magistrates may not give liberty to the wickedness of the people,

lest they bring a judgment on their own heads.

I have given you some view of the words, let me come to the points.

1. That those that have received mercies must be careful to give in

answerable returns, or to render according to what they have received.

2. That it is a sign we are unthankful for mercies when our hearts

are lifted up under the enjoyment of mercies.

3. Pride and unthanld'ulness is a sad intimation of approaching

wrath and destruction.

VOL. XYII. 2 B

386 SERMON UPON A DAY OF PUBLIC THANKSGIVING.

4. When a ruler's heart is lifted up, and doth not thankfully improve

the mercies received from God, the whole land may smart for it.

I shall speak but to the two first of these points —

\* Doct 1. That those that have received mercies must be careful to

give in answerable returns, or to render according to what they have

received. It was Hezekiah's sin that he did not render according.

Here I shall inquire what it is to render according to Mdiat we have

received. Observe — (1.) There must be a rendering ; (2.) A render-

ing according to the rate and kind of our receipts.

I. A rendering. There is a reflection upon God from all his works.

Hell-fire casts back the reflection of the lustre of his justice and the

power of his wrath. The world is round, and the motion of all things

circular ; they begin in God, and end in God ; their being is from him,

and the tendency of their motion is to him : Eom. xi. 36, ' For of him,

and through him, and to him are all things.' All things do thus reflect

upon God : ' The wrath of man shall praise thee,' Ps. Ixxvi. 10. We

should want many occasions of rejoicing in God if it were not for the

wrath of man ; thus God is glorified passively. All events turn to a

good account ; thus all creatures praise him : Ps. cxlv. 10, ' All thy

works shall praise thee, Lord ; ' the creatures offer matter of praise to

God.

But we speak of the active rendering and returning praise to God.

There are many words used in this matter. Those three which are

most solemn are, praise, blessing, and thanksgiving ; which last is the

solemn word of the new testament, as being proper to the dispensa-

tion of it, God's benefits being now fully manifested and accomplished.

There is a difference between these three terms. Praise respects God's

excellency, as I may praise a man that never did me good. Blessing,

God's benefits ; it is an echo to him : Eph. i. 3, ' Blessed be the God

and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all

spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' And thankful-

ness is not only declared in word, but in deed. These three should

always go together. We should gather up God's excellences out of

his providences, and acknowledge the mercy, and live the life of love

and praise. Or, if you will, in rendering praise to God these things

concur — (1.) We must be affected with the mercies ; (2.) Solemnly

praise God for them ; (3.) Kenew the remembrance of them ; (4.)

Improve them to some good use.

1. We must be affected with the mercy. Formal speeches are but

an empty prattle, which God regardeth not. David first calleth upon

his heart: Ps. ciii. 1, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is

within me bless his holy name.' The noblest faculties must be exer-

cised in the noblest work. Is the soul raised into an admiration of

God ? church adversaries took up the customary form : Isa. Ixvi. 5,

' Your brethren that hate you, that cast you out for my name's sake,

said. Let the Lord be glorified.' In an instrument of music, the more

the sound cometh out of the belly of it the sweeter ; if we expect flame,

we presuppose fire. When the heart is full of gracious affections, the

tongue will be loosed to praise God : Ps. xlv. 1, ' My heart is inditing

a good matter, my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.'

2. Solemn praising God for them. It is an honourable work ; love

SERMON UPON A DAY OF PUBLIC THANKSGIVING. 387

is the grace of heaven, praise the duty of heaven. There is no room

for faith nor use of prayer. It is angels' work, as sin is the devil's

work. It is good to be preparing for our everlasting estate. It is

comely for the saints : Ps. cxlvii. 1, ' Praise the Lord, for it is good

to sing praises unto our God ; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely.'

Usually we thrust gratulation into a narrow room : it is a stranger

in our public worship. Self-love will put us upon supplication, and

our wants will beget a natural fervency in prayer. We are eager

to have blessings, but we forget to return to give God the glory •. Hosea

V. 15, ' In their affliction they will seek me early.' This is self-love,

not religion. All the ten lepers could say, ' Jesus, Master, have mercy

upon us,' Luke xvii. 13, but only ' one of them, when he was healed,

turned l3ack, and with a loud voice glorified God,' ver. 15. Pharaoh

could pray when God's hand was upon him. Oh ! it is the more

honourable thing to give thanks, and it is profitable : Ps. Ixvii. 5, 6,

\* Let the people praise thee, God, let all the people praise thee ; then

shall the earth yield her increase.' There is a KVKXoyevveai,';, a circular

generation, between vapours and showers. Vapours cause showers, and

showers cause vapours. The course of mercy is stopped when God is

not praised. Where do husbandmen bestow their seed most plentifully,

but where the ground yieldeth most increase ? When the land faileth

year after year, men withhold their seed. God will not bury mercies in

the grave of unthankfulness. It is a due to God ; it is his bargain with

us : Ps. 1. 15, ' Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee,

and thou shalt glorify me.' He expects it as the return of all his mer-

cies. Glory and praise are the revenues of the crown of heaven, the

rent reserved to God. We have the comfort and use, God will have

the glory and praise. We promised it to him : Ps. li. 15, ' Lord, open

thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.' Want of

mercies maketh us prize them. If we would look upon the vows of

our affliction, we should find cause to value our enjoyments. It is our

privilege, as men, that we have a tongue to bless God : James iii. 9,

\* Therewith bless we God, even the Father.' Therefore our tongue is

called our glory : Ps. cviii. 1, ' I will sing and give praise, even with

my glory.' Beasts have no reason, angels no tongue. Praise is neces-

sary to give vent to our affections, yea, to increase them. Fire warmeth

the hearth, and then the warmth of the hearth doth preserve the fire.

Praise is necessary to convey our affections to others, as one bird may

set the whole flight on chirping.

3. Kenewing the remembrance of them : Ps. cxi. 4, ' He hath made

his wonderful works to be remembered ; the Lord is gracious and full

of compassion.' Great deliverances are things not to be once mentioned,

and no more, whilst the experience is warm upon our hearts ; when

the act is over, we should be remembering again and again.

4. The merries must be improved to a greater trust in God, and love

and fear oi God, and obedience to him.

[1.] Trust. The more we know of his name, the more should we

trust him : Ps. Ixiv. 10, ' The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and

shall trust in him.' That is true praise and thanksgiving that endeth

in trust. It is the purest respect of the creature, and that which

keepeth up a respect between God and us; faith is the best thanks.

388 SERMON UPON A DAT OF PUBLIC THANKSGIVING.

I doubt we are not spiritual enough in our returns to Grod. We content

ourselves with verbal praises, and do not look after the growth of faith

and trust : 2 Cor. i. 10, ' Who delivered us from so great a danger,

and doth deliver ; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.' He

findeth it growing upon him whilst he was mentioning of it. Every

experience we have is a condescension in God towards the strengthen-

ing of our faith.

[2.] Love ; it is a special part of this rendering. God will be loved

again where he loveth first. Radius rejiexus Icmguet. The cold wall

will reverberate and beat back the sunbeams ; a little water put into a

pump fetches up more: Ps. cxvi. 1, 2, 'I love the Lord, because he

hath heard my voice and my supplication ; because he hath inclined

his ear to me, therefore I will call upon him as long as I live.' God

is more endeared to us. Love him as thy Father in Christ. Every

mercy cometh wrapped in his bowels to the saints, and swimming in

his blood. When Moses had received mercies, Deut. x. 12, 'Now,'

saith he, ' what doth the Lord require of thee, but to fear the Lord

thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to love him, and to serve the

Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul ? ' We have a

good master, and love is one chief part of our work. We were bound

to love him if he had never done us good, much more when he is so

gracious. It is the end of all common mercies : Deut. xxx. 20, ' That

thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his

voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him, for he is thy life, and the

length of thy days.'

[3.] Fear, that we dare not offend so good a God. That is a true

improvement : Hosea iii. 5, ' Afterwards shall the children of Israel

return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall

fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.' When we grow

more presumptuous because we are well at ease, that is naught ; but

when it increaseth our reverence of God, and holy fear and trembling,

then it works kindly. You that have been conscious to the terrible

things of righteousness which God hath executed in the high places of

the field, you should fear, love, and trust him more than others. You

see what a great God he is, that he will find out those that hate him.

How suddenly can he blast worldly confidence, however supported !

and how able is he to protect those that trust in him ! Will you ofi'end

such a God ? These changes do not only speak duty to the enemies, but

to you. Habakkuk trembled at the thought of God's judgments on

Babylon : Hab. iii. 16, ' When I heard, my belly trembled, my lips

quivered at the voice ; ' and David : Ps. cxix. 120, ' My flesh trembleth

for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.' It is an appear-

ance of God, and tender hearts melt at it, as a lion trembleth to see a

dog beaten. Tender hearts are affected with the wrath that lighteth

upon others, especially when they are the instruments.

[4.] Obedience. You should walk the more humbly and strictly

with God. David was at a loss : ' What shall I render ? ' This was

one of his resolutions : Ps. cxvi. 9, ' I will walk before the Lord in the

land of the living.' This is your duty, to bind yourselves to a more

humble and holy walking with God. This is a good use of experiences.

The army that have seen so much of God should be a school of piety to

SERMON UPON A DAY OF PUBLIC THANKSGIVING. 389

the nation. There is a notable place : Judges ii. 7, ' And the people

served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders

that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord

that he did for Israel.' Whilst there were any to keep alive the memo-

rial of such experiences, what an awe was it upon their hearts ! Oh !

that you could get your hearts in such a frame. Methinks you should

have such arguings as this : Shall I, that have seen the wonders of the

Lord, be proud, vain, carnal, contemptuous of holy things ? Such holy

reasonings argue a good frame : Ezra ix. 13, ' Seeing that thou our

God hast given us such deliverance as this, should we again break thy

commandments ? ' Certainly none sin so dearly, and with so much

expense, as a people saved by the Lord's mercies.

II. To render accordingly, What is that ? It implieth two

things —

1. Keal mercies require real acknowledgments. When your lives

were in jeopardy in the high places of the field, did God compliment

with you, or save in jest ? And now, in the day of your thanksgivings,

wiU you compliment with God, and put him off with a little bodily

presence ? What is a little cold thanks if you be proud and injurious,

and despisers of the ministry, regardless of God's institutions, cavilling

at his ordinances, neglectful of church-communion, a thing grown into

fashion with many ; they content themselves with a loose profession of

Christ, living out of the communion of any particular church ; a sad

thing! God would have coals lie together. Wine is best preserved in

the hogshead, and saints in communion. Did God take their thanks

well that would own a mercy but oppress the people ? Zech. xi. 5,

' Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty, and they

that sell them say. Blessed be God, I am rich.' They were grown great

and high, and God must have the glory by all means ; but they used

the people severely at their own pleasure. There was a thanksgiving,

but withal there was disobedience and abuse of authority ; and in that

case keeping a day will be to no purpose. The devil's leading Christ

to the top of the pinnacle was but to persuade him to cast himself down

again.

2. The acknowledgment must answer the proportion of the mercy,

be it in word or deed. It is true we cannot vie with God for degree

and measure, but we must do what we can.

[1.] If the acknowledgment be in word: Ps. cxlv. 3, 'Great is the

Lord, and greatly to be praised ; ' it must be taken notice of in a more

than ordinary manner. The more of God is manifest, the more it

should be taken notice of : Ps. cl. 2, ' Praise him according to his excel-

lent greatness.' According to the great appearances and manifestations

of God so must our praises be : ' Let the high praises of God be in their

mouth,' Ps. cxlix. 6. There are higher and lower praises, more and

less solemn according to the proportion and size of our mercies. The

spouse's eyes were as ' dove's eyes,' Cant. iv. 1, to peck and look

upward.

[2.] If in deed, some notable thing must be done for God. When

Ahasuerus had heard of a good deed done by Mordecai, he saith, What

lionour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this ? Esther vi.

3. So, what honour hath been done to the Lord ? What have we

390 SERMON UPON A DAY OF PUBLIC THANKSGIVING.

done for him ? Saitli David, 2 Sam. vii. 2, 'I dwell in a house of cedar,

but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.' The Lord hath advanced

me from a sheep-hook to a sceptre ; what love have I showed to God ?

what excellent thing have I done for God ? wherein am I carried out

with zeal for God ?

Use. To reprove —

1. Those that, instead of rendering according, render the quite con-

trary, who, the more God liath blessed them, grow unthankful, proud,

sensual, dead, formal in prayer, less in communion with God, more

licentious in their actions. They are like tops, never well but when

they are scourged ; abuse their mercies to the contempt of God, as the

Israelites took the earrings of gold and silver, which were the spoils of

the Egyptians, and made a golden calf of them. As the sea turneth

all the sweet dews and influences of heaven into salt water, so they turn

all their mercies into occasions of sin.

2. Those that do not render aught at all. They are crying for mercy,

but think not of returning thanks to God, but, when they have what

they would have, turn the back upon God, not the face : Jer. ii. 27, ' In

the time of their trouble they will say, Arise and save us ; ' then their

face is to God. There was a law in Ezekiel xlvi, 9, ' He that entereth

in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by way of the

south gate,' &c. He that went in at one gate was not to go out at the

same gate, but an opposite ; some say, lest he should turn his back upon

the mercy-seat.

3. Those that render something, but not suitable. If you would

render according, you must be in a capacity. Under the law, the peace-

offering was brought at the top of a burnt-offering, Lev. iii. 3. We

must be first reconciled to God before we can do anything acceptable.

Awaken the heart to the work. David awakens his soul : Ps. ciii. 1,

Bless the Lord, my soul ; and all that is within me, bless his holy

name.' Search out the works of God : Ps. cxi. 2, ' The works of the

Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure in them.'

Consider what the world gaineth by every discovery of God, what

attributes of God are manifested, what promises are accomplished, how

church hopes thrive. Desire God to give you the heart to render, that

he that gave the occasion would give the disposition : Ps. li. 15, ' Lord,

open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.' We

are spiritually dumb and tongue-tied. Eeason and argue from your

experiences to your duty : Ezra ix. 13, ' Seeing thou hast given us such

a deliverance as this, shall we again break thy commandments ? ' When

you have done all, you will be at a loss : Ps. cxvi. 12, ' What shall I

render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me ? ' He that hath a

right sense of God's mercies will be forced to say so ; and therefore be

striving more and more.

Doct. 2. That it is a sign we are unthankful under mercies when the

heart is lifted up upon the enjoyment of them. The Spirit of God

bringetb this as the evidence against Hezekiah.

Eeasons of the point.

1. Because God can never be rightly praised and exalted while the

heart is proud : Isa. ii. 17, ' And the loftiness of men shall be made low,

and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.' God is exalted in

SEKMON UPON A DAY OF PUBLIC THANKSGIVING. 391

the creatures' self-abasement ; as two buckets in a well, when one goeth

clown, the other cometh up. The ark and dagon cannot stand together,

1 Sam. V. 3. Set up the ark, and dagon must come upon his face. If

you would have God exalted in the riches of his grace, you must lie

in the dust.

2. A proud, lifted-up heart cannot be rightly conversant about bless-

ings. It doth not give them their due rise, nor their due value, nor

their due end.

[1.] Not their due rise. Many will say God did it. ' God, I thank

thee/ was in the pharisee's mouth, Luke xviii. 11 ; but they do not

stand wondering why God should do it ; as David : 2 Sam. vii. 18,

\* Who am I, Lord God ? and what is my father's house, that thou

hast brought me hitherto ? ' that God should look upon a worm, whence

is it ? what did God see in me ? They actually disclaim all respect,

and worth, and merit in themselves, that praise God aright.

[2.] A proud heart doth not give blessings their due value. He

looketh for more still, he entertaineth crosses with murmuring, and

blessings with disdain. It is but thus and thus, and still set God a new

task to do : Ps. Ixxviii. 20, ' Behold he smote the rock, and the waters

gushed out, and the streams overflowed ; can he give bread also ? can

he provide flesh for his people ? ' They slight what is past if they have

not what they look for : ' All this availeth me nothing, as long as I see

Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate,' Esther v. 13 ; Mai. i. 2, 'I

have loved you, saith the Lord ; yet they say, Wherein hast thou

loved us ? ' Where are all those mercies and glorious experiences ? It

is all forgotten and undervalued. If the mercies fit not our mould, all

is nothing.

[3.] It doth not give blessings their due ends. God giveth us mercies

that we might be more holy and humble, and pride maketh us more

carnal and insolent and secure ; and so we feed our lusts of the Lord's

provision. He gives mercies that ' we may be lifted up in his ways,'

2 Chron. xvii. 6, that we might promote his interest the more cheerfully,

without baseness, fear, or carnal respects. But pride abuseth it to care-

lessness, contempt of holy things, insultation over those that are fallen

under God's hand : Dent, xxxii. 15, \* Jeshurun waxed wanton and

kicked.' They despise the ordinances of God, and dispute away duties,

and cavil at religion. Is this the fruit of our deliverances ?

How shall we know when the heart is lifted up ? Pride is a

capacious sin, therefore called ' pride of life,' 1 John ii. 16, because it

is a sin that difi"useth itself throughout all affairs and conditions of life ,

children, estate, beauty, strength, parts, honours, graces. A worm may

breed in manna. Paul was puff'ed up : 2 Cor. xii. 7, ' Lest I should

be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations,

there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to

buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measm-e.' But the text

speaketh of a pride after deliverances, which is a self-blessing and self-

depending confidence ; which is mainly shown — (1.) In security ; (2.)

In insolency.

(1.) In security. Men live as if they were above changes. God is

neglected, or but coldly owned, as if now we had no more need of him :

Lam. i. 9, ' She remembered not her last end, therefore she came down

392 SERMON UPON A DAY OF PUBLIC THANKSGIVING.

■wonderfully ; ' that is, she was not mindful of the changes and muta-

tions to which all things are obnoxious. Men usually lose their sense

of duty with their fears. The heart growetli flat and dead in prayer,

not carried out with such zeal and earnestness as when we were in dis-

tress. Or it takes us ofi" from what we proposed in our affliction, and

al] our vows and promises are forgotten.

(2.) In insolency. This is manifested —

{1st) By contention. When we are delivered, then we revive the

old quarrels ; as timber warpeth in the sunshine. When God giveth

us success, then follow divisions. The greatest strife is in dividing the

spoil : ' Only by pride cometh contention,' saith Solomon, Prov. xiii.

10. Plenty and ease begetteth pride, Dioclesian's persecution was

brought on by the factious carriage of the christians themselves, con-

tending for the honours of the church. In king Edward's days, when

there was a little breathing, then was there a contention for ceremonies.

{2d) By insultation over enemies. True they are under, but it is

unmanly to speak to the grief of those whom God hath wounded. If

our mercies cannot be advanced but by the fall of our brethren, let us

not insult, but pity them. David grieved when Saul fell, and fasted

for his enemies. Those whom the hand of the Lord hath touched

have a kind of reverence due to them ; as places blasted with thunder

and lightning were accounted sacred Judges xxi. 6, ' And the

children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother.'

{3d) By oppression and violence : ' Because it is in the power of

their hands,' Micah ii. 1. Power doth mightily draw forth corruption.

Tenderness of conscience should be a restraint where public force is

not. This I can do, but I dare not. But when men employ their power

for hurt, not for good, and think to be borne out in a sinful course by

their strength and power, it is pride and carnal confidence.

Use. christians ! beware of being lifted up in any kind.

1. Take heed of secret thoughts of merit : Dent. ix. 4, ' Speak not

thou in thine heart after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out

from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought

me in to possess this land.' Though there be not such formal thoughts

or downright expressions, yet this is the implied thought. There are

explicit thoughts and implicit thoughts ; the one is actually and

sensibly conceived in the mind, the other lurk and lie hid there, and

our actions being interpreted, are necessarily resolved into such thoughts.

As when you are scornful and pitiless, vaunting yourselves above others,

and do not actually admire the riches of the Lord's goodness, surely

there is some latent thought of merit in the heart. You may take

notice of God's justice, but still you must admire free grace.

2. Take heed of ascribing to your wisdom, power, and conduct. Man

would fain be faher foriunce suce, the author of his own happiness,

jostling God out of his thoughts : Hab. i. 16, ' They sacrifice to then-

net, and burn incense to their drag, because by them their portion is

fat and their meat plenteous ; ' insulting and glorying in their wisdom

and strength. Though a man doth not fall down as a gross idolater,

and perform rites of devotion, yet his thoughts run this way, and so

God is laid aside. God giveth his people warning of this : Deut. viii.

14, ' Let not thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy

SERMON UPON A DAY OF PUBLIC THANKSGIVING. 393

God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt ; ' and ver. 17, ' And

thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of my hand hath

gotten this wealth/ Why should the Lord give so many warnings if

we were not exceeding prone to this ? We should throw our crowns

at God's feet. It is enough for us to be poor instruments in God's

hand. I hope you came here before the Lord with such a design this

day, to strip yourselves, and give all the glory to God.

3. Take heed of the pride of self-dependence. Hereby the heart is

taken off from God, and then the devil hath us upon the hip. He that

swimmeth in a full stream is apt to be carried away with the stream.

It is a hard, matter to see the nothingness of the creaiure when we

enjoy the fulness of the creature. Man's thoughts are always swallowed

up with his present condition. In misery we think we shall never

come out of it ; in prosperity, that it will never be otherwise. Paul

could say, ' As having nothing, yet possessing all things,' 2 Cor. vi. 10.

Few can say, As possessing all things and having nothing, so as to sit

loose from our worldly dependences : ' I have learned to abound ; ' it

is an harder lesson than ' I have learned to be abased,' Phil. iv. 12, as

there is more of choice in it, and less of necessity. We are beaten to

the other. We use to say, Such a one would do well to be a lord or

a lady. It is an harder matter than you are aware of. Many have

done well in a low condition that could not manage an higher,

\* Ephraim is a cake not turned,' Hosea vii. 8 ; not baked of both sides,

so as to walk with an holy equality and evenness of spirit in all condi-

tions. You think it is hard to bear miseries ; it is as hard to master

comforts, to carry a full cup without spilling, and to keep from sur-

feiting at a rich and luscious banquet. Few know how to abound.

To prick these windy bladders in solemn remembrances of mercy,

such things as these are necessary.

[1.] A special recognition and recalling of sins is not unseasonable.

Let the warm sun melt you : Ezek. xxsvi. 30, 31, ' I will multiply the

fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no

more reproach of famine among the heathen ; then shall ye remember

your ways and doings that have not been good, and shall loathe your-

selves in your own sight for all your iniquities.' When mercies humble

us and set us a-mourniug, it is a kindly work. Moses bowed himself

when the Lord proclaimed the name of his mercy. Oh ! bow your-

selves ; poor worthless creatures, that God should look upon us !

[2.] Meditate upon the changes of providence. Things are at a great

uncertainty in the world. Hezekiah is delivered and then falls sick ;

he is delivered again, and then groweth proud ; and then came wrath

upon him, and upon all Judah and Jerusalem : Ps. xxxix. 5, ' Verily

every man at his best estate is altogether vanity ; ' not only in his worst,

but at his best estate ; when he is in his zenith, then he is at the

vertical point. Verily this is a truth should be stamped deeply upon

all our hearts. Belisarius, a famous general to-day, and within a little

while forced to beg for a halfpenny. Things and persons are as the

spokes of a wheel, sometimes in the dirt, and sometimes out. The

church complaineth, Ps. cii. 10, ' Thou hast lifted me up and cast me

down ; ' a sad dejection after some comfortable elevation. All outward

glory is like a glass, transparent, but brittle. Paul was rapt in the third

-394 SERMON UPON A DAY OF PUBLIC TnANKSGIVING.

heaven, and was full of unspeakable ravishments and revelations, yet

presently he talketh of a thorn in the flesh. Now, at your best think

of this, that you may inure your thoughts to changes, and settle your

solid happiness in God. David, when he had a glorious victory, speak-

eth of losing, and God's blasting their armies, Ps. Ix. 10, compared

with the title ; he acknowledgeth past judgments as the fruit of God's

displeasure. In the Roman triumphs there was one to remember them

of their mortality in the midst of their pomp. Yea, under the law

leavened cakes were allowed in peace-offerings and sacrifices of thanks-

giving, which were forbidden in other sacrifices : Lev. vii. 13, ' He

shall offer for his offering leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanks-

giving of his peace-offerings,' to teach us to temper our joys with the

thousrht of sorrow and affliction.

SERMON UPON LUKE XXII. 31, 32.

A7id the Lard said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to Jiave

you, that he may sij^ you as loheat: hut I have prayed for thee,

that thy faith fail not ; and ivhen thou art converted, strengthen

thy brethren. — Luke xxii. 31, 32.

In the words observe two things — (1.) A warning of clanger approach-

ing, ver. 31 ; (2.) A comfort propounded, ver 32.

First, In the first branch observe —

1. The person to whom Christ directeth his words ; to Peter, though

they concerned all the rest, for it was not him only whom Satan desired

to sift, but all of them ; but Christ speaks to him in particular, because

it most concerned him. The devil would vex all of them, but our Lord

foresaw that he would more grievously fall than his fellow-disciples,

and, being more fervent and confident than the rest, was more exposed

to temptations ; and when he addresseth his speech to him, he calleth

him not Peter, but Simon. It was, Mat. xvi. 18, ' Thou art Peter, and

upon this rock will I build my church ;' q. d., the name by which thou

art known to me signifieth a rock and stone. But this was when he

uttered his good confession ; but now he was to be an instance of

human frailty, he calleth him not Peter, but Simon. And mark

the ingemination of his name, 'Simon, Simon.' This doubling of his

name doth partly intimate aflection, and is as much as to say. My

dear Simon ; partly to stir up a serious attention, that he might mark

what is said.

2. The danger itself, ' Behold Satan hath desired to have you, that

he may sift you as wheat.' Where observe —

[1.] The author and procurer of this trouble, the devil, called here

Satan, that is an adversary. Our danger is mainly from the devil ; he

hath a great hand in the troubles of God's people. He assaulteth them

himself by his wiles, and fiery darts, Eph. vi. 11 and 16, and stirreth

up his instruments to persecute them : Luke xxii. 53, ' This is your

hoiu", and the power of darkness.' That was the time when the devil

and his instruments were permitted to work their wills on Christ;

when the shepherd was smitten, and the flock scattered abroad.

[2.] The way how he bringeth it about, ' He hath desired to have

you.' It intimateth two things —

396 SERMON UPON LUKE XXII. 31, 32.

(1.) He asketh leave ; for Satan and his instruments cannot touch

any of God's children without God's permission ; therefore he asketh

leave to have the disciples of Christ in his power to vex them. So for

Job ; he has leave to touch his substance, but must not meddle with

his person : Job i. 11, 12, ' But put forth thine hand now, and touch

all that he hath ; and he will curse thee to th)' face. And the Lord '

said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power, only upon

himself put not forth thy hand.' Then to afflict his body with boils,

and sores, but he must spare his life : Job ii. 5, 6, ' But put forth thine

hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee

to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine

liand, but save his life.' Nay, he was fain to ask leave to enter into

the herd of swine : Mat. viii. 31, 'So the devil besought him, saying,

if thou cast us out, sufier us to go away into the herd of swine.' Surely

then the flock of Christ's sheep need not be troubled. If the bristles

of the swine be numbered, much more are the liairs of your heads.

(2.) It is a kind of suing out of his right. The word signifieth the

putting in of a plea and suit, not a bare asking leave ; e^n^craro vfid<;,

jDoposcit vos adpcenam. Sin giveth Satan some right of claim, and when

we have committed some sins, we provoke God to give us over to Satan

to be disciplined. Therefore this \* desiring to have you' is his accusing

you to God, and requiring that he may have the shaking of you. For

the devil is an adversary : 1 Peter v. 8, ' Because your adversary the

devil as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.'

The word is av-LdLKO'i. an adversary. Satan is an enemy at law; he is

always indicting and accusing you before God, that he may get you into

his power and reach. Oh ! how watchful should the children of God be,

when they have an adversary that pleadeth law and equity on his side,

and pursueth his right against them to bring them to the trial ! But

how could he do so in the case of the apostles, and of Peter in parti-

cular ? Possibly it might be something criminously done by them in

that contention of the disciples about primacy and superiority, who

should be chiefest, mentioned ver. 24, ' And there was a strife among

them, which of them should be accounted greatest ; ' and the indigna-

tion of the ten against the two brethren, James and John ; and in that

contest Peter might be most faulty, he being with them too. Those

of the disciples whom Jesus most loved, Peter, James, and John, were

often admitted to his privacies when others were excluded. Oh ! it

is a sad thing when we give occasion to Satan to demand us to the

judgment.

[8.] His aim and purpose, ' To sift you as wheat,' that is, to toss and

shake you as grain in a sieve. The meaning is, the devil would have

permission from God wholly to subvert you, and cast you away. A

great judgment is expressed by this phrase : Amos ix. 9, \*I will sift

the house of Israel among all nations like as corn is sifted in a sieve.'

This is the devil's aim, utterly to destroy God's people. But he can

obtain no more than to sliake and molest them for trial. In sifting,

two things are considerable — (1.) The agitation of tossing to the corn,

now this way, now that way, from one side to another ; (2.) The sepa-

ration of the wheat from the chaff. The devil only intends the former,

but God the latter. He would have Peter and the rest of the apostles

SERMON UPON LUKE XXH. 31, 32. 397

given to him that he might trouble and vex them, and not suffer them

to have any rest ; but God Avoukl turn it to an holy use, to purge you

from your dross, your worldly and carnal affections. Satan desireth to

trouble us, but thereby God doth cleanse and refine us. He would have

liberty to do his worst to drive you from the faith of Christ ; but though

somewhat of that is granted to him, yet the power of the devil is limited,

both as to tempting and hurting. Crihxdione Satance non perditur,

sed purgatur frummtum. The corn is not spoiled but cleansed by

Satan's sifting.

Secondly, Here is comfort propounded to sustain them under this

great danger ; where observe two things —

1. The means of disappointing Satan, ' I have prayed for thee, that

thy faith fail not.'

2. The event, delivered in the form of a direction. Peter should

recover out of this lapse, and be a means to strengthen others : ' And

when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.'

1. The means of disappointing Satan, ' I have prayed for thee,' &C'

Mark, to Satan's desires there are opposed Christ's prayers. There is

more force in Christ's prayers than in Satan's temptations. More par-

ticularly consider — (1.) Who prayeth ; (2.) For whom he prayeth;

(3.) For what.

[1.] Who prayeth ; Jesus Christ, the Mediator and advocate of his

people. The devil is the accuser, but Christ the advocate, to whose

mediation and intercession it must alone be ascribed that we do not

finally miscarry. Christ is ready to pray, for he knoweth the heart of

a tempted man : Heb. ii. 17, 18, ' Wherefore it behoved him in all

things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful

and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconcili-

ation for the sins of the people ; for in that he himseK hath suffered,

being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.' And his

prayer is effectual : John xi. 42, ' And I know that thou hearest me

always.' Christ doth not only perfume our prayers, or stay till we pray

for ourselves, but prevents them by his own intercession when he fore-

sees the danger.

[2.] For whom he prayeth : ' I have prayed for thee ; ' that is, for

Peter. What ! for him only ? No ; but the rest of the disciples also.

The remedy was prepared for them before the trials came, and the

plaster fitted before the wound was made. But was it for the apostles

only ? No, but for all believers : John xvii. 20, ' Neither pray I for

these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their

word.' Christ here upon earth did pray first for the college of the

apostles, and then for all believers ; so in heaven he hath a watchful

care over us, that we may not faint under the temptations of Satan.

[3.] For what he prayeth : ' That thy faith fail not ; ' that is, may

not utterly miscarry. Here observe —

(1.) The grace prayed for, faith, the grace most necessary, and upon

■which other things depend. All matters that concern Christ and his

kingdom depend upon faith : 2 Peter i. 5, 6, ' Add to your faith virtue,

and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temper-

ance patience, and to patience godliness.' If faith fail not, other graces

wrill not fail : 1 Peter v. 9, ' Whom resist, steadfast in the faith.' And

398 SERMON UPON LUKE XXII. 31, 32.

faith is the grace most assaulted in the present trial ; for Peter was put

to it whether he would own and acknowledge Christ to be his Lord and

Master. . To faith there belong two acts — Believing with the heart,

and confession with the mouth : Eom. x. 9, 10, ' If thou shalt confess

with thy mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in thy heart that

God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved ; for with the

heart man believeth to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is

made unto salvation.' This last was put to the trial.

(2.) How far it was prayed for, in the word, ' Fail not.' Christ

prayeth not that our faith should never be tried and assaulted, nor that

we should be exempted from trouble, but kept from the evil : John

xvii. 15, ' I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world,

but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil' Not that we should

be never oppugned, but not expugned ; neither that it should be not

in any degree weakened, but not extinguished. Faith doth not fail

totally as to the habit and root of it in their heart, though the habit

may be much weakened and diminished, and its proper and natural

action obstructed and interrupted, such as is confession with the mouth.

Christ foresaw his approaching denial of him, and foretold it ; but

Peter did not utterly forsake the faith, as appeareth by his speedy

repentance. As a candle smoking and newly blown out easily sucketh

light and flame again, so did he recover himself out of that surprise.

2. The event, delivered in the form of a direction ; wherein —

[1.] Is intimated his recovery and being converted. Peter had

denied Christ with oaths and execrations, a foul fault ; but Christ

recovered him by his look, that no man might despair ; and after his

resurrection bringeth him to a threefold confession: John xxi. 15, 16,

' Lovest thou me more than these ? and lovest thou me ? and lovesi

thou me ? ' Now the core of his distemper was gotten out : ' Lovest

thou me more than these ? ' Is thy love to me so great as thou didst

seem to affirm it when thou saidst, ' Though all men forsake thee, yet

will not I ' ? Is thy love surpassing the love of all other my disciples ?

What was Peter's answer ? \* Lord, thou knowest that I love thee ; '

that is, sincerely. Being taught by his smart experience, he dareth

not make comparison with all others ; no more comparisons now. Peter

had been under a severe discipline, which taught him humility, and

before all, the disciples he testifieth his repentance, which was first acted

in secret. Now he was grown more jealous of himself, he would not

boast of such a singular love.

But observe the term, converted. Kecovery out of a sore temptation

is a kind of second conversion. Grace is battered and bruised, and so

many things are necessary to put us in joint again. Denial of Christ,

even out of weakness, is a loss not easily recovered. First, Peter had

Christ's look : Luke xxii. 61, ' And the Lord turned, and looked upon

Peter ; ' which pierced his very heart, upon which ' he went out, and

wept bitterly,' ver. 62. And then Christ's message : Mark xvi. 7,

\* Tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee ;

there ye shall see him.' Be sure to tell Peter, a little to revive and

comfort him. He was now full of tears, and grieved at heart for his

former offence ; then Christ appeared to him alone, as Luke xxiv. 34,

' The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.' Therefore

SERMON UPON LUKE XXII. 31, 32, 399

the apostle saith, 1 Cor. xv. 5, ' That he was seen of Cephas, then

of the twelve.' Then afterwards he is brought pubUcly upon the stage

to acknowledge his love to Christ, John xxi. 15-17. So hard a matter

is it to set a member in joint again that is once out. So David : Ps.

li. 10, ' Create in me a clean heart, God, and renew a right spirit

within me.' He speaketh of it as a second creation and renovation ;

not that there was a total expulsion of faith or charity, but to show

that the loss is not soon repaired.

[2.] There is counsel given him, ' Strengthen thy brethren.' When

by repentance thou art recovered out of thy sin, be more careful to

confirm and sti'engthen others.

(1.) To prevent falling, pray for them, warn them, be an example of

constancy to them, that they may not fall or fail in like manner ;

which he did by his threefold profession of love to Christ, and in

glorifying God in his whole life and death : John xxi. 19, ' This spake

he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.' Christ warneth

him of his future sufferings, showing that he should be more stout than

in his former trial. Such a difference there was between Peter trust-

ing in his own strength and Peter supported by God. He that before

was blown down by the weak blast of a damsel's question, could then

confidently look a cruel death in the face,

(2.) Ptecover them if lapsed with meekness, that they may not

despair : Gal. vi. 1, ' If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are

spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thy-

self, lest thou also be tempted.' If the possibility of falling be an

argument, the actual experience is much more. Christians should not

exercise too great severity on them that are fallen, considering we have

or we might fall into like sin in the time of temptation. Thus would

Clirist season and prepare his servants for their office, and by their

own experience teach them meekness and tenderness to others. In

general it is said, 2 Cor. i. 4, ' Who comforteth us in all our tribulations,

that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble with

the comforts wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.' Such

comforts are not only for our good, but for the benefit and advantage

of others, ' Confirm thy brethren,' saith Christ here to Peter. They

are brethren, and they need to be strengthened ; for all these afflictions

are incident to all our brethren which are in the flesh, and our example

and consolation from experience are a great relief to them.

Thus you have a full view and prospect of the words. I shall

observe this point from the whole.

Doct. That though Satan by God's permission may sorely ti'ouble

and vex his people, yet we are not wholly exposed to his fury to be

dealt with as he pleaseth. Let me shov/ you how many ways Satan

may vex and trouble God's people ; either by inward suggestion, or by

outward persecution and affliction.

1. By inward suggestions ; as when he tempted David to number

the people : 1 Chron. xxi. 1, ' Satan stood up against Israel, and pro-

voked David to number Israel.' Namely, as he moved him to pride

and glory in the arm of flesh, or in his grandeur or multitude of

subjects. God had an hand in it : 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, ' And the anger of

the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against

400 SEEMON UPON LUKE XXII. 31, 32.

them to say, Go, number Israel and Juclah ; ' to punish David and his

people for their sins, God as a just judge using Satan as his minister

therein. God by permission and a wise ordination of it for good, and

Satan by suggestion and malicious intention for evil. God as a judge

in a just punishment for sin, and Satan as an enemy and an actor of

sin. It is no excuse to Satan or David that God moved, nor any blot in

God that Satan moved, they acting from diverse principles and diverse

ends. Well, but to our present purpose, Satan moved David, a man

after God's own heart. Alas ! the best have their infirmities, and

Satan hath many hidden secret arts to mischief souls which we think

not of.

2. By persecutions or afflictions. Many of Satan's temptations are

conveyed by afflictions, that he may make the people of God weary of

their profession, and either quit the truth or cast off their duty to him.

Thus when the apostle telleth us of the devil's unwearied malice and

enmity to souls, he biddeth us ' resist him steadfast in the faith, know-

ing that the same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren which

are in the world,' 1 Peter v. 9. And again, Kev. ii. 10, ' The devil

shall cast some of you into prison.' Surely they were put in prison by

men, but these men were Satan's instruments. They have their hour

sometimes and seasons when they work great trouble to the people of

God. God doth not so altogether bind up Satan but that he suffereth

him to act many strange parts in the world, either by himself imme-

diately or by his instruments.

Again, our trials are the more sore because Satan hath an hand in

them.

1. Not only because that is cumulative to the malice of men, or

superadded to it. And so the apostle : Eph. vi. 12, 'We wrestle not

against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,

against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wicked-

nesses in high places.' Our business lietli not with men, with flesh

and blood only, but with Satan. Men are but the devil's instruments.

Human and bodily powers are Satan's auxiliaries, whom he stirreth up

and employeth ; so that there is a double party — the visible agents,

and the invisible powers by which they are assisted and acted. But —

2. There are special reasons why the devil is a more terrible and

dangerous party than any human power : as partly —

[1,] Because of his great enmity to mankind, especially the redeemed

by Christ ; because he looketh upon them as likely to possess the

vacant places from which he and his angels are fallen. He is always

called the enemy with respect to war ; adversary, or opposite litigant

party, with respect to law

[2.] Partly because of his unwearied activity. He is always going

about 1 Peter v. 8, ' Your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walk-

eth about, seeking whom he may devour ; ' and in the book of Job,

chap. i. 7, ' From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up

and down in it.' And —

[3.] Partly for his insatiable cruelty. His malice is bitter and

extreme, ' Seeking whom he may devour.' His aim is utter ruin and

damnation, to prejudice us in our eternal estate or our spiritual and

heavenly concernments. It is not your temporal and bodily interests

SERMON UPON LUKE XXII. 31, 32. 401

that lie would mainly bereave you of. He can let you enjoy the plea-

sures of the world that he may deprive you of your delight in God.

He can be content that you shall have dignities and honours, ease and

safety, so they prove a snare to you ; all is to ruin your souls. If he

cannot prevail so far, yet he would thereby draw you to scandalous

sins, that you may dishonour God : 2 Sam. xii. 14, ' By this deed thou

hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme ; '

and destroy your own peace : Ps. xxxii. 3, ' My bones waxed old

through my roaring all the day long.'

[4.] Partly for his subtlety. He is of a spiritual nature, and so the

devil is invisible both in his nature and approaches, and doth often

reach us a deadly blow before we know it is he ; and he seeketh by all

means to conceal himself : 2 Cor. xi. 3, ' I fear lest by any means, as

the serpent beguiled Eve by his subtlety, so your minds should be

corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ.' The devil maketh

as if he meant all kindness, when he cometh to ruin and destroy souls.

He playeth of all hands ; tempteth Peter to dissuade, and Judas to

betray, and the high priests to persecute. He endeavoureth to keep

out of sight, that he may not be seen himself in the temptation,

us the fowler and hunter hide themselves till the bird or beast is gotten

into the snare or toil. Alas ! little do we think the devil is so near,

and hath so great an hand in the business which we are about to per-

form, as we afterwards find him to be. It is not he that seemeth to

do it, but such a neighbour, such a minister, or wise man.

3. Why God permitteth this. For many holy and wise reasons.

[1.] To glorify the power of his grace in preserving us : 2 Cor. xii. 9,

\* My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in

weakness.' ' Made perfect,' that is, found or discovered to be perfect ;

for God's strength cannot be more perfect than it is. There are no

degrees in infiniteness, much less can our weakness add anything to it.

The meaning is, it is manifested to be. perfect. The greater the

pressures arc, the more visible and conspicuous is the perfection of the

divine assistance. More goetli to the keeping of a saint here in the

world than to the preserving of an angel ; for the angels are e|&) /BiXov^,

out of gunshot and harm's way, but we are making our way to heaven

almost every step by conflict and conquest.

[2.] To abate our carnal confidence. For till we have experience of

the strength of sin, danger of temptations, and our own weakness, we

are too confident of our own resolutions, which, because they are sincere

and undissembled, we think they may be easily maintained ; therefore

God, to show us ourselves, suftereth Satan to tempt us and his instru-

ments to vex us, that by experience we may see how weak that faith is

in the temptation which we thought to be strong out of the temptation.

This is the meaning of that counsel our Lord giveth his discij^les :

Mat. xxvi. 41, ' Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation :

the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' To enter into

temptation hath a peculiar sense and signification in that place, and

the meaning is, to be overcome by temptations, to enter so as to abide

under the power of them, to be encompassed so as we cannot get out.

Therefore watch and pray that it be not so with you ; for however

your mind and resolution be good, and your professions for the time

VOL. XVII. ' 2 G

402 SEliMON UPON LUKE XXII. 31, 32.

zealous, yet you may fall from your stoutest resolutions if you be not

careful. Or thus, though the spirit or the renewed part be willing to

resist and oppose temptations, yet the natural and unrenewed part is

weak and ready to be overcome by them. They were confident, secure,

and unconcerned when that danger was approaching which would make

them either to forsake Christ or to deny and forswear him^ as Peter

did ; therefore it were better for them to be watchful and importunate

with God, that they might not be overcome with this temptation. In

many cases we find that those that thought their faith strong find it

very weak when the temptation cometh : John xvi. 31, 32, ' Do ye now

believe ? Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be

scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone.' There is a

great deal of difference between trials in imagination and trials in

actual experience. Trials in imagination do not affect us so much,

because we only know them at a distance, or by guess and supposition ;

but evils in sense and feeling are another thing than we could imagine.

It is a lamentable thing to see what a cowardly spirit there is in most

christians, how soon they are discouraged with every petty assault or

slender temptation, and their resolutions shaken with the appearance of

any difficulty, how confident soever they were before.

[3.] God sendeth temptations to abate our pride, and so to humble us

as well as prove us, that we may not be proud of what we have, or

conceit that we have more than we have. Paul giveth this reason : 2

Cor. xii. 7, ' Lest I should be exalted above measure through the

abundance of revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a

messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above mea-

sure.' There is a difference about the interpretation what this aKoko-^

rfj aapKL, thorn in the flesh, was ; either a racking disease or some other

sharp affliction. Surely it was not stirrings of sin or some boiling lusts,

for Paul was aged, and he would then speak of it in other words.

Some think it was some racking disease, like the stake thrust into the

fundament of a slave that ran from his master, and came out at his

back. Whatever it was, it was a messenger of Satan. Now, whether

God would permit Satan to have such power over Paul's body, I leave

it to you to consider. Therefore some think it was some sore afflic-

tion. In the general, I remember the pricking brier and grieving

thorn is put for the despisers and persecutors of Israel : Ezek.

xxviii. 24, ' And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house

of Israel, nor any grieving thorn of all that are round about them

that despised them.' This may be called a thorn in the flesh. A

sad and sharp affliction questionless it was, inflicted on Paul by

the power of the devil. But whatever the event was, God's end was

clear, that he might not be elevated with his transcendent revela-

tions : he twice repeateth it, ' Lest I should be exalted above mea-

sure.' When the instruments of Satan deal roughly with him, this

■was designed by God to keep him humble.

[4.] God sendeth these temptations in justice to correct us for other

sins : 2 Sam. xxiv. 1 , ' The anger of the Lord was kindled against

Israel, and he moved David to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.\*

The Lord permitted Satan to move David, as I explained it before ;

but mark, it was because God was angry with Israel, when they had

SERMON UPON LUKE XXII. 31, 32. 4.03'

abused their plenty and prosperity to licentiousness and forgetfulness

of God. Satan is permitted to tempt David, that God might take

that occasion to punish them. And it is observed in the censures of

the church; a scandalous sinner is 'delivered over to Satan for the

destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the

Lord Jesus,' 1 Cor. v. 5 ; that is, permitted for a while to the devil's

power, that he might be recovered to God. And in the text, Satan

liath desired, e^T^Trjo-aro, hath required him of God, demands to have

him delivered up to him as to an executioner ; and if God thinks fit

to answer this request, then he delivereth them up to Satan. Ijfow

this should be regarded by us. It is a sad thing when the devil hath

a just plea in law against us. The apostle warneth christians ' not to

give place to the devil,' Eph. iv. 27. This may be done effective or

meritorie. Effectuallj'-, when you comply with his insinuations, and give

way to your inordinate passions and carnal affections ; then you set

open the door to Satan, for he watcheth for any opportunity to recover

his old possession and exercise his former tyranny again. Pharaoh was

not so hasty to pursue after the Israelites as this malicious spirit is to

recover the prey taken out of his hands. When you give way to any

known sin, and continue and lie asleep in it, Satan is encouraged and

God provoked. And so meritorie ; meritoriously you give place to

Satan as you make God to withdraw his assistance or to give Satan

leave to tempt you : 2 Chron. xxxii. 31, ' God left him to try him, that

he might know all that was in his heart.' And so fearful havoc is

made in the soul, not only of comfort, but grace as to many degrees of

it. One sin prepareth for another, as a spark doth for a flame ; and

the longer and oftener we sin, so much the worse it is for us. Repen-

tance is the sharper, because of the wrong done to God ; and the

harder, because it is not easy to settle and restore such a soul, that

the influences of God's grace and favour may have their wonted course.

4. That God doth not expose us to the fury of Satan, to be dealt

with as he pleaseth, but doth bridle and restrain his rage.

[1.] God is the sovereign orderer of this business of temptations.

As the shaking and tossing of the saints is by his leave, so is the pro-

tection of their faith from his grace. The devil is a creature under

government, as all other creatures are ; and it is a great comfort to

the saints that, when they are in Satan's hands, Satan is in God's

hands. Neither the devil nor the world can help or hurt us without his

leave. The devils are represented to be ' under chains,' and ' chains of

darkness,' Jude G, 2 Peter ii. 4. These chains are God's irresistible

power and terrible justice ; either the restraints of his powerful provi-

dence, called therefore ' chains,' or the horror of their own despairing

fears, called therefore ' chains of darkness.' They can do nothing but

as far as God's justice and holy wisdom permitteth them.

[2.] As our protection cometh from God, so it cometh to us by the

intercession of Christ, who prayeth for his people ; a copy whereof we

have, John xvii., and a pledge of which is this. He hath intendered

his own heart by experience, and so is more likely to pity us : Heb.

ii. 18, ' For that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to

succour them that are tempted.' There is ability of power, ability of

idoneity and fitness, as it is proper and agreeable that he should

404 SERMON UPON LUKE XXII, 31, 32.

become compassionate, and willing to relieve those that fall into the

like or same evils, namely, sharp persecutions in this world for his

name's sake: Heb. iv. 15, 'He was in all points tempted as we are.'

He hath felt the weight and trouble of temptations himseh', and will

be sensible of our condition ; as a man that has had the stone or gout

knows better how to sympathise with others in the like case, and as

Israel was commanded to be merciful and pitiful to strangers, because

they knew the heart of a stranger. Non ignara malt, miseris suc-

currere disco.

[3.] Christ's love is never more at work for us than when under

temptations. He hath a tender sense of our danger by Satan. When

he followeth them out of malice and spite, then God puts forth the

strength and efficacy of his mediation : Zech. iii. 1, 2, ' And he showed

me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and

Satan standing at his right hand to resist him : and the Lord said

unto Satan, The Loitl rebuke thee, Satan.' When his people are

assaulted by Satan he hath most love for them, and taketh care

aforehand • John xiii. 1, ' Having loved his own that were in the world,

he loved them to the end.' Saith Christ of them, Poor creatures !

they are left to storms and tempests, and they are undone if I help

them not.

[4.] Though he permit the temptation, yet he alloweth not a total

victory, as he prayed that Peter might not utterly forsake the faith.

No7i pugna sublata est, sed victoria. He doth not hinder the fight,

but the victory. He overcame the devil and the world, therefore fear

not. God promiseth help for human frailty, not for rashness and

sloth. We are sure of victory whilst we resist and keep up the fight :

James iv. 7, ' Eesist the devil, and he will flee from you.'

[5.] Being kept from the evil is better than to be exempted from the

trouble of vexatious temptations. Our Lord prayeth so : John xvii. 15,

' I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that

thou shouldest keep them from the evil.' He teacheth us to pray so :

Mat. vi. 13, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'

There is a direct prayer, and a prayer by way of reserve. First, if it

be the will of God, ' lead us not into temptation ; ' but if that be, then

' keep us from the evil.' It is a more wonderful providence to be kept

from the evil than to be kept from temptation. A garrison never

assaulted is easily kept. And partly because the evil of sin is greater

than the evil of trouble. Sin separateth from God, affliction driveth

us to him ; and to be preserved from the reign of sin is better than

not to be permitted to fall into a signal act of sin ; for the act may be

consistent with grace, but not the reign.

Use 1. Let us not be secure. Christ was tempted, so was Job, so

was Paul. We have a fierce and subtle adversary to encounter with,

many trials we must look for. None are so tempted as the best

christians; the pirate doth not set upon an empty vessel. Wicked

men are not troubled ; they are already in the snares, slaves and vassals

to Satan, of whom he is sure already : Luke xi. 21, ' Where a strong

• man keeps his palace, his goods are in peace.' A middle sort of men

God permitteth not to be tempted : 1 Cor. x. 13, ' God will not suffer

you to be tempted above what you are able.' They are not seasoned

SERMON UPON LUKE XXn. 31, 32. 405

enough, nor furnished with life and light. Satan's malice aimeth at

the best, but he prevaileth with the presumptuously confident and

fool-hardy. They know not their own weaknesses. If we slight these

things, and thrust ourselves into temptations, we fall as a ready prey

into the mouth of the roaring lion. You know how many a good

purpose hath come to nothing ; and will not you wtitch ? This is the

cause why we are so often surprised ; we live and walk as if we were

not among our enemies, as if the devil did not haunt us, and we gave

him no occasion to solicit God against us.

2. Being forewarned, let us be forearmed or prepared against Satan's

devices ; otherwise, when we think, as Samson, to go forth and

shake ourselves as at other times, we shall find that our strength

is gone, and we have permitted ourselves too much to the power of

the enemy. Our preparation mainly lieth in two things —

[1.] That we be dead to the flesh and the world. Be sober and

watchful. Sobriety is a moderation in all earthly things. The devil

usually gets the world on his side. Therefore, till we be dead to applause,

commodity, honour, and profit, and resolve to be holy and obedient to

God though it cost us dear, we shall do nothing in Christianity. Satan

will tempt the flesh, and that will soon say. Spare thyself : Mat. xvi. 22,

' This shall not be unto thee.' Therefore as long as there is a bias of

worldly inclination upon us, and we are set on the pleasures, profits, or

honours of the world, or be taken too much with its ease, peace, and

prosperity, we are not prepared ; and what work will Satan make when

he comes to toss us !

[2.] Keep faith upright. Christ prays that Peter's faith may not

fail, and 1 Peter v. 9, ' Whom resist, steadfast in the faith.' Faith has

many things to pitch on, the whole gospel, but chiefly the promises

and threatenings of the gospel ; they will inform you what will be the

end of godliness and sin, and a man that hath his eyes opened, and seeth

the end of godliness and sin, hath a mighty advantage. As to the

promises of Christ, surely Christ is no deceiver. Will you credit the

devil, whom you have found to be false, and suspect the promises of

Christ ? Luke xii. 32, ' Fear not, little flock ; for it is your father's good

pleasure to give you the kingdom.' Christ promiseth more than the

devil. As to the threatenings, let not the threatenings of men afi"right

you ; if they threaten a prison, God threateneth hell ; if they threaten

to molest the body, God can cast body and soul into helL God can pre-

serve you from what men threaten, and he threatens what is worse than

man threatens ; and therefore, to have our eyes in our head, and see the

end of godliness and sin, is a mighty help in this case, that our faith

may not fail.

SERMON UPON HEBREWS I. 9.

Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity ; therrefore God, even

thy God, hath anointed thee loith the oil of gladness above thy

fellows. — Heb. i. 9.

In the context the apostle is proving that Christ hath obtained a more

excellent name than the angels. They are servants, he a son ; they

are creatures, he is God ; they are to worship, he is to be worshipped,

in which divine honours they Can have no communion ; they are spec-

tators of the mystery of redemption, he is the head of the redeemed

world, as being solemnly appointed thereunto by God. This is the

argument of the text, which is a quotation out of the 4oth Psalm,

\* Thou hast loved righteousness,' &c.

In these words we have — (1.) A description of Chi'ist ; (2.) The

exaltation of Christ ; (3.) The respect of the one to the other, ' there-

fore.' The one is the foundation of the other.

1. In the description of Christ his holiness is taken notice of ; and —

[1.] Both branches are mentioned, ' loved righteousness,' ' hated

iniquity.'

[2.] The habitual inclination of his heart is asserted in all that he

did or now doth do ; all proceeded from his love to righteousness, and

his hatred to sin.

[3.] This commendation or description doth not only concern his

l)ersonal practice, but his design. His heart was set upon it, not only

to practise holiness himself, but to promote it in the world ; for the

holiness of God incarnate is essentially necessary both to his person and

employment. By it he was fitly qualified. Nothing puts us on to do a

thing thoroughly more than love ; this was Christ's principle ; and

therefore he would express the most efiectual means.

2. His exaltation : ' God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the

oil of gladness above thy fellows ; ' that is, exalted thee above men and

all angels. Anointing is often applied to Christ : Ps. ii. 2, ' Against

the Lord and his anointed ; ' Acts iv. 27, ' Thine holy child Jesus,

whom thou hast anointed ; ' Isa. Ixi. 1, ' The Lord hath anointed me

to preach good tidings to the meek.' Therefore he is called in the

Hebrew Messiah, and in the Greek Xpiaro^. This anointing usually

signifieth three things —

[1.] The giving of power and authority, as Saul by being anointed

408 SERMON UPON HEBREWS I. 9.

was made king of Israel, 1 Sam. x. 1, and Aaron and his sons made

priests, Exod. xxx. 30. So Clirist was anointed to authorise his dis-

pensation, or to invest him in the authority and power of the mediatory

office.

[2.] To fit and enable the person so authorised for the discharge of

the office unto which he was called ; for the oil was typical, and

signified the gifts and graces of the Spirit. So Jesus Christ was

' anointed with the Holy Ghost, and with power,' Acts x. 38, to fit his

human nature for so high a function.

[3.] His welcome and entertainment at his return to heaven ; and

so the glorious exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he solemnly

sat down at the right hand of majesty, and entered upon his kingdom,

was his anointing ; for then was he sokmnly ' made both Lord and

Clirist,' Acts ii. 36, and evidenced to be the Lord's anointed one, as I

shall show more fully by and by.

3. The respect or relation of his exaltation to his description, ' there-

fore.' At least it is a consequent of what he had done in the world in

love to righteousness and hatred of sin, but moreover it is to him a

recompense : Phil, ii, 9, ' Wherefore God hath highly exalted him,

and given him a name which is above every name ; ' Rom. xiv. 9, ' For

to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be

Lord both of the dead and living.' Which is no lessening of his merit ;

for therein he considered not himself, but us, that he might be a merci-

ful high priest to us, or a powerful king to defend his people. The

Son of God had before his incarnation a glory to which nothing can be

added, and a full right which cannot be increased ; and whatever glory

he received as mediator, it concerneth us more than him.

Doct. That Jesus Christ as mediator, because of his love to right-

eousness and hatred of sin, is dignified and advanced by God, not only

above all men, but also above all angels.

In handling of this point — (1.) I shall speak of the holiness of

Christ; (2.) His unction, which is the consequent and fruit of it.

First, Of the holiness of Christ, both as to his person and office.

1. As to his person. There we must consider the original holiness

of his natures, divine and human. Divine ; he is called, Isa. xlv. 21,

'A just God, and a saviour.' Human ; he was wholly free from that

original contagion wherewith others that come of Adam are defiled :

Luke i. 35, ' That holy thing that shall be born of tliee shall be called

the Son of God.' Now add to this his perfect actual obedience to God

both in heart and life, and this either to the common law of duty that

lieth upon all mankind, for it ' became him to fulfil all righteousness,'

Mat. iii. 15, or that particular law of mediation which was proper to

himself : Heb. v. 8, ' Though he were a son, yet he learned obedience by

the things he suffered ; ' by which he answered the end of the law which

we have broken, and was also the meritorious cause of the covenant of

grace, by which all blessings are conveyed to us : 2 Cor. v. 21, ' For

he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be

made the righteousness of God in him.' Well, then, his personal

holiness did make him acceptable to God, and should make him

amiable to us. He loved righteousness, and hated iniquity. Adam

in the state of innocency did perfectly love righteousness and hate sin

SERMON UPON HEBREWS I. 9. 409"

but not constantly, for he soon fell. Believers in the state of regener-

ation love righteousness and hate iniquity sincerely and constantly, but

not perfectly ; but Christ, when he assumed our nature, did love right-

eousness and hate iniquity both perfectly and constantly, in heart and

practice, and this even to the death. This qualified him for his office

of prophet, priest, and king. As a prophet, who is so fit to teach the

world holiness as one that hath a perfect love to holiness and hatred ot

sin, and this manifested in our nature ? Angels are holy and right-

eous, but not so as Christ, who, besides the essential purity and holiness

of the Godhead, hath also assumed our nature, and preserved it in

purity and innocency. And therefore his nature and practice agreeth

with his design : 1 John iii. 5, ' He was manifested to take away our

sins, and in him is no sin.' So as a priest ; his holiness gave a value

both to the merit of his sacrifice and intercession ; Heb. vii. 25, 26,

' Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come to G-od

by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them : for such

an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate

from sinners.' Here was a pure, unspotted sacrifice, oftered up to God

here upon earth, and pleaded and represented in heaven. He that was

to satisfy in the behalf of others needed to be free from the defilement

of sin himself, that he might be not only our ransom but our pattern.

Then as a king, this purity and holiness is necessary, not only that he

might powerfully aftect, but also favour and patronise all that is good,

holy, and just in the world ; for, Prov. xv. 9, ' The way of the wicked

is an abomination to the Lord, but he loveth him that followeth after

righteousness.' The one are the objects of his abomination, the other

of his love. The wicked are for a while prosperous and successful,

therefore they think God loveth them, but they are an abomination to

him into whose hands all judgment is put. They cannot collect or

conclude his approbation from his forbearance. No ; nor any neglect

of human affairs, as if they were left to their own chance and arbitra-

ment. No ; all that can be gathered from thence is his great for-

bearance and mercy to the worst, while he is inviting them to repent-

ance. On the other side you have the disposition of the regenerate set

forth, who do not perfunctorily and by-the-by do that which is holy

and righteous, but set their whole heart and desire to it. They follow

after righteousness ; their business is to be eminently holy ; and surely

they are loved by Christ : for he that hateth iniquity and loveth right-

eousness will love those that follow after it, than which nothing more

sweet, honourable, and blessed can be thought of by us than to ba

loved by our Eedeemer, To have a prince love ns, or a wise or learned

man love us, we highly value it ; what is it then to have Christ love

us ? This will not be a barren or an empty love. Well, then, he is

fit to be the king of the world.

2. All this while we have spoken of his personal holiness, which

raaketh him acceptable to God and amiable to us, and qualifieth him

for his office. Now let us see how he showeth this love to holiness

and hatred to iniquity in his office as well as in his person. The

general term whereby this office is expressed is mediatoi'. The three-

particular functions are those of prophet, priest, and king.

[1.] As to the general term mediator, whose work it is to bring

4lO SERMON UPON HEBREWS I. 9.

heaven and earth to kiss each other, or to make peace between God

and man, God offended, and man guilty, all that he did therein was

out of his love to righteousness and hatred of iniquity, which was the

great makebate between God and us ; therefore surely his chief design

was to destroy sin and to promote holiness. So much we are told, Dan.

ix. 24, that the Messiah shall come ' to finish transgressions, and to

make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to

bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and pro-

phecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.' The great business for which

the Mediator came into the world was to destroy the reign and power

of sin, and to advance the practice of all goodness and holiness, and to

recover the lost world to God. Now, because his heart was so much

set upon this, God ' anointed him with the oil of gladness above his

fellows.'

[2.] Come we to those three particular functions wherein this office

is exercised, those of prophet, priest, and king.

(1.) As a prophet, by his doctrine he showeth that he loveth right-

eousness and hateth iniquity, for the whole frame of it discovereth and

breatheth out nothing else but an hatred against sin and a love to

holiness : John xvii. 17, ' Sanctify them through the truth ; thy word

is truth ; ' Ps. cxix. 140, ' Thy word is very pure.' All the histories,

mysteries, precepts, promises, threatenings, aim at this one business,

that sin may be subdued in us, and brought into disrepute and dis-

esteem in the world. The histories are certain patterns and examples of

holiness, and those taken from men and women that had not divested

themselves of the interests and concernments of flesh and blood no

more than we have, and yet pleased and served God in their several

generations, to excite us to like diligence and self-denial : Heb. vi. 12,

' Be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the

promises.' The mysteries are not only to raise our wonder, but breed a

true spirit of godliness : 1 Tim. iii. 16, ' And without controversy great

is the mystery of godliness.' The whole gospel is called, Titus i. 1 , ' The

truth which is after godliness ; ' and 1 Tim. vi. 8, ' A doctrine which

is according to godliness ; ' because it delivereth the exact and most

perfect way of serving God. The Lord Jesus was desirous that this

doctrine should take place in the world, therefore he himself Avas

pleased to assume our nature to preach it to us. So for his precepts,

they all prescribe an universal adherence to God, and dependence on

him, that we may not be carried away by the false offers and delights

of sin, but may live in perfect obedience to God, and justice and charity

to men. Besides, the word discovereth all the cheats and fallacies we

put upon ourselves, to keep us from all impure mixtures of worldly

and carnal aims : it discovereth the crafty pretences, and the most

insinuating and cunning contrivances to disguise and hide sin : Heb.

iv. 12, ' For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than

any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul

and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the

thoughts and the intents of the heart.' In short, the whole aim of it

is that we may please God and be beloved by him : John xiv. 21, ' He

that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth

me ; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love

SERMON UPON HEBREWS I. 9. 411

him, aucl will manifest myself to him/ The promises call for the

greatest purity and cleanness of heart and life : 2 Cor. vii. 1, ' Having

therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all iilthiuess

both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' So the

threatenings ; why doth Christ tell us of torments without end and ease,

of a pit without a bottom, of a iire that shall never be quenched, but

to make sin more odious and hateful to us ? Surely not to terrify us,

but to sanctify us ; for his government is rather by love than by fear.

Now, whosoever wisely considereth the christian religion, he will soon

discern that it was framed and set afoot by one that loved righteous-

ness and hated iniquity.

(2.) His priestly office consists in his oblation and intercession, as

the high priest under the law did both offer sacrifice and intercede for

the people. Now what was the intent of Christ's sacrifice but to put

away sin ? Heb. ix. 26, ' Now once in the end of the world hath he

appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself ; ' that is, not

only to destroy the guilt, but the power of it. There are three things

in the death and sufferings of Christ to make us hate iniquity, and so

by consequence to love righteousness — (1.) By way of representation ;

(2.) By way of impetration ; (3.) By way of obligation.

(Ist.) By way of representation. His bitter sufferings are an instance

of God's great wrath against sin and sinners : for if Christ must thus be

handled rather than sin shall go unpunished, it warneth us to be very

cautious how we meddle with the forbidden fruit. When we remem-

ber his bitter agonies, his accursed, shameful death, we should cry out

Oh, odious sin ! This is the meaning of that expression, Rom, viii. 3,

\* And for sin he condemned sin in the flesh ; ' that is, by a sin-oft'ering,

or the sacrifice of Christ, he hath condemned sin, he hath left a brand

or mark of his displeasure against sin, which should induce us to be

very cautious and watchful against it ; for if these things be done in

the green tree, what shall be done in the dry ?

{2d.) By way of impetration and purchase. Christ came not only

to expiate the guilt of it, but to get it out of our hearts. As he pacified

the wrath of God, so he purchased the Spirit ; in which sense our old

man is said to be crucified with him, Rom. vi. 6, namely, as grace was

obtained whereby it might be crucified. Now we are sluggish and

cowardly if we tamely yield to our lusts, and pretend want of power,

when it is want of will to cast them off.

{3d.) By way of obligation, by this great instance of his love to induce

us to kill our love to sin : 1 Peter ii. 24, ' Who his own self bare our

sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should

live unto righteousness, by whose stripes we are healed.' Since he

hath borne the weight of our sins, and endured the wrath due to them

in his own person, if we have any esteem of Christ's love, certainly we

would not spare our most beloved lusts, nor be still alive to sin and

dead to righteousness, nor wittingly and allowedly do the least thing

that is offensive to him : Ezra ix. 14, ' Should we again break thy com-

mandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations,

wouldst thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that

there should be no remnant nor escaping ? '

(3.) The next is a king. He is one whose heart was so set upon the

412 SERMON UPON HEBREWS I. 9.

love of rifjjhteousness, and the hatred of all iniquity, that he would come-

as a prophet himself to teach the sinful lost world how to become holy

again. And as a priest to die for the guilty world to reconcile them to

God. Surely he was fit also to rule and govern the world. There are

two parts of government — laws and actual administration. His laws

are all good and equal, the same witli his doctrine. As he giveth notice

of these things as a prophet, so he giveth charge about them as a king.

Of his laws we need not further speak, but the administration is undei

our consideration. Now in the righteous ordering the affairs of his

kingdom he showeth himself to be one that loveth righteousness and

hateth iniquity. As the laws are good and equal, so the administra-

tion is right and just. Tlie administration of this kingdom is twofold

— internal and external.

(Is^.) Internal. Christ is set over the church of God as a glorious

head and chief, who is to recover a lost people unto God. His internal

administration is either effective or remunerative.

(1st.) Effective by his preventing grace, as he changeth our hearts,

bringeth us into his kingdom, worketh faith in us, and maketh us

willing subjects to him. Conversion is one of his kingly acts, wrought

in us by the efficacy of his preventing grace ; otherwise we cannot

enter into his kingdom : Mat. xviii. 3, ' Except ye be converted, and

become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of

heaven ; ' Col. i. 13, ' Who hath delivered us from the power of dark-

ness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.'' Till

he subdue the power of sin and Satan in our hearts, we shall still groan

under that tyranny : Acts xxvi. 18, 'To open their eyes, and to tura

them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.'

(2d.) Eemunerative, by the rewards of godliness here and hereafter.

Here : Rom. xiv. 17, ' For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink,

but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' Peace of

conscience, increase of grace, joy in the Holy Ghost. They shall not

want encouragement who seriously set themselves to love righteousness

and hate iniquity : 2 Peter i. 11, ' For so an entrance shall be minis-

tered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord

and Saviour Jesus Christ.' Hereafter, heaven is the portion of the

sanctified : Acts xx. 32, ' And now, brethren, I commend you to God

and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give

you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.' He doth

sanctify all that believe on him, and then gives them eternal life.

(2c?.) External, in the course of his providence. Christ hath set up

a government wherein he will favour and protect those that walk up-

rightly : Ps. xi. 7, ' For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness ; his

countenance doth behold the upright.' But with the disobedient ' God

is angry every day,' Ps. vii. 11. Only it is the day of God's patience.^

God is preparing himself. Well, then, we must neither rebel against

his government nor distrust his defence ; for Christ administereth

justice in his kingdom, defending the good, and destroying the wicked,

and he will in time earnestly espouse the cause of all holiness and

righteousness.

Secondly, 1 come now to the unction of Christ, which is the conse-

quent fruit of the former : ' God, even thy God, hath anointed thee

SERMON UPON HEBREWS I. 9. 413

Tvith the oil of gladness above thy fellows.' There you may observe — (1.)

The author of this unction, ' God, even thy Grod ; ' (2.) The privilege

itself, to be 'anointed with the oil of gladness ;' (3.) The partakers of

this privilege, or the persons to whom it is applied. One principal and

singular, who hath the pre-eminence, and that is the Mediator ; others

inferior, and in a lower degree of participation, called here ' his fellows.'

Let us a little explain these things.

1, The author of this unction, ' God, even thy God.' Is this spoken

to him as God or man ? It may be true in both senses. As to his

divine nature he is God of God, or, as it is in John i. 1, ' The Word

was with God, and the Word was God.' As to his human nature, he

is a creature made of a woman, and so God is his God, as he is the

God of all flesh. But especially is this spoken of him as Mediator, so

Christ is one of God's confederates. There is a covenant between God

and him: John xx. 17, \* I go to my Father and your Father, to my

God and your God.' The sum of the covenant was, that after he had

suffered here upon earth, and satisfied God's justice by being made a

curse for us, he was at length to be raised out of the grave, and exalted

to his regal power in heaven. All that belongeth to a covenant is found

in this transaction between God and Christ.

[1.] God propouudeth the terms, or demandeth of his Son that he

lay down his life ; and for his labour he promiseth that he shall see

his seed, that God shall give him many children : Isa. liii. 10, ' He

shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the

Lord shall prosper in his hands.'

[2.] The Sou consenteth, and saith, ' A body hast thou prepared for

me ; Lo, I come to do thy will,' Ps. xl. 6, 7 ; ' Sacrifice and offering

thou didst not desire ; mine ears hast thou opened : burnt-offering and

sin-oflering thou hast not required. Then said I, Lo, I come ; in the

volume of the book it is written of me.' Here the eternal Son of God

doth agree and contract with his Father to perform that perfect obed-

ience to his laws, and to offer up himself such a divine and spotless

sacrifice for the sins of the whole world as was necessary for the expia-

tion of sin.

[3.] Christ hath not only consented, but doth with all joy and delight

set about this whole will and counsel of God, and go through with the

work and office assigned unto him very cheerfully and heartily, till he

liad brought it to a good end and issue : Ps. xl. 8, ' I delight to do

thy will, my God ; yea, thy law is in my heart.'

[4.] After this ready and willing obedience he is to plead the cove-

nant : Ps. Ixxxix. 26, ' He shall cry unto me, Thoii art my Father,

my God, and the rock of my salvation ; ' Ps. ii. 8, ' Ask of me, and I

will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost

parts of the earth for thy possession.' Upon this there is —

[5.] God's answer, ' God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the

oil of gladness above thy fellows ; ' and Ps. ex. 1, ' The Lord said unto

my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy foot-

stool.' Thus doth the scripture lisp to us in our own dialect, or in such

language as we can best understand, concerning that bill of contract or

transacted bargain between God and Christ from all eternity, wherein

Christ, undertaking perfectly to fulfil the will of God, and to perform

414 SERMON UPON HEBREWS I. 9.

nil active and passive obedience even unto death, had the promise from

God that he should become the author of eternal salvation to all that

obey him. The redemption of sinners is not a work of yesterday, nor

a business of chance, but well advised, and in infinite wisdom contrived.

There was a preparatory agreement to that great work before it was

gone about, and therefore it should not be slighted by us, nor lightly

passed over.

2. The privilege itself; to be anointed with the oil of gladness. It

noteth his solemn exaltation and admission to the exercise of his office.

By oil all agree is meant the Spirit, by which Christ was anointed :

Luke iv. 18, ' The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath

anointed me.'

[1.] Christ was anointed at his conception in his mother's womb,

when he was sanctified by the Holy Spirit ; for the work of the Spirit

was not only to form his body out of the substance of the virgin,

which nature could not do of itself ; but chiefly to preserve it from sin,

and endow it with the gift of holiness ; from which time he grew in

wisdom and grace, as well as in stature : Luke ii. 52, ' And Jesus in-

creased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.'

[2.] Again, Christ may be said to be anointed at his baptism, which

was the visible consecration to his office, when the Holy Ghost de-

scended upon him ' in the form of a dove,' Mat. iii. 16, 17, and John i.

33. Once more —

[3.] He may be said to be anointed at his ascension, when he received

of the Father the promise of the Spirit to pour him forth upon his dis-

ciples : Acts ii. 33, ' Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted

and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he

hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear,' This I take to be

the sense here, his glorious exaltation at the right hand of God, where,

being possessed of all power, he joyfully expectetli and accomplishetb

the fruits of his redemption. I am the more confirmed in this —

(1.) Because the exaltation of Christ is as it were his welcome to

neaven ; God doth as it were take him by the hand, and set him upon

the throne after all the sorrows of his humiliation. As we welcome a

stranger or a guest whose coming is pleasing to us by taking him by

the hand and bringing him into our houses, so is Christ exalted by the

right hand of God, and welcomed into heaven, as having done his

work, and made full provision for the glory of God and the obedience

of the creature ; as we are also received into glory after we are guided

by his counsel : Ps. Ixxiii. 24, ' Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel,

and afterward receive me to glory ; ' and then all tears shall be wiped

from our eyes.

(2.) The term, ' the oil of gladness,' implieth it ; for that was the

entertainment of honourable guests invited to a feast. We see it prac-

tised to Christ by one woman : Luke vii. 37, ' And behold, a woman in

the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in

the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment.' And by

another : Mat. xxvi. 7, ' There came unto him a Avoman having an

alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head as he

sat at meat.' And the psalmist, spealdng of God's festival entertain-

ment : Ps. xxiii. 5, \* Thou preparest a table before me i-n the presence-

SERMON UPON HEBREWS I. 9. 415

of mine enemies ; thou anointest my head with oil.' Another mention

of this practice is, Ps. civ. 15, ' Wine to make glad the heart of man,

and oil to make his face to shine.' All these places, and many more

in the scripture, allude to the custom of pouring some fragrant precious

ointments on the heads of guests of special eminency, called ' the oil of

gladness,' hegause the use of it was to exhilarate and cheer the spirits.

Now, because this was an extraordinary respect paid them, this phrase

came at length to signify the preferring one above another ; and so it

is fitly applied to Christ, whom God hath dignified above all men and

angels, in that he hath received power spiritual and divine above what

was communicated to any other.

3. The persons anointed.

[1.] One singular in this unction, the Lord Jesus Christ. There are

two sorts of privileges — (1.) Some things only given to Christ, not to

us ; as the name above all names to be adored, Phil. ii. 9 ; to be the

head of the renewed state, Eph. i. 21, the saviour of the body, Eph. v.

23 ; to have power to dispense the Spirit, to administer providences,

&c. All this is proper to Christ ; neither men nor angels share with

him in these honours. (2.) There are other things given to Christ

and his people ; as the sanctifying and comforting Spirit, the heavenly

inheritance, victory over our spiritual enemies, the devil, the world,

and the flesh ; these are given to us and him ; only God doth grace

his Son above his fellows : Rom. viii. 29, ' That he might be the first-

born among many brethren.' He must have the honour due to the

first-bom. Anciently the first-born was lord of the rest of the family :

Gen. xxvii. 37, ' And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I

have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for

servants.' And also the first-born gave the rest of the brethren a share

of the father's goods, reserving to himself a double portion : Deut. xxi.

17, ' He shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the first-born by

giving him a double portion of all that he hath, for he is the beginning

of his strength, the right of the first-born is his.' Christ being the

first-born, he must in all things have the pre-eminence. In our con-

flicts and trials he is ' the captain of our salvation,' Heb. ii. 10. In

holiness he is our pattern, or the copy which we must transcribe : 2

Cor. iii. 18, ' Are changed into the same image from glory to glory,'

Frimum in unoquoque genere est mensura et regula cceterorum — The

first in every kind is the standard for all the rest. In our glory and

blessedness he is our forerunner, Heb. vi. 20, having actually taken

possession of that felicity and gloiy which he will bestow upon his

followers ; so that Christ's honour is reserved, and believers are com-

forted whilst they follow their head in every state and condition.

[2.] Others are admitted to be partakers of this grace in a lower

degree, called \* his fellows.' They are also dignified and graced by

God above the rest of the world, but not as Christ was. Two things

I will observe here —

(1.) They must be his consorts and fellows. Sometimes they are

called ' his brethren,' Heb. ii. 11 ; sometimes members of his mystical

body, Eph. i. 22, 23, sometimes 'joint-heirs with Christ,' Rom. viii.

17 ; meaning thereby all believers, who are companions with him both

in grace and glorv. Thus we must be before we partake of this

416 SERMON UPON HEBREWS I. 9.

anointing. Actus activorum sunt in passivo unito et disposito — They

that receive influence from another must be fitted for what they receive,

and united to him from whom they receive it. Therefore none hut

Christ's members and fellows do partake of his unction. But who are

they ? All such as are like-minded with himself, that love righteous-

ness, and hate iniquity, that set themselves seriously to promote the

glory of God, and to destroy the reign of sin in the world, both in

themselves and others ; in short, those that are regenerated and planted

into his mystical body by the Spirit.

(2.) The next thing which I observe is, that all these may have

somewhat of this unction according to their measure and part which

they sustain in the body : 1 John ii. 20, ' But we have an unction from

the Holy One ; ' compare Ps. cxxxiii. 2, ' It is like the precious ointment

upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that

went down to the skirts of his garments.' The ointment poured upon

our head in such plenty that it diffuseth itself to all his members,

God is the author thereof : 2 Cor. i. 21, ' Now he that establisheth us with

you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God.' It is a divine work but

the pipe or means of conveying it to us is Christ, who is the great re-

ceptacle from whence the whole family is supplied: John i. 16, 'Of

his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.' And it mainly

consisteth in the gift of the Spirit, sanctifying and preparing us for our

present work and final reward, and comforting us with our present

interest in the love of God and hopes of glory : 2 Cor. v. 5, ' Now he

that hath wrought us for this self-same thing is God, who also hath

given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.'

Use. I shall exhort you to two things — (1.) To holiness ; (2.) To

get more of the oil of gladness.

1. To holiness. If there were no more than that it is pleasing to

Christ, and visibly exemplified in his own person, this should induce us.

It was love to holiness and hatred of sin that brought him out of heaven,

and put him on the work of our redemption. Nothing doth more urge

us to do a thing than love, or to forbear it than hatred. These were

Christ's motives to undertake the redemption of sinners. Now we should

love what he loveth, and hate what he hateth : Eev. ii. 6, ' Thou hatest

the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate ; ' Prov. viii. 13, ' The

fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride, and arrogancy ; and the evil way

and the froward mouth do I hate.' But there is more in the argument

than so. This was the design of our Redeemer : 1 John iii. 8, \* For

this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the

works of the devil.' Now it doth not become christians to contradict

the designed end of their Redeemer. But this is not all ; it is to slight

the price of our redemption, as if there were no such great mystery in

it, that the Son of God should die ; for if we slight the benefits we

slight the ransom, 1 Peter i. 18. Yea, there is this further in it, we

neglect the grace that may be had upon such easy terms. Surely the

coming of our Lord Jesus Christ did somewhat shorten the power of

sin, or else he came in vain. He obtained the grace he purchased :

John xii. 31, ' Now is the judgment of this world ; now shall the prince

of this world be cast out.' These are the glorious fruits and effects of

liis death, that it shall tend to the glory of God and the bringing down

SERMON UPON HEBREWS I. 9, 417

the kiDgxlom of sin and Satan in the world. They to whom this pur-

chase is revealed, and yet reject the offer, are guilty of sluggish cow-

ardice, and if they be not delivered from the power of the devil, and

restored to a life of holiness, their condemnation is just. In our natural

estate by the fall of Adam we were all corrupted and out of frame, but

the second Adam came to restore things that were in confusion and

out of frame to their right and primitive order. Man hath fallen

from holiness and happiness ; sin and Satan have reigned and raged in

this world ; the children of this world have blessed themselves in their

bad condition, and delighted in their slavery and bondage. Now if

Christ come to make an end of sin and bring in everlasting right-

eousness, shall it be so still as it was before ? shall the disordered

world go on in its ancient wont ? Surely there should be more

visible fruits of his coming seen among us. If men should lie in

wickedness still, and turn their backs upon God, after whose image

they were created, and sin and Satan rule them at their pleasure,

how are things put in frame that were out of course ? What hath the

Son of God done by all his holy life and bloody sufferings ? Surely

either the purchase is not so great and glorious, or we make but little

use of it, and so are quite strangers in God's Israel,

I have not done with the argument yet. We have no communion

with Christ, yea, we renounce it, if we continue to be so unlike him :

1 John i. 6-8, ' If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in

darkness, we lie, and do not the truth ; but if we walk in the light, as he

is in the light, then have we fellowshij) one with another, and the blood

of -Tesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say we have

no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' Such a solemn

preface iutroduceth that truth, to show that if we live in our sins, we

shall die in our sins, and then farewell all happiness.

2. To look after more of this unction. He is Christ the anointed of

God; we must bechristians : Acts xi. 26, 'The disciples were called chris-

tians first ill Antioch; ' anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power,

that we may understand the mind of God, consecrate ourselves to him,

work his work, and engage in his warfare, fighting against the devil,

the world, and the liesh, till we triumph with Christ in heaven. All

must be anointed.

[1.] This is the fruit of Christ's exaltation, to send and shed abroad

the Sph'it. There are effects of Christ's humiliation and effects of

Christ's exaltation. The efiects of Christ's humiliation are taking away

the curse of the law, pacifying God's wrath, satisfying his justice, the

annihilation of the right which the devil had over sinners, a right to

return to God and enjoy eternal life. The exaltation of Christ also

hath its effects ; the application of this grace and the execution of this

right, by quickening us who were dead in trespasses and sins, and par-

doning our transgressions, and putting us into the way everlasting.

Now we should seek in Christ not only the force of satisfaction but the

force of regeneration, and his efficacious grace to apply what he hath

purchased for us, that he may be ' made sanctification to us ' as well as

' righteousness,' 1 Cor. i. 30. Since Christ is so able and willing to

dispense this grace freely and abundantly into men's hearts, surely it

should not be neglected.

VOL. XVII. 2 D

418 SERMON UPON HEBREWS I, 9.

[2.] Consider the necessity of this grace. Our love to righteousness

and hatred of iniquity is the fruit of this unction, for affections follow

the nature. When we live in the Spirit we shall walk in the Spirit :

Ps. xcvii. 10, ' Ye that love the Lorcl, hate evil.' All that pretend to

return to God must show the reality of it this wa3^ Therefore, as you

would be pleasing to Christ, do not neglect this grace.

[3.] Consider the utility and profit. It is for our comfort. The

Spirit is called ' the oil of gladness,' because the benefits whereof we

are partakers are matters of great joy : Acts xiii. 52, ' The disciples

were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost;' Acts viii. 39, 'He

went on his way rejoicing ; ' Acts xvi. 34, ' He rejoiced, believing in

God with all his house.' It is for our honour we are dignified above

others, the more we are made partakers of the Spirit : 1 Peter ii. 9,

' Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar

people.'

SERMOXS UPOX ACTS XXIV. U-16.

SEEMOX I.

Believing all things which are icritten in the law and the prophets:

and have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that

there shall he a resurrection of the dead, both of the Just and

unjust. And herein do I exercise myself to have always a con-

science void of offence towards God, and towards man. — ^Acrs

xxiv. 14-16.

These words are part of Paul's apology against the accnsation of

TertuUus. Among other things, he chargeth him to be an heretic, or

an apostate from the Jewish religion. When the Eomans had con-

quered the Jews, they submitted upon this condition, that they should

innovate and change nothing in their religion, but defend it against

the disturbers of it. Now the christians being accused of innovation

and disturbance of such a religion as was under the caution of the

Eoman laws before a Eoman tribunal, it concerned them to show the

harmony and agreement of both religions as to the substance. This is

Paul's business, and therefore he giveth an account of his faith, worship,

and conversation. He did indeed observe the way of the christian

worship, which they called sectarism or heresy, and Paul was accused

' to be a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes,' ver. 5 ; but yet this

was agreeable enough to the rehgion of the Jews for the substance,

which he proveth by his faith, hope, carriage, and conversation.

Here is in effect all Christianity delivered to us in one prospect and

view.

1. An account of his faith at the bottom of all, ' Believing aU things

which are written in the law and the prophets.'

2. His hope, as the immediate fruit of it, ' And have hope towards

God ; ' and the principal object is, ' The resurrection of the dead, both

of the just and the unjust,' when we shall enjoy the full of what we

wait for.

3. An account of his manners, where you have a brief description of

a christian conversation, ' Herein do I exercise myself, to have always

a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards men.' My

business is not to discuss all these branches of Christianity apart, and

in their full latitude, but to give you the sum and delineation of all

religion in one view. Therefore observe —

420 SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-16.

Doct That true cbristianity is such a believing the truths contained

in the scriptures as produceth an hope of eternal life, and is expressed

in an impartial, uniform, and constant obedience.

Here is Paul's apology ; faith at the bottom, hope as the immediate

effect and product of it, and an holy conversation as the fruit and

consequent. The same method is observed in other scriptures ; as

1 Tim. i. 5, ' The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure

heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.' The com-

mandment is the gospel institution, and this received with a pure heart

and faith unfeigned produceth a good conscience, which shows itself

in love to God and men, by a true and lively faith in Christ. The

Holy Ghost purifieth the heart and conscience, and so produceth love :

2 Peter i. 5, 6, ' Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and

to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience

godliness.' In the chain of graces faith is the root of all. I sliall —

(1.) Examine the expressions here used; (2.) Give some reasons why

this is true Christianity.

I. Examine the expressions here used.

First, Concerning faith, 'Believing all things that are written in the

law and the prophets.'

1. Here is the object, or things believed, ' Things written in the law

and the prophets.'

2. The extent, ' All'

3. The act, ' Believing.'

1. The object, ' Things written in the law and the propnets.' Law

and prophets is an expression commonly used for all the scriptures then

extant : Mat. xi. 13, ' For all the prophets and the law prophesied until

John ; ' and Luke xvi. 29, ' They have Moses and the prophets ; let

them hear them.' The books of the Old Testament are thus called.

We christians, who have received the canon and rule of faith more

enlarged, are said ' To be built on the foundation of the prophets and

apostles,' Eph. ii. 20; so that now the object of our faith is prophets

and apostles. The object of faith may be considered formally or ma-

terially. Materially, such things as God hath revealed; formally,

because God hath revealed them. If God hath revealed what is in

the writings of the apostles, then we are to believe them. God's

veracity is the ground and support of our faith, into which it is ulti-

mately resolved. His instruments in revealing are the prophets and

apostles. We know God hath revealed the things written by them,

partly because these writings are delivered to us by the universal tradi-

tion of the church, and the testimony of christians through all succes-

sions of ages, in whose experience God hath blessed these writings for

conviction, conversion, and consolation ; and partly because of the

consent between the prophets and the apostles, the one foretelling what-

ever the other declared as accomplished : Acts xxvi. 22, 'Having therefore

obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small

and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and

Moses did say should come.' Partly because the doctrines have an im-

press of God upon them, as everything that hath passed his hand hath.

How do I know a fly, gnat, or any other creature to be made by God ?

God hath set his signature upon them : Ps. xix. 1, ' The heavens

SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-16. 421

declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork.'

So the scriptures agree with the nature and properties of God. As

God is wise, powerful, and good, these doctrines become his wisdom :

they have the stamp of his moral goodness, which is his holiness ; and

as for his power, they that feel it not fear it : John iii. 20, ' For every

one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the liglit,

lest his deeds should be reproved.' There is something that alarmeth

the conscience. And partly because it agreeth with the nature of man,

so far as a man hath any good left in him. It agreeth with the

necessities of man, his guilty fears and his desires of happiness. For

his guilty fears, men, that by reason of sin are afraid of God's j ustice, can-

not be quieted by any other means, but are by this : Jer, vi. 16, ' Stand

ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good

way. and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls ; ' Mat.

xi. 28, ' Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I

will give you rest.' In life and death the conscience is quieted. So

for desires of happiness. Men rove and grope about for some satisfying

good : Acts xvii. 27, ' That they should seek the Lord, if haply they

might feel after him, and find him ; ' And Ps. iv. 6, \* There be many

that say, Who will show us any good ? ' Life and immortality are

brought to light in the scriptures, and the way to obtain it clearly

revealed : Ps. xvi. 11, ' Thou wilt show me the path of life ; in thy

presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for ever-

more.' Partly because God hath witnessed and attested it by his

Spirit : Acts v. 32. ' \Ye are witnesses of these things, and so is also

the Holy Ghost' Without, by miracles and other wonderful effects ;

within, by enlightening the heart and mind, inclining and exciting us to

believe it upon these motives and arguments : 2 Cor. iv. 6, ' God, who

commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our

hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the

face of Jesus Christ ; ' so as to discern God's impress. Upon these

accounts we receive what is written in the prophets and apostles as

revealed by God.

2. The extent 'All things.' A believer receiveth all truths which

are of divine revelation, whether precepts, promises, threatenings,

doctrines, or histories. But then we must distinguish of an implicit

or explicit faith. With the latter we can only believe those things

which we know ; what we know not we cannot believe with an explicit

faith. Some christians know not all things which are contained in the

prophets and apostles, and yet in a sense they do believe by an implicit

faith ; as Agrippa believed the prophets : Acts xxvi. 27, ' King Agrippa,

believest thou the prophets ? I know that thou believest.' Yet he was

ignorant of some things revealed by them. So all christians own the

writings of the apostles and prophets as the rule and warrant of faith,

yet they do not discern every truth therein contained ; they do believe

that whatever the prophets and apostles say and have written is true,

and so are ready to believe all things which shall be demonstrated to

them to be written or said by them. But by an explicit faith they

believe all fundamental truths, such as are absolutely necessary to sal-

vation, and usually most other truths which are next to fundamentals.

The fundamentals are set down, John xvii. 3, ' This is life eternal, to

422 SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-16.

know tliee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.'

That God ii? to he known, loved, obeyed, worshipped, and enjoyed, and

that the Lord Jesus is our Redeemer and Saviour, to bring us home to

God, with his gifts of pardon and life, to be begun by the Spirit here,

and perfected in heaven.

3. The act, ' Believing." It is not enough not to deny or not to con-

tradict, but we must actually and positively believe. The reason why

the generality of people living in the christian world feel so little force

of their faith is from their inadvertency ; they leap into the christian

faith by the advantage of their birth, but do not consider what they

believe, nor why they should believe it, and how they are concerned in

it ; and so may be rather said not to contradict than to believe. But

true faith is a positive, firm assent, excited in us by the Spirit of God.

As the apostle saith of some that were zealous for the law, ' Understand-

ing neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm,' 1 Tim. i, 7, so

the rabble of common christians may be zealous for the gospel, yet are

not instructed in the nature and grounds of it, what and why they

should believe. A sound belief requireth a thorough understanding of

what we believe, and a deep consideration of the grounds and reasons

why we are to believe it. And then it is such a fixed assent as is not

perplexed and haunted with doubts about the truth of it, and such a

close adherence as is not discouraged with difficulties and oppositions.

It would be much better with the christian world if every one that

carrieth the name of a christian could say, ' I believe all that is written

in the prophets and the apostles.' In short —

To a sound belief there is necessary —

[1.] A knowledge or full instruction in the things which we believe;

for it is said, 1 John iv. 16, ' We have known and believed the love

that God hath to us ; ' first known and then believed.

[2.] A due conviction of the certainty of them : Luke i. 4, ' That

thou mayest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been

instructed ; ' and John vi. 69> ' We believe and are sure, that thou art

that Christ, the Son of the living God ; ' and John xvii. 8, ' They have

known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that

thou didst send me.'

[3.] This faith doth not only imply a bare intellectual assent, but a

practical trust and affiance ; for the nature of the object requireth so

much. Christianity doth not only propound bare truths to be assented

unto, but joyful, comfortable truths suitable to our necessity and

desires ; and therefore we must depend upon them, seek our happiness

in them in the way appointed by God, which is nothing but practical

trust and affiance. Therefore it is not a bare opinion, but a reliance

upon God, that he will make good his word to us, whilst we continue

with patience in well-doing. Therefore we are said to belong to Christ,

\* If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto

the end,' Heb. iii. 6.

[4.] Those truths which are contained in the word are to be consi-

dered with application, that we may know them for our good : Job v.

27, ' Hear it, and know thou it for thy good.' Every doctrine, which

upon search we find to be sound and good, we must make application of

it to ourselves, that it may affect our own hearts ; if threatenings, that we

SEKVIONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-16. 423

may escape the curse ; it" comforts or promises, Eom. viii, 32, \* "What

shall we say to these things ? ' The promise of pardon to all believers

is so miiversal, that it includeth you as well as others. Christ is

offered to every creature, that he may be yours as well as another's ;

and the offer of heaven and eternal life is so propounded that you

should engage your hearts to seek after it, and closely to adhere to it

till you obtain it. But to apply it so as to be persuaded that your own

sins are already pardoned, that you are an heir of glory, that you are

Christ's as to actual interest, you must have good evidence for that from

a spiritual sense of your own qualifications : but it belongeth not to

faith simply taken. Thus we have set forth a christian in his first part,

as a believer.

Secoyidlij, The apostle asserts his hope, ' And have hope towai-ds God,

which they themselves allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the

dead, both of the just and unjust.'

1. Mark that he propoundeth his hope as the immediate efiect and

product of faith ; for when I believe, then I must look and long, and

prepare for the blessedness offered, otherwise my faith is but a cold

opinion, not such a faith as will subdue the inclinations and interests

of the flesh, nor make the labours and sutferings of the spiritual life

tolerable : and that is true faith which breatheth and longeth after the

end of all religion, and looketh for it. What good will it do me to

believe the doctrines of the prophets and apostles, if I expect no good

from thence ? Faith would be vain, and religion vain. Only note

liere that hope is twofold —

[1.] One the fruit of regeneration, or the immediate effect of conver-

sion to God : 1 Peter i. 3, ' Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us

again unto a hvely hope.' And this is nothing else but a seeking and

looking for a happiness in another and an unseen world, with a longing

desire and diligent care to obtain it. It is faith to place my happiness

so liigh and so far from sense ; now when my desires and delights are

there, and my daily care is to get thither, and to live in a continual

preparation for it, and desirous expectation of it, and to deny myself,

and suffer any loss and pain to get thither, this is the work of hope.

[2.] There is an hope built upon experience : Eom. v. 4, 5, ' And

experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of

God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.' This dependeth

upon the sense of my qualification and interest, and is confirmed by

experience of God's love to my soul, for grace hath the force of an evi-

dence and pledge.

2. Observe that he pitcheth upon the resurrection as the great thing

hoped for, because then is our full and final happiness. We do not

believe in Christ unless we believe in him for eternal life : 1 Tim. i.

1<). ' That in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all lono:-sufterino',

for a pattern to them that should hereafter believe on him to life ever-

lasting ; ' John XX. 31, ' But these things are written that ye might

believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye

might have life through his name.' This is the great thing which we

liope, wait: and labour for. Nobody would trouble themselves about

religion, which abridgeth us of present delights, and exposeth us to

424 SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-16.

great troubles and sufferings, but for these things. Who would deny

himself, and devote himself entirely to God, but for these things ? 1 Cor.

XV. 19, ' If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men

most miserable ; ' but at the resurrection all shall be recompensed to

us, all the effects of sin cease.

3. Observe that he proposeth the double resurrection, of good and

bad; all that ever lived shall be judged and rewarded, whether good

or evil ; though with a hope to be found among the good and among

the sheep, not the goats. This is the true way of christian reflection

upon the great day ; however we are assured of our own interest, that

whilst we strengthen faith and hope, we weaken the security of the

flesh. Some may miscarry, though I have hopes to be accepted: 1

Cor, ix. 26, 27, ' I therefore so run, not as uncertainly ; so fight I, not

as one that beateth the air ; but I keep under my body, and bring it

into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others,

1 myself should be a castaway.' We have a covenant wherein to trust,

as long as we continue faithful with God, and deny the flesh its satis-

factions.

Thirdly, See what account he giveth of his manners and conversa-

tion : ver. 16, 'And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a con-

science void of offence both towards God and towards men.'

Observe here three things — (1.) The encouragement ; (2.) The

integrity of his obedience ; (3.) The laborious diligence wherewith he

carried it on.

First, His encouragement, eV tovto). Interpreters diversely expound

this eV TovTw (-x^povq)), interea temporis, in the meantime, till faith be

turned into vision, hope into fruition. There is a time between believ-

ing and possessing, hoping and having ; and during that time there is

much exercise for our faith and patience : Heb. vi. 12, ' That ye be

not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience

inherit the promises,' Again, kv tovtw, by virtue of this faith and

hope, upon this hope and encouragement. Faith and a good conscience

are often coupled : 1 Tim. i. 5, ' Now the end of the commandment is

charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith

unfeigned.' We cannot keep the one without the other ; not a good

conscience without faith, nor faith without a good conscience. Not tlie

first, for no man will make conscience of his duty unless he believeth

in God and bopetli for salvation ; for unless we believe in God and

hope for his promises, we shall not be so careful to keep a good con-

science, by eschewing evil and doing good. Sometimes faitli is said to

work by love, and sometimes by hope. By love : Gal. v. 6, ' For in

Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision,

but faith that worketh by love.' The soul is never fit for duty till it

be possessed with the love of God and man. Sometimes by hope : 1

John iii. 3, ' He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as God is

pure.' And the second is evident, for it is said, 1 Tim. i. 19, ' Holding

faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning

faith have made shipwreck.' Any great lust cherished will destroy

our faith and hopes, as a man cannot long subsist in a leaky vessel.

So 1 Tim. iii, 9, ' Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.'

Precious liquors are best kept in a clean vessel.

SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 11-16. 425

Secondly, The integrity of his obedience, set forth in all the neces-

sary requisites.

1. There is sincerity asserted. For his conscience was in it, and a

good conscience, ^ow conscience is that faculty which is apt to take

God's part, and is the judgment a man maketh upon his actions, mor-

ally considered, in order to praise and dispraise, reward and punish-

ment ; and the goodness of conscience consisteth in its ability to do its

oflSce, in its clearness, purity, tenderness, quietness, or peaceableness.

For its clearness : a blind conscience is an evil conscience ; for ' with-

out knowledge the heart is not good," Prov. ix. 2. As a judge that

understandeth not the laws of the country is unfit to give judgment in

any matter that cometh before him, or as a dim eye cannot do the office

of an eye, so a blind conscience is no competent judge of our duty to God.

So for the pmity of conscience : 1 Peter iii. 21, ' Not the putting away

of the filthiness of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience

towards God ; ' and Heb. xiii. 18, ' We trust we have a good conscience,

willing in all things to live honestly.' A good conscience is an heart

set to please God in all things, an heart hating sin and loving holi-

ness. Again, tenderness is another property of a good conscience

when it is wakeful, and smiteth for sin upon all occasions offered. This

property may be understood by what the apostle saith of heathens for

gross sins : Eom. ii. 15, ' Which show the work of the law written on

their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts

in the meantime accusing or else excusing one another.' In David :

1 Sam. xxiv. 5, ' David's heart smote him because he had cut off Saul's

skirt ; ' and by what Job saith, chap, xxvii. 6, ' My heart shall not

reproach me as long as I live.' The opposite is a seared conscience

that hath no feeling : 1 Tim. iv. 2, ' Having their consciences seared

with a hot iron.' This we contract by frequent heinous sinning, or by

a customary practice of that which is evil, by which the heart groweth

as hard as the highway which is trod upon. Quietness of conscience

is another property, whereby the goodness of it is discerned ; only this

quietness must arise from the former properties, else it is a dead, sleepy,

seared conscience. For in this we must consider not who hath most

quiet, but who hath most cause ; as in buildings, not the fairness of the

structure, but the foundation of it is to be regarded. There is a quiet

evil conscience : Luke xi. 21, ' When a strong man armed keepeth his

palace, his goods are in peace.' When wind and tide go together there

is a calm, but the quiet good conscience is from faith in Christ : Eom.

V. 1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God; ' from a sense

of our sincere dealing with God : 2 Cor. i. 12, ' For our rejoicing is

this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sin-

cerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had

our conversation in the world.' A serenity resulting from our peace with

God and close walking with him.

2. The strictness and exactness of the apostle's course. He would

keep this good conscience ' void of offence.' It may be understood

passively or actively. Passively, that conscience be not offended and

suffer wrong ; actively, that we offend not, or offer wrong to others.

[1.] That conscience be not offended, or receiv3 wrong by any mis-

carriage of ours, for it is a tender thing. The least dust in the eye

426 SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-lG.

hindereth its use, so doth sin offend and trouble tlie conscience. Take

those four notions before mentioned, Clearness : Mat. v. 8, ' Blessed

are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' A dusty glass hindereth

the sight of the image, so lust cloudeth the mind. In regard of purity ;

so far as we give way to sin, conscience is defiled. The apostle speak-

eth of some ' whose minds and consciences were defiled/ Titus i. 15.

It is defiled by sin. In regard of tenderness, nothing bringeth a brawn

upon conscience so much as frequent and allowed sinning in small

things. First it is wounded, and then hardened, and so groweth dead

and sleepy ; though it may write, it refuseth to speak ; it is a register

when it is not a witness. So it is ofi'ended in regard of quietness. An

offended conscience will offend us, and ' a wounded spirit who can

bear ? ' Prov. xviii. 14. You may as well expect to touch the flesh

with a burning coal without pain as to sin without trouble of con-

science. Sin will bring shame and horror ever since Adam's experi-

ence, who was afraid and ashamed. Gen. iii. 7.

[2.] The second sense, that we offend not, nor offer wrong to others,

will fall in with the next head.

3. The impartiality of his obedience, ' Both towards God and towards

men.' There are two tables, and we are to take care we do not give

offenceto God or men, by neglecting our duty to either.

[1.] Our chief care should be that we do not make a breach upon

our love to God. Conscience standeth always in dread of God's eye

and presence, to whom it is most accountable : Acts xxiii. 1, ' I have

lived in all good conscience before God until this day ; ' O ' grieve not

the Spirit ! ' Eph. iv. 30. Offend not the pure eyes of his glory.

[2.] That we do not offend men : Rom. xii. 17, rrpovoovjxevoL to,

KoXa, ' Provide things honest in the sight of all men.' We must be

careful of our conscience before God and frame with men, that we

neither seduce them by our example nor grieve them by any unjust or

uncharitable carriage of ours, but be blameless to men.

4. The constancy, hiaiTavTo^, ' always,' in all cases, by all means, at

all times. A conscience brought forth at times, and for certain turns,

is not a good conscience : Job xiii. 18, ' Behold now I have ordered

my cause ; I know that I shall be justified.' A man is tried by his

course, not by a step or two : 1 Peter i. 15, ' As he that hath called you

is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation,' ev Trdarj avaarpot^rj ;

in every creek and corner of your lives, not in an humour and in good

moods. A christian is everywhere like himself, and never dareth to do

anything knowingly against conscience.

Thirdly, The laborious diligence wherewith he carried it on : 'I

exercise myself.' We must make it our constant labour and endeavour,

by a diligent search into the mind of God : Eom. xii. 2, ' That we may

prove what is the good and acceptable will of God ; ' Eph. v. 17, ' Be not

unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is ; ' Eph. v. 10,

' Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord,' that we may not offend

him in worship or daily conversation. By a serious inquiry into the

state of our own hearts and ways : Ps. iv. 4, ' Stand in awe, and sin

not ; commune with your hearts upon your bed, and be still.' If we

would have conscience speak to us, we must often speak to conscience :

Jer. viii. 6, ' I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright ; no

SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-lG. 427

man repented bim of his wickedness, saying, What have I done ? '

Ask questions of your hearts. And also by a constant watchfulness

and taking heed to our feet : Ps. xxxix. 1, ' I said, I will take heed to

my ways, that I offend not with my tongue.' Many live as if they had

no conscience, and by a broken-hearted making use of Christ's death :

Kom. V. 1, ' Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, thi-ough

our Lord Jesus Christ ; ' and 1 John ii. 1, ' If any man sin, we have an

advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; ' and Heb. ix.

14, ' How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eter-

nal Spirit ofi"ered himself to God without spot, purge your conscience

from dead works to serve the living God.' By a serious resistance and

mortification of sin, cutting ofi" the right hand, and pulling out the right

eye, Mat. v. 29, 30 ; and Gal. v. 24, ' They that are Christ's have cruci-

fied the flesh with the aff'ections and lusts ; ' and by the use of all holy

means which God hath appointed.

II. The reasons why this is true Christianity.

1. The necessity of it. It is a great question how far obedience be-

longeth to faith, whether as a part, or as an end, fruit, and consequent ?

I answer — Both ways. Consent of subjection is a part of faith, actual

obedience a fruit of it. In the covenant there is a consent first before

practice. Faith believeth the precepts as well as the promises : Ps.

cxix. 66, 'Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I have believed

thy commandments ; ' Heb. x. 22, ' Let us draw near with a true heart,

in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil con-

science, and our bodies washed with pure water.' It believeth the pro-

mises to sweeten obedience to us ; it hath a persuasive oratory, as it

worketh by love or hope. It worketh us to an observance of the precepts

by the hopes of the resurrection, lest we be enticed from them either by

things grateful or troublesome to present sense : 1 Cor. xv. 58, ' Be

steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,

forasmuch as you know that your work is not in vain in the Lord.' If

you believe things written in the law and the prophets, you wiU see your

labour is not in vain in the Lord.

2. The comfort of obedience to us. "We cannot make out our evi-

dence and plea but by a uniform, constant, and impartial obedience.

Principles are latent till they discover themselves by their fruit. Our

faith and hope is but a fancy unless it prevail over sensitive inclina-

tions to present things, that we may live in the patient and delightful

service of God, and an entire obedience to his holy will. The sap is

not seen, but the apples and fruit appear: Acts xxvi. 20, ' That they

should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance ; '

Mat. iii. 8, ' Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance ; ' we can

else have no comfortable evidence of it.

3. It is for the honour of Christ, as well as our own comfort and

safety. Obedience maketh faith visible and sensible : 2 Thes. i. 11,

12, ' And fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of

faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be

glorified in you, and ye in him.' An holy conversation bringeth

doctrines near to our senses, and thereby it is more clear and powerful

to gain upon others : Christ hath the honour, we the reward : John xv.

S, ' Herein is my father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit, so

428 SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-16.

shall ye be my disciples ; ' and Phil. i. 11, ' Being filled with the fruits

of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise

of Grod/ Uniform practice is such a fruit of grace as representeth the

doctrine of life with advantage to the consciences of others ; otherwise

■we shall never do any great things for Christ in the world.

SERMON II.

Believing all things ivhicJi are loritten in the law and the prophets :

and have hope towards God, which they themselves also alloiu,

that there shall he a resurrection of the dead, both of the just

and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself to have always a

conscience void of offence towards God and toivards man. —

Acts xxiv. 14-16.

Use 1. Is disproof of the nullifidians, and solifidians ; those that cry

up good life without faith, and, on the other side, that cry up empty

faith without obedience and holiness.

1 . Nullifidians, who are very rife among us, who do as wisely as

those that would plant a tree by the top, and not by the root ; so they

cry up a morality without the faith and hope of the gospel, and that

love to God which is engendered by it ; and so, out of a fondness of

pagan strictness and philosophic institution, defy the religion they

were bred up in. There can be no true love to God or man without

the faith of the gospel. The apostle telleth us, Rom. vii. 4, ' That we

are married to him who was raised from the dead, that we may bring

forth fruit to God.^ As the children who are born before marriage are

illegitimate, so all that justice, and temperance, and charity which is not

cherished in us by the love of God, and faith in Christ, and the hopes

of the other world, is but mock grace and bastard holiness, and is not

acceptable to God.

I shall prove two things —

[1.] That morality is not kindly unless it be founded on the gospel,

and never so thoroughly promoted as by the principles laid down there :

Titus ii. 11, 12, ' The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath

appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly

lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present

world.' The more we believe all things contained in the writings of

the prophets and apostles, the more we are taught how to live soberly,

righteously, and godly in the present world. There we liave the true

principle of obedience, viz., love to God fed and bred in us by his

love to us in Christ ; the true encouragement and motive of obedience,

the hopes of the other world ; the true rule of obedience, God's mind

revealed in his word, and perfecting the light of nature so far as it

discovereth anything of our duty to God, neighbour, and self. Here is

better furniture than we can have elsewhere, a forcible principle and a

glorious hope, and an exact rule. Now they that would cry up right

SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-16. 429

reason in defiance of these are not Christ's disciples, but would make

him theirs, and teach him and his apostles how to speak and teach the

way to true happiness ; and so are guilty of great unthankfulness for

this blessed revelation which we have in the gospel.

[2.] That true morality and good conscience cannot be had without

the faith of the gospel ; so that we are not only better provided, but

indeed cannot perform such obedience as is acceptable to God without

faith in Christ. And therefore I shall show you the defects that are

in men's obedience till they believe in Christ.

(1.) There is a defect in their state. They are not reconciled to

God till they be in Christ ; and therefore he will not accept an offer-

ing at their hands who neglect his grace, and will not sue out their

atonement with him in that penitent and broken-hearted way which he

hath appointed in the new covenant. Let them first sue out their pardon

in the name of Christ, and then begin with a new course of obedience.

God is ^vst placandus, then placenchis. First his wrath is to be appeased,

and then he will accept of our duties and actions ; first our persons are

accepted, and then our duties and ofi"erings : Gen. iv. 4, ' The Lord

had respect to Abel and to his offering ; ' Abel being a believer, and

under grace, as the apostle explaineth it, Heb. xi. 4, ' By faith Abel

offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, by which he

obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and

by it he, being dead, yet speaketh ; ' that is, he was justified and accepted

with God. This is such a principle of reason, that Lilius Gyraldus

saith it was the custom of the heathens, Utprius iratos deos placarent,

et postea invocarent propitios — First to appease their gods, and then

to pray unto them. Man cometh as a sinner to God, and therefore

first he must deprecate his wrath, and use all means how God may be

pacified and appeased.

(2.) There is a defect in the actions themselves.

(1st) In the root ; there is not a clear fountain or principle of grace

in their hearts ; and then, ' Who can bring a clean thing out of an

unclean ? ' Job xiv. 4 ; a clear stream out of a dirty puddle ? How can

he perform a good action which is naturally corrupt ? Without the

Spirit of Christ all our good actions have a blemish : ' The fruit of the

Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth/ Eph. v. 9. It

is but wild fruit unless it be the fruit of the Spirit, and floweth from

the grace of regeneration, and that new state of heart into which we

are put by Jesus Christ : John xv. 5, ' I am the vine, ye are the

branches : he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth

much fruit ; for without me ye can do nothing.' One that is in Christ

will be fruitful to God, but without him, %w/3i? e/iou, seorsim a me, or

apart from him, there is no bringing forth fruit to God. It is not

nihil magnum, some great thing, ye cannot work miracles without me,

but nihil, nothing, nothing saving and acceptable to God.

(2d) In the manner. They do not obey God with that purity, that

life and affection, that he hath required. Their actions are superficial,

shadows of good things ; they draw nigh to him with their lips when

their hearts are far from him : Mat. xv. 8, ' This people draweth nigh

to me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their

heart is far from me.' Their duties to men are but shadows of good

430 SEKMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-16.

actions, not flowing from a hearty love and a good conscience, but from,

interest or natural temper.

(3c?.) There is a defect in the end ; they do not regard God's glory :

Col. iii. 17, ' Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of

the Lord Jeisus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him ; ' 1 Cor.

X. 31, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the

glory of God.' The most commendable actions of carnal men have

either a natural aim, as self-preservation ; so in their worship : Hosea

vii. 14, ' They have not cried unto me with their heart when they

liowled upon their beds ; ' they howl upon their bed for corn and wine.

Or self-quiet and ease; so in their duties to men, more 'for wrath

than conscience' sake,' Rom. xii. 5. Or for vain-glory, ' To be seen of

men,' Mat. vi. 1. Or a legal aim ; when most devout, to quiet con-

science, or to satisfy God for their sins by their duties : Micah vi, 6, 7,

' Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the

high God ? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves

of a year old ? will the Lord be pleased with thousand of rams, or

with ten thousands of rivers of oil ? shall I give my first-born for my

transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ? ' Usually

the sacrifice of the wicked is 'brought with an evil mind,' Prov.

xxi. 27 ; to buy our indulgence in some sins by avoiding others, or by

performing some duties to pay for their neglect of others which are mOre

weighty. Duties are performed as a sin-offering, not as a thank-offer-

ing ; to pacify God, not to glorify him. There is no delight in God

or obedience. In short, all is as flowers strewed upon a dunghill.

2. The solifidians, that cry up an empty faith without obedience

and holiness, these are to be dealt with as well as the other.

[1.] The end of all religion is practice. Christianity was not brought

into the world that we might talk of great things, but do great things

for God. All the mysteries of our most holy faith are mysteries of

godliness ; and if it be not so, the word of God is come to us in word

only, and not in power, and we are christians of the letter, not of the

spirit. The law of grace was never intended to try the acuteness of

men's wits, who could reason most profoundly of these glorious things,

nor the firmness of their memories, who could best carry in mind these

holy truths, nor the readiness of their invention, who could most

plausibly discourse about them, but the willingness of their obedience,

who would most entirely practise them : John xiv. 21, ' He that hath

my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.' The

practical christian hath the truest sense of his religion.

[2.] The end of our redemption is obedience. Christ hath ends of

his own, as well as those which more immediately concern our benefit ;

Eev. V. 9, 'Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy

blood.' Sin had made us unserviceable to God, and the end of Christ's

death was to put us in joint again, and to bring us into a course of

service and obedience unto our Creator : Eom. xiv. 9, ' For to this end

Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of

dead and living.' He came to redeem us not only from wrath, but

from sin ; not only to abolish guilt, but to establish holiness: Titus

ii. 14, ' Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all

• iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good

works.'

SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-16. 431

[3.] It is the end of bis renewing grace. He hath altered the con-

stitutiou of our hearts, that we may hve unto God : 2 Cor. v. 17,

' Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old

things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new.' We

are renewed in heart, that we might walk in all newness of conversa-

tion.

[4.] It is the end of our faith and hope. Faith and hope are but

means subservient to love, which is the grace by which we are inclined

to perform our duty to God and man ; and therefore the strength of

our faith is to be judged by the readiness of our obedience : Gal. v. 6,

' For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncir-

cumcision, but faith which worketh by love.' That carrieth away the

prize of justification. It is the love of God, stirred up in us by faith

which maketh us watchful against sin, and careful to please him in all

things.

Use 2. To press us all, if we would be complete christians, to take

all the three parts. (1.) Let us be sound in the faith; (2.) Let us

keep up hope ; (3.) Let us be tliorough and exact in obedience.

1. Let us be sound in the faith, believing all things that are contained

in the word of God, not contenting ourselves with a light credulity or

common tradition, but have a faith of the S})irit's working. Your

love to God dependeth upon the principles laid down in the gospel,

which discover to you his love in the Redeemer, and the provision

made for your souls ; therefore you are ' to build up yourselves in

your most holy faith, that you may keep yourselves in the love of God/

Jude 20, 21.

2. Let not hope be left out as an unnecessary grace. This is not a

cursory and slight, but a desirous expectation, so as not to be weakened

by the lusts of the flesh : 1 Peter i. 13, ' Wherefore gird up the loins

of your minds ; be ye sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is

to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.' When

Christ Cometh all your labours and self-denial shall be recompensed :

Rom. viii. 24, 25, ' For we are saved by hope ; but hope that is seen

is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for ? but if we

hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.'

3. Be sound and thorough, and exact in obedience. Many hold

sound doctrine, and have some lazy expectation of eternal life, but they

are defective in the third branch ; they are not careful to keep a good

conscience, and do their duty in all things to God and man. Here I

shall press you to two things —

1.] Let conscience be your guide.

2.] Exercise yourselves in this, that conscience may be a good

guide to you.

First, Let conscience be your guide. I shall press you hereunto by

two considerations —

1. From the nature of conscience. It is not only a monitor, but a

judge. As a monitor it warns us of our duty ; as a judge it censures

our neglects of it. Science is one thing, conscience is another. Science

is a man's knowledge of other things ; conscience is a man's knowledge

of himself, his state, and ways, to know what he is to do, and to know

what he hath done ; that is conscience. It is the judgment of a man

concerning himself and his actions with respect to reward and punish-

432 SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-16.

ment. God, that is our Lord, is also our proper judge; but it pleaseth

God to put a faculty into man, this spirit within him, that he should

have something in his own bosom to be a rule and judge, but yet a

subordinate rule, and a deputy-judge, accountable to God ; but a judge

it is. However it much conducetli to the glory of God and to the

safety of man.

[1.] To the glory of God.

(1.) As it is an evidence of his being, whose law is the ground of

conscience, and before whom conscience doth accuse, and whose sentence

it doth dread and stand in fear of. Why doth conscience scruple this or

that, if there be not a God by whose will good and evil are distin-

guished ? To whom doth it accuse us but to God ? Why is conscience

sometimes afraid, sometimes comforted, if there were no God to mind

things here below ? We find conscience appalleth the stoutest sinners

after the commitment of some offence, though it be secret, and beyond

the cognisance and vengeance of man : Ps. liii. 5, ' There were they

in great fear where no fear was ; ' that is, no outward cause of fear,

where none sought to hurt them ; accusing themselves when none else

could accuse them, as Joseph's brethren : Gen. xlii. 21, 'We are verily

guilty concerning our brother's blood ; ' or where none had power to

reach them, as princes and worldly potentates feel the stings of con-

science as well as others. Felix trembled, who was the judge, at Paul's

words, who was the prisoner : Acts xxiv. 25, ' And as he reasoned of

righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.'

What is the reason of this, but that they know there is a supreme

judge and avenger ?

(2.) It is for the glory of his judicial proceedings. Self-accusers

and self-condemners have no reason to quarrel with God and impeach

his justice. Man hath principles and sentiments graven upon his

heart, which justify all God's dealings with him : Luke xix. 22, ' Out of

thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant ! ' and Ps. li.

4, ' That thou may est be justified when thou speakest, and be clear

when thou judgest.' Hereby he is left without excuse : Eom. i. 20,

' So that they are without excuse,' ava'iro\o<yr]rov<i ; Titus iii. 11, ' Know-

ing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of

himself,' avTOKardKpLro<i. Hence the frequent appeals to conscience :

Isa. V. 3, 4, ' Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard : what

could I have done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it ? '

I have produced these scriptures to show that by conscience man is

better induced to give a testimony to God concerning all his dealings

with him.

[2.] To the safety and benefit of man, that he may have an oracle

in his own bosom to direct him to his duty, and to warn him of his

danger if he doth amiss. Conscience is spoken of in scripture both

ways ; as instructing us in our duty : Ps. xvi. 7, ' My reins also instruct

me in the night season ; ' that is, conscience showed him his duty, and

how he was concerned in the law of God, or the rule which God had

given to his creatures. And as it showeth us what to do, so it reflecteth

upon what we have done. If evil, it smiteth us for it : 2 Sam. xxiv, 10,

' And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people.'

If good, it cheereth us with it : 2 Cor. i. 12, ' For our rejoicing is this,

SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-16, 433

the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity,

not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our

conversation in the world.' It smiteth as it exciteth fear of punish-

ment ; it cheereth as it stirreth up hope of reward, and we do very

much understand hereby how God standeth affected towards us : 1

John iii, 19-21, ' And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and

shall assure our hearts before him ; for if our heart condemn us, God

is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our

heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.'

2, Conscience is God's vicegerent and deputy. You may know

much of his mind by the voice and report of conscience ; therefore,

next to the judgment and sentence of God, a man should regard the

judgment and sentence of conscience: 1 John iii. 20, 21, 'If our heart

condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards

God.' Observe what conscience speaketh ; doth it condemn thee or

acquit thee ? and upon what terms doth it either ? The voice of con-

science is often the voice of God, and men would sooner come to know

themselves, and might make a right judgment upon theu' estates, if

they would look inward, and regard the voice of conscience, doth it

condemn or acquit ? Indeed there lieth an appeal from court to court,

and from judge to judge.

[1.] From court to court. In what court doth conscience condemn

you ? In the law court ? You ought to own the desert of sin, clear-

ing God, if he should inflict it upon you : 1 Cor. xi. 31, ' For if we

would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.' But yet you may

take sanctuary at his grace, and humbly claim the benefit of the new

covenant : Ps. cxxx. 3, 4, ' If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity,

Lord, who shall stand ? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou

mayest be feared.' If it condemn you in the gospel court for no sound

believer, the case must not be lightly passed over, but examined,

%vhether thero be a sincere bent of heart towards God : Heb. xiii. 18,

' "We trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live

honestly.'

[2.] There is an appeal to an higher judge. Doth conscience write

bitter things against thee ? Yet if God justifieth, Kom. viii. 33, ' "Who

shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? it is God that justifieth.'

God's act is authoritative and powerful : Isa. Ivii. 19, ' I create the

fruit of the lips, peace, peace to him that is afar ofl", and to him that is

near, saith the Lord, and I will heal him ; ' Ps. Ixxxv. 8, ' I will hear

what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace unto his people

and to his saints.' But sometimes he speaketh in the sentence of his

word when not in the conscience ; his authority may comfort when

we feel not his power. So for acquitting ; conscience is not the highest

judge : 1 Cor. iv. 4, ' For if I know nothing by myself, yet am I not

hereby justified ; but he that judgeth me is the Lord ; ' Prov. xvi. 2,

' All the ways of a man are clear in his own eyes, but the Lord

weigheth the spirits.' We must consult his word, and thereby clear

our case, so as to assure our hearts before him. 1 1

3. Conscience is easily offended, but not easily appeased ; as the eye '

is easily offended v,'ith the least dust or mote, which soon gets in, but

VOL. XVII. 2 E

434 SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-16.

is not easily gotten out. But then to appease it costs a great deal of

trouble. Therefore, if we would, as Paul, keep a conscience void of

offence, there needeth much tenderness and watchfulness, for by the

commission of deliberate and wilful sins you may raise a tempest that is

not easily laid again ; as David felt broken bones after his foul fall :

Ps. li. 8, ' Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which

thou hast broken may rejoice.' Before the action conscience showeth

what is to be done ; in the action it guideth us in doing ; after the

action it censureth it as well or ill done ; and so either comforteth us

with hopes of a reward, or terrifieth us with fear of punishment. As a

man acteth, so conscience is a party ; as the action is censured, so

conscience is a judge. After the action the force of conscience is

usually seen more than before the fact or in the fact, because before

and in the action the judgment of reason is not so clear and strongs

the affections raising mists and clouds to darken the mind and trouble

it, and draw it on their side by their pleasing violence. By the

treachery of the senses and revolt of the passions the mind is betrayed ;

but as the violence of the affections ceaseth, and is by little and little

allayed, guilt flasheth in the face of conscience, and reason hath the

greatest force to affect the mind with grief or fear. The act being

over, and the affection satisfied, the soul giveth place to reason, which

was before contemned ; and when it recovereth the throne, it striketh

through the heart with a sharp sentence and i-eproof for obeying

appetite before itself, and brings in terror and trouble, which causeth

the soul to sit uneasy : Mat. xxvii. 4, ' I have sinned in that I have

betrayed the innocent blood;' Kom. i. 32, 'Knowing the judgment of

God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death.' There-

fore do not go like an ox to the slaughter, nor a fool to the correction

of the stocks.

4. Conscience is the best friend and the worst enemy. It is the

best friend, partly for its comfort : Prov. xv. 15, ' He that is of a merry

heart hath a continual feast ; ' 2 Cor. i. 12, ' For our rejoicing is this,

the testimony of our conscience ; ' no bird sings so sweetly as the bird

in the bosom. Partly for its nearness ; it is always with us, in health

and sickness, in life and in death. Husbands and wives, who are most

together, yet because they live a distinct life, they are often apart;

death looseth the bond and knot, but this remaineth with us. So it is

the worst enemy. Partly for its universal nearness. It is sad for a

man to be at odds with himself, and fall out with his own heart. It

is a domestical tribunal, which always remaineth with us ; and there-

fore Job could bear the reproaches of others, but his own heart should

not reproach him as long as he lived, Job xxvii. 6. Partly because of

the grievousness of the wound and stroke : Prov. xviii. 14, ' A wounded

spirit who can bear ? ' It is no less than the fear of the wrath of the

eternal God. A man cannot run away from his conscience, no more

than he can run away from himself ; and therefore for a man to please

others and offend his conscience, what folly is that ! or to please a lust

to wound his conscience. A lust or vain appetite is an unjustifiable

thing, and will soon appear so, but the fears of conscience are justified

by the highest reason, the law of God. The satisfaction of a lust is a

poor vanishing pleasure, but the observing and keeping a good con-

SERMONS UPON ACTS X5IV. 14-16. 435

science breecleth a solid joy, which will stick by thee to the very last,

and when thou comest to die, will be a support to thee : Isa. xxxviii.

3, ' Eemember now, Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before

thee in truth, and with a pei'fect heart, and have done that which is

good in thy sight/ When thou must leave riches, honours, and

pleasures, which are the baits of thy lust, this will stick by thee :

1 John ii. 17, ' The world passeth away, and the lust thereof ; but he

that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' Therefore now thou

shouldst mortify thy lust and gi^atify thy conscience.

5. Thy conscience is the beginning of heaven and hell. A good

conscience is the beginning of heaven, and peace and joy in believing

is a foretaste of that fulness of joy and pleasure which we shall have

when we come into God's immediate presence. The glorified spirits

carry a good conscience with them to heaven ; ' their works follow them,'

Eev. xiv. 13 ; and the damned carry their stings and convictions with

tliem to hell : Mark ix. 44, ' Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not

quenched.' Oh, think of this ! The joys of the Spirit are an antepast

of glory, called often an earnest in scripture : 2 Cor. i. 22, ' Who hath

also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.'

And the horrors of conscience are the suburbs of hell. Oh ! therefore

be sure to keep all quiet within, and whatever be your temptations, do

not offend conscience, but unfeignedly discharge your duties to God

and men.

6. If there be a crack and a flaw in your conscience, all your trading

with heaven is at a stand ; there cannot be any serious dealing with God,

nor holy boldness in prayer: 1 John iii. 31, 'If our hearts condemn

us not, then have we confidence towards God/ Wlien you have sinned

away your peace, a strangeness and distance groweth between God and

you : Ps. xxxii. 3, ' When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through

my roaring all the day long ; ' Gen. iii. 8, ' And Adam and his wife hid

themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the

garden.' Adam ran to the bushes. Tour hearts will grow shy of

God, and you cannot so comfortably look him in the face, and so the

sweetness of holy privacy and communion with God will be lost. Time

was when you could go boldly, and open your hearts to God, but now

you are afraid of him, and every act of commerce is a reviving of your

bondage ; the remembrance of God is a trouble to you.

7. If conscience speaketh not, it writeth, for it is not only a witness,

but a register and book of record : Jer. xvii. 1, ' The sin of Judah is

written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond/ We

know not what conscience writeth, being occupied and taken up with

carnal vanities, and carried away with foolish and hiu'tful lusts, but we

shall know afterwards, when the book of conscience shall be opened :

Kev. XX. 12, ' And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God :

and the books were opened ; and another book was opened, which is

the book of life ; and the dead were judged out of those things which

were written in the books, according to their works.' These books are

the book of conscience and the book of God's remembrance. The

remembrance of our actions shall be forced upon us. Conscience is

God's register, and keepeth a diary, and sets down everything. This

book, though it be in the sinner s keeping, cannot be razed : what con-

436 SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-16.

science writeth is written to eternity, unless it be blotted out by

repentance and a serious application of the blood of Christ. Well, then,

cipnsider a sleepy conscience will not always sleep : if we suffer it not

to awaken here, it will awaken in hell, where there is no remedy ; for

the present it sleepeth in many, in regard of motion, check, or smiting,

but not in regard of notice and observation. This secret spy is privy

to more than it speaketh of ; it is laid up as matter for the worm that

never dieth to feed upon.

8. If the stings of an evil conscience be not always felt, yet they are

soon awakened by serious thoughts of death and judgment to come, and

then forced upon us. There is a fire smothering in our bosoms, and it

is soon blown up into a flame. Sometimes by the word : Acts xxiv. 25,

\*And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to

come, Felix trembled.' Belshazzar's edge was taken off in the midst of

his carousing : Dan. v. 6, ' Then the king's countenance was changed,

and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed,

and his knees smote one against another.' Sometimes by some great

troubles : Isa. lix. 12, ' For our transgressions are multiplied before thee,

and our sins testify against us : for our transgressions are with us, and

as for our iniquities, we know them.' Therefore ' we roar like beasts,

and mourn like doves,' ver. 11. In atempest, that which is at the bot-

tom Cometh a-top. Or by death ; whatever silence there be in conscience

before, yet death usually reviveth these fears : 1 Cor. xv. 56, ' The sting

of death is sin.' Men are wise and more serious as they are entering

on the confines of eternity ; near things afiect us ; the baits of the flesh

have then lost their allurement. The devil, that was before a tempter,

will then be a tormentor. Things overlooked before are then seriously

considered ; then the stings of sin work more sensibly, and in a lively

manner, and the deluded sinner begins to see what he would not take

notice of before.

9. If conscience do not speak to you, you must speak to it, and call

upon it to do its office. Call yourselves to an account for the expense

of your time and employment : Ps. iv. 4, ' Commune with your own

heart upon your bed, and be still ; ' Ps. Ixxvii. 6, ' I commune with

mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.' Take a time to

parley with yourselves, and consider how matters stand between you

and God. When the clock striketh not, it is a sign the plummets are

down, and we must wind them up again. Every day we must do

something, as Job sacrificed for his sons day by day : Job i. 5, 'It

may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.'

And God himself reviewed every day's work, and ' saw that it was good,'

Gen. i. 4, 10, 12, &c. So should we review every day's work, and cast

up the account at the foot of every page. Short reckonings prevent

mistakes. Pythagoras taught his scholars that they should never

give way to sleep till they had posed themselves with these questions,

Quid feci, &c. — What have I done ? what good have I omitted ?

wherein have I transgressed ? Conscience, what hast thou to say to

me ? And Seneca telleth of his friend Sextius, that before he would

betake himself to rest he would ask his soul, Quid liodie mcdtim iuum

sanasti? cui vitio obstitisti? qua parte melior es? — What evil hast

thou got rid of to-dav ? what sin hast thou resisted ? wherein art thoi?

SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIY. 14-16. 437

better than thou wert before ? And he saith of himself, Quoiidie aipud.

me causam dico, iotinn diem mecirni scndor, dicta et facta mea reme-

tior ; that he scanned all his actions and speeches in the day. Shall

heathens be more serious, and shall christians, vrho are acquainted with

eternity, never take time to set conscience a-work ? Oh ! let us be

ashamed of our slightness and negligence I

10. We can never have a sound conscience till we be sincere ^\-ith

God in a constant uniform course of self-denying obedience : 1 John

iii. 19, ' Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our

hearts before him ; ' and this is described in the text by ' keeping a

conscience void of oflence both towards God and towards men.' So

2 Kings XX. 3, ' I beseech thee.. Lord, remember now how I have

walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done

that which is good in thy sight,' and this not in an act or two, but in

a man's whole course : Ps. cvi. 3, ' Blessed are they that keep judgment

and he that doeth righteousness at all times.' Not by starts and good'

moods only, but constantly and at all times. And our obedience must

be self-denying as well as constant and uniform. That rehgion is worth

nothing that costs nothing : 2 Sam. xxiv. 24, ' I will not ofter burnt-

offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing.'

When we value God's interest above our own, and we can deny our-

selves upon the hopes of glory, then is our sincerity most evidenced.

But if we embrace only the safe, cheap, and easy part of religion, and

cannot deny our ease, profit, and honour, we do not set up Christ's re-

ligion, but a Christianity of our own making : Mat. xvi. 24, ' Then said

Jesus unto his disciples, If any one will come after me, let him deny

himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.'

11. If we would have conscience to do its office, there must be gi'eat

heed and watchfulness, for it is corrupt as well as other faculties, and

from a judge it may become an advocate, excusing the partialities of our

obedience. To evidence this more fully with re.^pect to conscience,

men may be considered three ways — as acting without conscience, or

according to conscience, or against conscience.

[1.] A man may act without all conscience, so a man may do either

good or evil.

(1.) Good, as those that act rashly, inconsiderately, or customarily.

As when men pray, give alms, go to church : conscience did not send

them thither, but custom, inducement of friends, persuasions of parents,

or the like. These do that which is good, but they do it not well r

Luke viii. 18, 'Take heed how you hear.' Conscience doth not put

them upon it. To this first sort may be reckoned those that intended

to do evil, but by accident do that which is good ; as Joseph's brethren :

Gen. 1. 20, ' But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God

meant it unto good.' And those that perform the duties of Christianity

so far as the interest of the flesh will give them leave, for the flesh

itself will command you to do well, and sin itself forbid sin, that it may

not disgrace them in the world, and bring some hurt and inconvenience

on them. Conscience doth not guide them herein, but hypocrisy or

sin sets them a-work.

(2.) Evil, as Lot s incest with his daughters : Gen. xix. 33, 34. ' He

perceived not when they lay down, or when they arose.' Conscience

'438 SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-16.

■was laid asleep ; it did not stir and chasten or rebuke him. So when the

people of Epliesus came together, Acts xix. 32, ' The most part knew

not wherefore they were come together ; ' they were in a hurry, tumult,

and sudden passion. These consult not with conscience in their

actions, and the evil they do is not against conscience ; yet evil it is,

and doth not exempt from punishment, for a man is bound not to act ,

rashly, but according to the dictate of conscience,

[2.] A man may act out of conscience, or according to conscience,

and so he may act either good or evil.

(1.) Good, either lawful, because it is permitted, or necessary,

because it is commanded ; in the one conscience is sensible that he

may, in the other that lie ought to do so. This he doth not out of terror,

but the sweet force of love and willing obedience unto Grod ; for feat- and

conscience are opposed : Kom. xiii. 5, ' Wherefore ye must be faithful,

not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake ; ' but he doth it in

obedience to God : Ps. xxvii. 8, ' When thou saidst, Seek ye my face,

my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' I acknowledge

thy power over me.

(2.) Evil. So Paul out of conscience persecuted Christ, for his

erring conscience told him that the precepts and ceremonies of the

law of Moses were all of eternal obligation, and necessary to a man's

justification towards God, and therefore that Christ, abolishing the

ceremonies, was an enemy to Moses : Acts xxvi. 9, ' I verily thougJit

with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of

Jesus of Nazareth.' Error of conscience dictated it to him. But did

Paul do well or ill herein ? As to the manner of the action, it was

well, for he did it with a good mind, and according to his conscience ;

thus far Paul sinned not. But as to the matter of the action, he did

wickedly, that he followed the dictates of a misguided conscience, and

did not subject his conscience to that higher revelation of God which

is in scripture, but to the tradition of the elders. So many persecutors

do evil, and do not think they do evil, but do God good service : John

xvi. 2, ' They shall put you out of the synagogues ; j'ea, the time

■cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service ;\*

and this through ignorance and blind zeal. This erring conscience is

their bane ; it may urge them to do evil, but it cannot oblige them to do

evil, for they are bound to know better ; and according to the means of

their conviction, so is the greatness of their sin.

[3.] A man may act against conscience.

(I.) So he may do good. As a papist communicating with the

reformed churches in the word, and prayer, and sacraments, he doth

that which is good, but he doth it against his conscience, because he

thinks it is not lawful to have communion with heretics. To this

head belongeth those things that we do with scruple of conscience,

fearing the things which we do are not right. So many times we do

things which are lawful, yet fearing they are unlawful ; we do them

not without some scruple, and terror of conscience ; as, for instance, a

self-condemning sinner coming to the Lord's supper, yet because he

hath not a clear sense of the love of God, his conscience troubleth him,

and he is afraid he eatethand drinketh unworthily. The apostle saith,

Eoin. xiv. 22, 23, ' Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that

SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-16. 439

thing which he alloweth ; and he that donbteth is damned if he eat,

because he eateth not of faith ; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin;'

that is, to the party that doeth it, though it be good in itself. There-

fore we must endeavour that, whatever we do, we may be assured out

of the word of God that it is lawful : Kom. xiv. 5, ' Let every one be

fully persuaded in his own mind.'

(2.) So he may do evil. When a man doeth good against his con-

science, it is evil ; but when he doeth evil against his conscience, it is

a double evil, because he doth not only transgress the rule that should

guide him, but affronts the judge which God hath set over him in his

own bosom, and kicketh against the pricks, the urgings of his own con-

science : James iv. 17, ' Therefore to him that knoweth to do good,

and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' But especially it is a greater sin,

when not only by light natural, but by the checks and motions of the

Spirit, he understandeth the evil which he doth, or the necessary good

which he omitteth, for this is to resist the Holy Ghost : Acts vii. 51,

' Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always

resist the Holy Ghost.^ Especially when he wilfully and blasphemously

rejects that sufficient evidence that is given him of the ways of God,

' and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace,' Heb. x. 29 ; for that

is ' the sin unto death,' 1 John v. 19. In short, we should be careful

we sin not against conscience, for it is our best friend or our worst

enemy. It is God's deputy, and to resist the officer is to resist the

prince or magistrate. Therefore do nothing without conscience, do

nothing against conscience, but do all things with conscience, rightly

informed by the word of God.

Secondly, Exercise yourselves in this, that conscience may perform

its office, and be a good guide unto you. There are two offices of con-

science — to direct and to censure ; to judge rightly dejure, what you

ought to do; and to judge rightly de facto, what you have done or

what you are, that you may neither have a blind and erring nor a

sleepy conscience.

1. That you may not have an erring conscience, or a blind one, you

must consult with your rule : Eom. xii. 2, ' That ye may prove what

is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God ; ' Eph. v. 17,

' Wherefore be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the

Lord is ; ' with a mind fully resolved to do his will : John vii. 17, ' If

any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be

of God, or whether I speak of myself.' This rule is the word

of God : Ps. cxix. 105, ' Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and

a light unto my path.' Beg the light of the Spirit : ver. 133, ' Order

my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion

over me.' And be not rebellious against this light, for our sins and

lusts blind the mind, and a naughty heart defileth the conscience,

so that it groweth loose and indulgent, and from a judge it becometh

an advocate, excusing the partialities of our obedience to God and our

injuries to men. Therefore there must be a resolute endeavour to

overcome every sin you are convinced of : Heb. xiii. 18, ' Pray for us,

for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live

honestly.'

2. That you may not have a dead, sleepy, stupid conscience, you

440 SERMONS UPON ACTS XXIV. 14-16.

must often excite it. For your actions, bring them to the rule : Hag.

i. 5, ' Now therefore thus saith the Lord God, Con^^ider your ways ;'

Ps. iv. 4, ' Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.'

For your state, try it often : 1 Cor. xi. 28, ' But let a man examine

himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup ; ' 2

Cor. xiii. 5, ' Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith ; prove

your own selves : know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is

in you, except ye be reprobates ? ' The acts of conscience are three — to

be an accuser, witness, and judge.

[1.] As an accuser, hearken to its voice ; what doth it say to you,

good or evil ? Job xxvii. 6, ' My heart shall not reproach me so long

as I live.' If it speak not to you, you must speak to it. God com-

plaineth, Jer. viii. 6, ' I hearkened and heard, but they spake not

aright ; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I

done ? '

[2.] As a witness, consider the evidence it bringeth, that it may be

matter of joy or sorrow to you, of confession or thanksgiving. If it

reproach you, do not smother the check : Acts xxiv. 25, ' And as he

reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix

trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time ; when I have a more

convenient season I will call for thee.' If it cheer you, see upon what

grounds: Kom. ix. 1, ' I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not, my con-

science also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.' It is no matter

what others think, but what conscience thinketh. Nothing is nearer

to us tlian ourselves ; it is a domestical tribunal, that we always carry

about with us.

[3.] As a judge it passeth sentence ; if it be wrong, there is an appeal

from court to court : Ps. cxxx. 3, 4, ' If thou, Lord, shouldst mark

iniquities, Lord, who can stand ? but there is forgiveness with thee,

that thou may est be feared.' Conscience is a judge, but it is an inferior

judge ; there lieth an appeal to a higher: 1 Cor. iv, 4, ' He that judg-

eth me is the Lord ; ' Heb. xii. 23, ' And to God the judge of all' But

it should be done with great admiration of grace. But if the judgment

be right, it is ratified ; its judgment we must yield to : 1 Cor. xi. 32,

'But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord.' Tlius should

we keep up the force of conscience.

SERMON UPON ZECHARIAH XIV. 20, 21.

In that day there shall he upon the hells of the horses, Holiness unto the

Lord ; and the pots in the Lord's house shall he like the hoivls he/ore

the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall he

holiness unto the Lord of hosts. — Zech. xiv. 20, 21.

These words describe the purity and holiness of the gospel church in

such terms and notions as are proper to the old testament dispensa-

tion. In them observe — (1.) The inscription or impress ; (2.) The

things on which it is engraven ; (3.) The time when it is done.

1 . The inscription or impress, ' Holiness to the Lord.' This was of

old written on the priest's mitre: Exod. xxviii. 36, ' And thou shalt

make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it like the engravings of a

signet, Holiness to the Lord ; ' to show that he was a person sacred,

and designed for special holy uses : therein he was a type of Christ.

Now what was upon the high priest's frontlet was inscribed on every-

thing, to show they should consecrate their all to God.

2. The things inscribed, particularly enumerated, first, the horse-bells^

or the ornaments of their horses ; secondly, their bowls or basons ;

thirdly, their pots.

1.] What was used in the kitchens of the temple.

2.] The utensils of every ordinary house and family. There were

kitchens belonged to the temple, wherein the thank-offerings were dressed

for their sacred feasts. The bowls of the altar were for an higher use,

namely, to receive the blood of the sacrifices to make the sprinklings,

as ' Solomon made an hundred basons of gold ' for that use, 2 Chron,

iv. 8.

3. The time, \* In that day.' He speaketh not of any peculiar time,

but the whole state of things under the gospel, which is as it were but

one day. And it is called ' that day ' by way of excellency. Thus the

time of the gospel are days indeed full of light and grace, and ' that day'

by way of limitation. It should be reserved for this day, and not found

in such a degree and measure at any other time ; even then when there

should be no sacrifices, no altars, then the bells, pots, and basons should

be sanctified or separated from a common, and dedicated to an holy use ,

that is, there shall be such special universal holiness, as if it were so

done upon all these things.

But you will say, When and where is it ? Alas ! considering the

4.42 SERMON UPON ZECHARIAH XIV. 20, 21.

degenerate state of tlie christian world, where is this universal holiness

to be found ? How shall we make it good ?

Ans. 1. Prophecies of things belonging to our obedience are to be

understood many times quoad qfficium, of our dut)', rather than qucad

eventum, of the event ; it is their duty to be thus holy in all their employ-

ments and affairs ; that dispensation requireth it as our duty.

2. As to the event, it is to be understood comparatively, not abso-

lutely, to show that there shall be a far greater holiness under the

gospel than under the law ; both intensive as to the degree of the

holiness itself, and extensive as to the persons sanctified. Intensively

the holiness itself is greater, because the ordinances of the gospel are

rational, and not typical, and the duties of it moral more than cere-

monial. God taught them by ceremonies to hate sin by the types of

legal uncleanness, to devote themselves to God by offering their beasts

in sacrifice. Theirs was like a training, ours a real war, as much as

the difference is between shooting at a puppet or painted castle and

fighting with an enemy. And because more of the Spirit is poured

out ; now grace is not given upon trust, but the price is actually paid.

Extensively, more persons are sanctified, as the pale is enlarged, and

the gospel prevaileth on them : Eev. v. 9, ' Thou wast slain, and hast

redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue,

and people, and nation ; ' Mark svi. 15, ' Go into all the world, and

preach the gospel to every creature.'

3. The gospel state hath its ebbs and flows in several ages. Some-

times there is a notable vigour and power of godliness, at other times

a great increase of wickedness, and men do so far corrupt their way,

that we are forced to put another sense upon words, or expect a better

time when the prophecy shall be more amply fulfilled. We can hardly

reconcile the words with the state of the times.

Doct. God in and by the gospel will effect an eminent and notable

sanctification both of things and persons. (1.) Let us consider how

gospel holiness is set forth in this prophecy ; (2.) I shall speak of holi-

ness in the general ; (3,) Give you the reasons.

I. That degree of holiness which is here prophesied of

1, All such things as were before employed against God should be

then employed and converted to his service, for the horse-bells shall be

inscribed. He speaketh before of horses employed against the church,

which God would overthrow, ver, 15. It was the fashion of those

oriental countries to adorn their war-horses and camels with golden

chains and bells. Judges viii. 26. This prophecy intimateth that now

these bells should be converted to another use, to make golden pots and

bowls for the temple, and be inscribed by God's motto and impress.

In our natural estate we employed ouv time, and wit, and parts, and

strength agamst God ; but if converted, then for him. As one of the

fathers glosseth upon Eve's seducing Adam, she was a rib, but she

proved a dart. We fight against God by his own weapons, but con-

version maketh a change : Kom. vi. 13, ' Neither yield ye your members

as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin ; but yield yourselves unto

God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instru-

ments of righteousness unto God.' The oifKa uSiKia'?, the weapons or

' instruments of unrighteousness,' are become oirXa iKaioavvr}^, ' instru-

SERMON UPON ZECHARIAH XIV. 20, 21. 443

ments of righteousness.' So ver. 22, ' For now, being made free from

sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness.'

There is a manifest change in the use of all things.

2. Upon all the utensils of the temple there shall be ' Holiness to the

Lord,' whether pots or bowls. The great and immediate duties of the

worship of God should have special holiness in them, for God will be

sanctified in all that draw nigh unto him : Lev. x. 3, ' I will be sancti-

fied in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be

glorified.' There should be a special awe and reverence upon our

hearts in our conversins; with God, when the blood of the sacrifice is

presented to him, as it was in the bowls, or the flesh of the sacrifice

eaten by ourselves, as it was by the priests when it was sodden in the

pots of the Lord's house. We read of ' discerning the Lord's body,' 1

Cor. xi. 29. We receive it not in an holy manner if our eating be not

in a different manner from eating our ordinary meal. The impression

of our great end should be upon our ordmary and common actions, but

in worship the nature of the work is holy, and the manner of our deport-

ment should be very reverent and serious.

3. The expressions imply a proficiency and growth in holiness ; for

the pots of the kitchen of the temple shall become as the bowls of the

altar for purity and holiness. There were degrees of holiness in the

several vessels belonging to the temple ; the meanest things in sacred

use shall be advanced to an higher degree of esteem and holy employ-

ment than before, which some understand thus : that the meanest things

in the christian church shall be as precious as the most glorious things

in the Jewish church ; rather that holiness should be upon the growing

hand, and increasing from degree to degree, till all be perfected in the

everlasting estate. The bells or neck- ornaments of their horses shall be

turned into pots of the Lord's house, and the pots in the kitchen become

as the bowls on the altar. christians ! the holiness of the gospel is

a growing holiness ; we should go on ' from strength to strength,' Ps.

Ixxxiv. 7, ' from glory to glory,' 2 Cor. iii. 28. The inner man must

be ' renewed day by day,' 2 Cor. iv. 16. There should be a continuance

in gospel holiness. Carnal men seek to grow greater and greater, and

higher and higher, and attain further degrees of their worldly happi-

ness, and shall not we seek to grow better and better ? One drachm of

holiness is worth a whole world of greatness. Holiness is the glory of

saints, the beauty of angels, the delight of God ; you cannot be too holy.

But alas ! many lose ground in religion ; holiness is in the wane, not in

the increase ; sin is not so hateful as it was before. What will this come

to at length ? How can he be rich who groweth every day poorer ? or

reach the goal who goeth every day a step back ? who lose their zeal,

and, the older they grow, live in more indulgence to the flesh ?

4. As it is a progressive holiness, so it is also a diffusive holiness,

that spreadeth itself throughout all actions, civil and sacred ; in things

which belong to peace and war. (1.) In things civil and sacred, all

the pots of the Lord's house, and all the pots in Jerusalem. (2.) In

things of war and peace, for here are horse-bells and pots ; all things

should now become holy, and holily used. In every point and ordinary

action of the christian life, a christian should devote himself to God.

True holiness will extend itself, and shine forth in a man's most com-

444 SERMON UPON ZECHARIAH XIV. 20, 21.

mou things and employments, and the sincere man referreth all to God,

even in his ordinary conversation, as if he were about immediate wor-

ship : 1 Peter i. 15, ' For as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye

holy,' ev irdarj dvaaTpo(f>fj, ' in all manner of conversation.' In every

creek and turning of your lives, or in every particular passage of your

christian course. Oh ! what a blessed thing is it when godliness run-

neth through a man's whole life as the woof through the web ! when

our whole conversation savoureth of godliness and true holiness, and

our common and civil actions are done in the Lord and for his glory,

and upon all occasions you show yourselves haters of sin and lovers of

what is good ! Everything that passeth God's hand discovereth the

author ; there is not a gnat or a pile of grass but you may see God in it

as well as in the more stupendous works of the creation. So should

a christian in every condition, prosperous and adverse, in an high or low

condition, whether he be abased or do abound, carry himself like a

christian : Phil. iv. 12, ' I know both how to be abased, and I know

how to abound ; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to

be full and to be hungiy, both to abound and suffer need ; ' Hosea vii.

8, ' Ephraim is a cake not turned,' baked but on one side, and dough

on the other. So in every action, civil or sacred, there must not only

be a spirit of holiness breathing in our duties, but shining forth in our

ordinary employments and recreations. Every action, morally consi-

dered, is in itself a step forward to hell or to heaven ; in every relation,

in love to our maker, in duty to our fellow creatures : Acts xxiv. 16,

' And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of

offence towards God and towards men.' To all men, and to our fellow-

saints : 2 Peter i. 7, ' And to godliness brotherly kindness, to brotherly

kindness charity ; ' injustice and charity. When the web is one thing,

and the woof another, the Lord abhor re th it.

II. Of holiness in the general. What it is ? It may be considered

relatively or positively.

1. Kelatively ; so that thing or person is holy which is set apart from

a common to a holy use.

2. Positively ; so it implieth the renovation of our natures and the

rectitude of our actions ; for holiness may be applied to persons or

actions. An action is holy by its conformity to the rule ; a person by

the prevalency of his principle. Holiness with respect to our actions

is an universal endeavour of conformity to the will of God. A person

is holy by the prevalency of his principle, when his heart by those divine

qualities which we call gi'aces is constantly bent and powerfully inclined

to please God in all things.

1. For holiness relatively considered, or with respect to our relation

to God. These four things are in it —

[1.] An inclination towards God. There is a new bias upon the

heart, which bends it to God, which before bended and tended towards

carnal vanities. Conversion is a turning to God, and the holy life is a

living to God : Gal. ii. 19, ' For I through the law am dead to the law,

that I might live unto God.' The great work of grace is to set and fix

the heart towards him from whom we departed by our folly and sin,

that we may serve, please, and glorify him in all things, and finally come

to enjoy him as our chief happiness : 1 Chron. xxii. 19, ' Now set your

heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God.'

SERMON UPON ZECHARIAH XIV. 20, 21. 445

[2.] From this tendency towards God ariseth a dedication of ourselves

and all that we have to the Lord's use and service : 2 Cor. viii. 5, ' But

first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of

God ; ' Eom. vi. 13, ' But yield yourselves unto God, as those that are

alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness

unto God ; ' Eom. xii. 1, \* I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the

mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,

acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.' They are

ashamed they have so long kept God out of his right, therefore now they

resign themselves to be what he will have them to be, and to do what he

will have them to do.

[3.] From this dedication there results a relation of the persons so

dedicated to God, so that from that time forth they are not their own,

but the Lord's : Ezek. xvi. 8, ' Now when I passed by thee, and looked

upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love, and I spread my skirt

over thee, and covered thy nakedness, yea, I sware unto thee, and entered

into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest

mine ; ' Eom. xiv. 7, 8, ' For none of us livetli to himself, and no man

dieth to himself ; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and

w^hether we die, we die unto the Lord ; whether we live, therefore, or die,

we are the Lord's.'

[4.] There is another thing, and that is the actual using of ourselves

for God. We are vessels set apart for the master's use: 2 Tim. ii. 21,

\* If a man therefore purge himseK from these, he shall be a vessel unto

honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto

every good work.' And accordingly we must live, not to ourselves, but

unto God ; it resulteth from all the former : 2 Cor. v. 15, ' And that

he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto

themselves, but unto him which died for them.' If we love God, and

have a thankful sense of his love and kindness to us, we will do so ;

there needeth no other law to bind this upon us but our love. Love is

the poise which inclineth the soul to God. If we are dedicated to God,

the sincerity of our dedication is known by our use. Many give up

themselves to God, but in the use of themselves there appeareth no such

matter ; they use their tongues as their own, their hearts as their own,

their bodies as their own, their wealth, strength, and time as their own ;

but a sincere christian maketh conscience of his dedication : 1 Cor. vi.

15, ' Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ ; shall

I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an

harlot ? God forbid ! ' Our members are members of Christ, as

we are in covenant with him ; in point of fidelity, we must not do so.

And his interest in us obligeth us : Mat. xxii. 21, ' Eender therefore to

Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and to God the things which are

God's.' We are not our own, but God's : 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, ' Ye are

not your own, for ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in

your body and in your spirit, which are God's.' Do not rob God of his

own ; you should make conscience of alienating, that which is the

Lord's.

Once more, this is bound upon us by another argument, the certainty

of our future account : Luke xix. 23, ' Wherefore then gavest not thou

my money into the bank, tiiat at my coming I might have received

446 SERMON UPON ZECHARIAH XIV. 20 21.

my own with usury ? ' He will require his own with usury. We

should keep a constant and faithful reckoning how we lay out ourselves

for God ; we must not spare God something only, but the main drift

and business of our lives must be to honour God ; he must have a share

in all things we have and do.

I might add, as another binding consideration, the constancy of

divine inspection. We are always in the eye and presence of the

great God, who still looketh upon us, and considereth whose business

we are about, his or our own : Luke i. 75, ' In holiness and righteous-

ness before him all the days of our life.' We are always before him,

and observed by him.

2. Positive holiness may be considered either with respect to our

persons or actions.

[1.] Our persons, when we are renewed by the Spirit, or there is an

inward principle of sanctification wrought in our hearts. Other things,

when dedicated to God, are changed only in their use, as gold, silver,

and goat's-hair ; but when man is dedicated to God, he is changed in

his nature ; there is not only a difference between him and others, but

a difference between him and himself. There is a difference between

him and others, not only as he is set apart for God and dedicated to an

holy use ; the godly are set apart for God : Ps. iv. 3, ' But know that

the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself ; ' but as he is

cleansed, purified, and renewed by the Holy Ghost, and so there is a differ-

ence between him and himself: 1 Cor. vi. 11, 'And such were some

of you ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified,

in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God.' Now

this is necessary, that a man should be holy before his actions shall be

holy ; for till a man be regenerated, and act from a principle of grace

in his heart, all that he doth is but the shadow and imperfect imitation

of a good action, as an ape would imitate a man, or as a violent motion

doth resemble that which is natural. We are bidden to be holy as

God is holy : 1 Peter i. 15, ' But as he that hath called you is holy, so

be ye holy in all manner of conversation.' God as to his essence' and

being is holy, and all his acts carry a condecency with his nature :

' He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works,' Ps. cxlv.

17. So we are ' made partakers of a divine nature,' 2 Peter i. 4, and

so live and walk in a godlike manner : 2 Peter i. 3, ' According as his

divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and

godliness.' Grace is given to beget life, and then we are visibly to

express it in a course of godly walking. Grace is planted in the

heart, and then the influence of it is diffused throughout all the parts

of his life. First there is internal holiness, in the hatred of sin and

the love of that which is good, and then external holiness is expressed

in avoiding the one and pursuing after the other. In short, actions

without life are the motions of puppets, not living creatures. On the

other side, if there be a change of heart, there must be fruits becoming

it. Habits are known by their acts, and resolution by our practice,

and the new nature by newness of conversation. A principle of grace

there must be, and a prevalent principle, such as gets the mastery of

sin, before a man can be denominated holy. There are mixed principles

and mixed operations in a christian, but one is in predominancy

SERMON UPON ZECHARIAH XIV. 20, 21. 447

though there be a mixture of principles and of operations, yet there is

not a mixture of interests ; there is hut one chief good ; their great

design is to please God in all things.

[2.] As a person is holy hy his principle, so an action is holy by the

rule, when it agreeth with it as to manner and matter and end. The

substance of the matter must be such as is warranted by the law of

God, which meteth and sets out the bounds of sin and duty : ' For by

the law is the knowledge of sin/ Eom. iii. 20 ; Kom. xii. 2, ' That ye

may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God ; '

Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them,

and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.' So for the manner ; it must

be done in such a way as will suit with the nature of the action we are

about. A man may sin in doing good when he doth not do it well :

Luke viii. 18, ' Take heed how you hear ; ' Eccles. v. 1, ' Keep thy foot

when thou goest into the house of God, and be more ready to hear than

to give the sacrifice of fools ; for they consider not that they do evil.'

And in our ordinary conversation : Eph. v. 15, ' See then that ye walk

circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise ; ' Prov. iv. 26, ' Ponder the

path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.' The end must

be to glorify God : 1 Cor. x. 31, ' Whether therefore ye eat or drink,

or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God ; ' Col. iii. 17, ' What-

soever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,

giving thanks to God and the Father by him.' A common rule for all

our actions, that they be undertaken in Christ's name, and thanks be

given unto God for the event and success of them. In short, to be

ruled by Clii'ist's command, depending on his help, aiming at his glory ;

the heart must be habitually inclined to all things in him and for him,,

so as in the issue and close of their actions to yield them matter of

thanksgiving to God ; this is that universal holiness which is required

of all christians.

III. Eeasous why this eminent holiness, both of persons and actions,

should take place in the gospel, above the times of the law.

1. Because of our principle, the new nature wrought in us by the

Spirit of God, which is suited to the whole will of God : Eph. iv. 24,

'And that yeput on the new man, which after God is createdin righteous-

ness and true holiness.' As thou art a creature, thou art bound to do

the whole will of God, for no creature can be exempted from subjection

to his creator ; but now as new creatures, so are we fitted and prepared

or put into a capacity to serve and please God in all things : Eph. ii.

10, ' For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good

works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.'

Every creature is fitted for the operations which belong to that life

which it hath ; so the new creature, if created anew, is fitted

anew, and therefore the new nature must show itself in all our

actions towards God and men. The new nature must still show itself

in all our actions with God, our neighbour, and ourselves : Titus ii. 12,

\* Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should

live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world.' In our

worship, taking all occasions of conversing with God ; as Cornelius, ' a

devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave

much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway,' Acts x. 2. la

448 SERMON UPON ZECHARIAH XIV. 20, 21.

our dealings with men : Eom. xii. 17, ' Provide things honest in the

sight of all men.' In charity : Acts ix. 36, Dorcas, a devout woman,

' full of good works and alms-deeds which she did.' Nay, in oar

recreations and delights of the present life, use them still in order to

God : 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5, ' For every creature of God is good, and nothing

to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving ; for it is sanctified

by the word of God and prayer.' God's permission, and prayer calling

for a blessing on it. The word showeth what is commanded as neces-

sary, what is lawful or indifferent. Prayer on all things showeth the

seriousness of a chi'istian ; in lesser matters, he would go about nothing

but what is recommended to God.

2. Because of the exactness of our rule, which teacheth us how to

walk in our several businesses and employments. A christian in his

walk, either as to faith or manners, is not left indifferent to choose

what rule pleaseth him best ; but there is a fixed determinate measure

of all our actions, how we shall enter into a state of grace, how we

should behave ourselves in it : Micah vi. 8, ' He hath showed thee, O

man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord God require of thee, but

to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ? '

and Ps. cxix. 10.5, ' Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto

my path.' Carnality is a walking Kara rov aliova rod Koafiov rovrov,

' according to the course of this world,' Eph. ii. 2. Holiness is walk-

ing Kara Kavova, ' according to the rule,' Gal. vi. 1 6. The one accord-

ing to the fashions of men, and the guise of fleshly-minded creatures,

the other according to the holy will of God : Kom. xii, 2, ' Proving what

is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God ; ' or, ' as becometh

the gospel,' Phil. i. 27 ; a conversation strict, spiritual, and heavenly.

3. Because of our pattern and example, Jesus Christ, who was exact

in all his actions. He declared himself to be the Son of God, useful in

all his converses, still aiming at the honour of his father : John viii.

60, ' I seek not mine own glory ; there is one that seeketh and judgeth.'

He was careful to please him in all things. Christ came from heaven

not only to expiate our offences, but to give us an example ; and ' he

that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he

walked,' 1 John ii. 6. Wherein lieth this example ? He telleth us he

came 'not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him,' John

V. 30. In temptations, sufferings, reproaches, in the midst of the

ingratitude of men, and poverty and meanness of condition, in all his

fastings, labours, and death, he sought still to please his father and

promote his will : John viii. 29, ' For I do always those things that

please him.' This is } onr pattern, christians ; and it is true religion to

imitate him whom we an orship : likeness to him is the true note of our

communion with him ; if your life be such a life, then there is 'Holi-

ness to the Lord ' wriuen upon it from first to last.

4. Our obligations to Christ ; partly because of his dominion, as the

Lord-redeemer by right of purchase : Rom, xiv. 9, ' For to this end

Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of

dead and living.' In all conditions and states of life he hath a right

in us, therefore in every state of life we should glorify him. Partly

from our gratitude to Christ as a Saviour as well as a Lord. What

doth he expect from thee, when he hath done so much for thee already,

SERMON UPON ZECHARIAH XIV. 20, 21. 449

and will do much more, but that thou shouldst love him, and live to

him ? 2 Cor. v, 14, 15, ' For the love of Christ constraineth us, because

we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead ; and that

he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto

themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again.' What

liadst thou been were it not for his love ? What wouldst thou have

answered to an accusing conscience in the midst of thy griefs and fears?

How wouldst thou have looked God, the judge of all the world, in the

face ? Who could free thee from the curse of the law, and the flames

of hell, but the Son of God, who parted with all his glory that he might

redeem thee to God ? And if thou wilt not part with thy sins, thou

justly deservest to suffer for them. Thou lookest for more from him

than ever yet thou hast received, to live with God for ever ; what then

is thy business, but to glorify him upon earth, that thou mayest be

glorified with him for evermore ? Partly by thine own covenant vow ;

thou art baptized in his name, and hast often ratified the bond of the

oath into which thou art entered ; and what is baptism but a dedication

unto God, not to be thine own, but his ? Acts xxvii. 23, ' Whose I am,

and whom I serve.' If thou art this, thy whole life should be Christ's.

' We are debtors not to the flesh, to live after the flesh,' Kom. viii. 12 ;

with Gal. V. 3, ' I testify to every man that is circumcised, that he is a

debtor to do the whole law.'

Use. Is to persuade you to this universal obedience. None enter

upon God's service but with a consecration, and none entirely give up

themselves to God unless they give up all things with themselves, not

one thing reserved ; and if nothing be reserved, nothing must be used

but for his glory, otherwise the dedication is a mockery. The consi-

derations are plain. Now I shall give you sundry directions, and they

will mostly come to the same purpose, but altogether will bind this

holiness upon you.

1. Undertake nothing but what will bear this inscription upon it,

\* Holiness to the Lord,' This question should be put to ourselves, Can

I dedicate this to God ? In worship, Am I now acting for God or for

myself? In your callings, Is this for God? Is it inconsistent with

my great end, or impertinent to it ? If it be inconsistent, it is plain

treachery to my covenant vow ; if impertinent, it is a diversion not

voluntarily to be allowed : 2 Cor. v. 9, ' Wherefore we labour that,

whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.' In your sports

and delights, Eccles. ii. 2, ' What doeth it ? ' When you are carding

away your precious time or your substance, which might be better

employed, is this ' Holiness to the Lord ? ' That should be legible in

all you are and do. In the choice of your relations, disposal of your

condition of life, here is your measure still.

2. Be sure to exercise your general calling in your particular ; your

general calling is to be a christian, your particular calling is that way

of life to which God hath designed you by your abilities and education

for the common good. Now the one falleth into the other. I am to

guide myself in my calling by the general duty of a christian, as a

minister, magistrate, gentleman, or tradesman, as one fearing and

loving God : John xvii. 4, ' I have glorified thee upon earth, I have

finished the work thou gavest me to do ; ' Acts xiii. 36, ' David served

VOL. XVII. 2 F

450 SERMON UPON ZECHARIAH XIV. 20, 21.

his generation by the will of God.' As an instrument of providence,

I must consider how my particular calling will serve my great end :

1 Cor. vii. 21, 22, ' Art thou called, being a servant ? care not for it ;

but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called

in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman ; likewise also he

that is called, being free, is Christ's servant ; ' Neh. i. 12, ' The Lord

show me favour in the sight of this man ; for I was the king's cup-

bearer,' He had improved his place for God.

3. Turn all second-table duties into first-table duties : Heb.

xiii. 16, ' But to do good, and to communicate, forget not ; for

with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' Sacrifice is a first-table

duty, yet relieving the poor is called a well-pleasing sacrifice : James

i. 27, ' Pure religion {dpTjaKela, worship) and undefiled before God

and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their

affliction.' Whatever we do must be a sacrifice ; then in serving

men you serve the Lord Christ. This is to turn common pots into

temple pots, and pots into bowls of the altar : Eph. v. 21, \* Sub-

mitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.' Be con-

scientiously careful and tender of your duty to man : Col. iii. 22,

' Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not

with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing

God ; ' ' Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the

Lord,' Eph. v. 22 ; out of love to Christ : Eph. vi. 1, 'Children, obey

your parents in the Lord.'

4. Go about your earthly business with a heavenly mind : Phil. iii.

20, ' But our conversation is in heaven.' All is a journey thither ; look

to the unseen world.

5. Content not yourselves with the natural use of the creature, as

brute beasts do, but see God in all. The creature is as a glass and

image wherein to read your Creator's goodness, and as helps and means

to enable you to his service ; therefore still they must be received with

thanksgiving : 1 Tim. iv. 3, ' For every creature of God is good, and

nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.' Man is to

use the inferior creatures for God, not as the lord of them, but as the

steward of the Creator, to whom he is accountable for that use ; not to

sacrifice them to his own pleasure and will, and to gratify his fleshly

mind ; they are neither his, nor for him, but for God ; for he hath not

the right of a lord, but a servant.

6. In all your ways acknowledge God, depending upon him for

direction and success, and consulting with him, and approving thy

heart and life unto him : Prov. iii. 6, ' In all thy ways acknowledge

him, and he shall direct thy paths.' Especially duties must be done

by virtue of influence from Christ: Phil. ii. 13, 'For it is God which

worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure ; ' Gal.

ii. 20, ' I live by the faith of the Son of God.' In our ordinary actions,

we must still ask his leave, counsel, and blessing, acknowledging his

dominion over us and all that we do ; there we must call in his help,

and aim at his glory : 1 Cor. x. 31, ' Whether you eat or drink, or

whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God ; ' that, doing things

by him, we may do them for him.

7. God should be worshipped by every faithful person in his own

SERMON UPON ZECHARIAH XIV. 20, 21. 451

house in as God-like a manner as he was worshipped by the Jews in

the temple. A christian must be alike everywhere, at home and

abroad : Phil. ii. 12, ' Wherefore, my beloved, as ye always have obeyed,

not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work

out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' So David: Ps.

ci. 2, ' I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.' There

where we familiarly converse, we should show most of holiness, order-

ing all our affairs and actions as may best demonstrate the sincerity

of om' hearts.

SERMON UPON JOHN III. 14, 15.

And CIS Moses lijied up the serpent in the ivUderness, even so must the

Son of man he lifted up, that lohosoever helieveth in him should

not perish, but have eternal life. — John iii. 14, 15.

The former part of this chapter is spent in a discourse with Nicodemus.

(1.) About regeneration. That great pharisee needed to be catechised

and taught the plainest principles of Christianity. (2.) About salva-

tion by Christ, the great secret which our Lord brought out of

his Father's bosom. He instructed him in two things mainly —

(1.) The manner of purchasing ; (2.) The manner of applying, this

salvation. As the whole context may be comprised under these two

heads, so also the words read to you. The manner of purchasing is

by Christ's coming into the world and dying for sinners ; the way of

applying is by faith in the Son of God. He instructeth him in the

manner of purchasing ; partly that he might not think light of sins,

seeing he must die for them ; partly that he might not be scandalised

at his sufferings, as afterwards he buried Christ, and provided a mix-

ture of myrrh and aloes for his funeral, John xix. 39. He instructeth

him in the way of applying and obtaining the purchased benefits,

partly that he might not be ashamed of professing himself one of

Christ's followers and disciples ; partly to engage his heart to own him

as the Saviour of lost sinners, having sufficient virtue to cure the sin-

fulness and misery of such as fly to him by faith. These things are

represented to him by a type, and that a notable one, the type of the

brazen serpent. In the words take notice —

1. Of the 7rp6rcun<i, or proposition, ' As Moses lifted up the serpent

in the wilderness.'

2. The a7r68ocrt9, or the reddition or explication of it, ' Even so must

the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should

not perish, but have eternal life.' In which —

[1.] The way of saving mankind, ' The Son of man must be lifted

up.'

[2.J The means of applying it, ' That whosoever believeth in him.'

[3.] The benefit propounded, negatively, he ' Should not perish ; '

positively, ' But have eternal life.'

I shall open the words by a short illustration, and then come to the

point.

1. For the protasis. \*As Moses,' by God's appointment, though

the minister be only mentioned : Num. xxi. 8, ' The Lord said unto

454 SERMON UPON JOHN III. 14, 15.

Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent ; ' it was not his device, but God's

ordinance ; no invention and institution of his ; he had God's express

command and vrarrant for it. ' Lifted up ; ' that is, set upon a perch

or pole, as an object to be looked upon by the stung Israelites. ' The

serpent ; ' that is, the brazen image and figure of a serpent. Signs are

often called by the name of the thing represented and signified. ' In

the wilderness ; ' a figure of this world, through which we have our

passage to the heavenly Canaan. You may add, that the 7rp6Tacn<;, or

proposition of the type, may be more full, ' That the people might not

perish, but be healed and live,' for then the reddition or explication of

the type will run more smoothly.

2. The apodosis. ' Even so must the Son of man ; ' that is, Christ,

spoken of in the former verse ; the Son of man that ascended and

descended, that was in heaven, and knew the depths of God's counsel,

and came down to make them known to us. This Son of man must

' be lifted up,' believed on, or looked unto by faith, and then the guilty

sinner is healed, and shall not perish, but have eternal life. The lift-

ing up of the Son of man in the sound and first hearing seemeth to

note his exaltation ; but it doth not carry that notion here, but such a

lifting up as is correspondent to the erection of the brazen serpent on

a tree or pole. It signifieth the crucifixion of the Son of God, not his

exaltation, but the lowest act of his humiliation. So in many other

places : John viii. 28, ' When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then

shall ye know that I am he.' He speaketh it to the wicked Jews ; and

how did the Jews lift him up but by crucifying him ? Surely they

intended no honour to him, yet there it is made their act. So John

xii. 32, 33, ' I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men after

me. This he said, signifying what death he should die,' as the evan-

gelist there explaineth his meaning ; so that there needeth no further

scruple about the sense of the words. It followeth, ' that whosoever ; '

all persons are invited, without exclusion of any ; that universal particle

comprehendeth sinners of all sorts and sizes, of all ranks and conditions

in the world. ' Believeth in him ; ' this answereth to looking upon

the brazen serpent. Believing is a looking to Christ, a looking upon

him by the eye of faith. ' Shall not perish, but have eternal life.' He

shall escape the present danger which he feareth. Souls shall be

healed, and delivered from hell, and life eternal is restored to them.

Doct. That we ought to consider salvation by Christ as prefigured

and represented by the history of the brazen serpent.

' As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must

the Son of man be lifted up.' And Christ here propoundeth it to

Nicodemus.

1. It is useful to consider the types, partly to confirm our faith, when

we see the harmony between the testaments. There are historical

types and prophetical types. Historical types are only patterns and

examples : 1 Cor. x. 11, ' All these things happened to them for rv-rroi'

ensamples or types ; so the providences of God to his ancient people :

1 Cor. X. 9, ' Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted,

and were destroyecl of serpents.' Prophetical types were instituted to

prefigure a thing to come, as the ceremonies of the law were figures

of better things to come. Now we see the eospel is not a novel inven-

SERMON UPON JOHN III. 14, 15. 455

tion, only hatched in that age when it was first set afoot. No ; it was

long since foretold, not only by words, but things ; there was a prepar-

ation made for it. And partly to lielp our meditation ; we reflect upon

these things with more delight and sweetness, whilst we view the agree-

ment between the truth and the type. When we know the person, yet

we delight to see the picture ; and so we may take a view of things

with a grateful variety. We see them double when we consider both

the shadow and the mystery. Partly to increase our thankfulness;

we have not such dark and long prospects, through which they only

could look to Christ ; we may see him more clearly in the doctrines of

the gospel, where he is evidently set forth unto us, and, as it v/ere,

' crucified before our eyes,' Gal. iii. 1. Surely then we are more obliged

to mind these things. The more clearly and convincingly Christ is

represented to us, the more will our negligence be aggravated, and our

contempt the greater, if we make light of these things.

2. Among other types, the brazen serpent must not be forgotten ;

partly because it doth in a most lively and full manner represent

Christ. Here a word is a sermon ; aud we cannot think of the brazen

serpent but the necessity, the remedy, the means of application, do

presently ofler themselves to our thoughts. And partly because this

took off the great scandal and Jewish exception against Christ, which

was the ignominy of the cross. Therefore to a doctor of the law he

doth not produce the paschal lamb or other figures, but the brazen \_

serpent, as clearly representing the cause, quality, and fruit of his

sutferino;s.

3. To help you in this consideration, I shall — (1.) Give the history ;

(2.) The typical use of it.

First, The history, in Num. xxi. 6-9, ' And the Lord sent fiery

serpents among the people, and they bit the people ; and much people

of Israel died. Therefore the people came unto Moses, and said, We

have sinned ; for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee :

pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us : and

Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make

tliee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole ; and it shall come to pass,

that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, he shall live.

And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole ; and it

came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld

the serpent of brass, he lived.' The sin occasioning the judgment was

their murmuring at Moses and Aaron, and their loathing of manna ;

for this God sendeth fiery serpents. Observe how God suiteth the

judgment to the sin ; venomous tongues are plagued witli venomous

serpents. It is said, Eccles. x. 11, 'Surely the serpent shall bite with-

out enchantment, and a babbler is no better.' And again, Ps. cxl. 3,

' Thej" have sharpened their tongues like a serpent ; adders' poison is

under their lips.' They have a bag of water under their tongues, which

is most poisonous and inflaming, which in biting is broken. But this

was not the asp, but the cliersydrus, a sort of serpent which abideth

on land as well as in water ; whilst it liveth in the water, it is not

-altogether so venomous as when it cometh to live on the dry land, and in

this part of the thirsty howling wilderness these kind of serpents were

most fieiy and burning, and at that time of the year when the Israelites

456 SERMON UPON JOHN III. 14, 15.

were there, which was about the end of August ; for \* Aaron died in

the first day of the fifth month,' Num xxxiii. 38, which was about the

10th of July, and the children of Israel mourned thirty days before they

journeyed, Num. xs. 29. And when they journeyed from Mount Hor,

then we read of their murmuring and God's plaguing them with fiery

serpents. Observe, again, that God, that bringeth manna from heaven,

can also send serpents. God is not all honey ; abused mercy is turned

into fury, and when his favours are despised, he hath judgments to

sting us ; and if men will loathe their food, God will chastise them with

poison.

But again to the history. These serpents which God sent are called

' fiery serpents,' partly for their colour, being of a shining glistering

skin ; the word in the original is serapliim-hurners, a name given to

the angels : Isa. vi. 2, ' Above it stood the seraphims,' which angels

are called elsewhere ' flames of fire,' Ps. civ. 4 ; partly because their

venomous stinging and biting did cause a raging heat and grievous

burning in the bodies of the Israelites. And it seemeth they were a

kind of serpents with wings, not of feathers, but of a cartilaginous

substance, like the wings of a bat, and did here and there seize upon

them and bite them ; or at least they are said to fly because of their

swift motion, where by suddenly jerking they shoot themselves forward,

or dart themselves out of trees on men or beasts as they pass by them.

There is a plain allusion to those flying serpents, Isa. xiv. 29, ' Out of

the serpent's hole shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be

a fiery flying serpent.' And indeed that wilderness through which the

Israelites passed did abound with many sorts of these serpents ; there-

fore it is said, Deut. viii. 15, ' Who led thee through that great and

terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions.' Well,

then, they go to Moses, and said, ' We have sinned ; for we have spoken

against God, and against thee : pray to God for us, that he take away

the fiery serpents.^ In adversity men will own the faithful servants

of God, against whom they have murmured when all is well. Moses

forgetteth the injury, and prayeth to God for them ; and God, though

he doth not take away the serpents, yet he provideth a remedy unlikely

in appearance, a brazen serpent to cure the bites of living serpents ;

but divine institution conveyeth a blessing. The word of command is

that they should ' look upon the brazen serpent ; ' and the word of pro-

mise is ' that they should be healed ; ' Num. xxi. 8, ' Make thee a fiery

serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass, that every

one when he is bitten, that looketh upon it, shall live.' This is, in

short, the history.

Secondly, The mystery, or typical use of the brazen serpent. The

chief things represented in it are sin, Christ, and faith ; the deadliness

of sin, the manner of our deliverance by Christ, and the nature of

faith.

1. The Israelites' deadly sin and misery occasioned the setting up of

the brazen serpent ; so the occasion of Christ's sending into the world

was man's sin and misery, we being all bitten by the old serpent, and

so liable to the curse. The devil is called 'the old serpent,' Kev.

xii. 9 -, and in the appearance of a serpent he deceived our first parents ;

therefore we read that ' the serpent beguiled Eve,' 2 Cor. xi. 3. Human

SERMON UPON JOHN III. 14, 15. 457

nature was then stung to death by Satan, and the venom dispersed

itself throughout the whole race of mankind. Among the Israelites

there were but a few stung, here all ; there their bodies, here the soul ;

there temporal death followed, here eternal. In the sting of these

fiery serpents two things representeth our misery by sin — (1.) It is

painful ; (2.) Deadly.

[1.] This sting is painful. The bitings did presently cause pains,

and an intolerable thirst and burning, which was very grievous to

them ; so the sting of sin is painful ; not always felt, but soon awakened.

In spiritual things we are more stupid, and are not so sensible of the

maladies of the soul as they were of the pains of the body. We are

'subject to bondage,' Heb. ii. 14. Though we do not always feel

actual horror, there is a fire smothering in our bosoms, though it be

not blown up into a flame. One of our spiritual diseases is a lethargy,

and it is a great part of our misery not to know our misery. If con-

science were not lulled asleep we would be more sensible. Surely

Satan's bites are more painful than those of these serpents. His darts

are called ' fiery darts,' Eph. vi. 16. His darts are dipped in the gall of

asps and vipers. Boiling lusts will in time awaken raging fears and

despair. Oh ! what horror and torment will sin procure to us if it be

not speedily cured ! Sin is an evil and a mischief, whether we feel it,

yea or no ; but we shall soon feel it an evil, as the stung Israelites felt

the biting of the serpents. Sin in the life will make hell in the con-

science ; it seemeth a sweet draught while we are taking it down, but

there is rank poison at the bottom. A wounded spirit findeth it now :

Prov. xviii. 14, ' A wounded spirit who can bear ? ' Horror and

anguish of conscience is insupportable. Ask any man whose heart is

well awakened, and he will tell you that the sense of the guilt of sin

is more bitter to the soul than the gall of asps ; no terror comparable

to the terror and sting of an accusing conscience. God's terrors are

compared to a fire that drinketh up the blood and spirits : Job vi. 4,

'The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof

drinketh up my spirit ; the terrors of God do set themselves in array

against me.' No poison more burning than sin in an awakened con-

science. It may lie asleep till you come to die in sin, stupid and be-

numbed creatures ; but then ' the sting of death is sin,' 1 Cor. xv. 5Q.

Death is made terrible by those sad horrors and apprehensions which

sin raiseth in us.

[2.] This sting is deadly. As the biting of the fiery serpents could

not be cured, but was present death till God found out a remedy, so

this sting of sin is deadly : Kom. v. 12, ' By one man sin entered into

the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for

that all have sinned ; ' Gen. ii. 17, ' In the day thou eatest thereof thou

shalt surely die ; ' dying thou shalt die : Eom. vi. 23, ' The wages of

sin is death ; ' death temporal, eternal. Thou art a dead man, lost for

ever, if thou art not cured. Those who were not solicitous about their

cm'e are a figure of the impenitent, who obstinately continue in their

sins though they bring destruction upon them. Not only death tem-

poral, which consists in the separation of the soul from the body ; but

death spiritual, which consists in an estrangement from God as author

of the life of grace ; yea, death eternal, which consists in a separatioa

458 SERMON UPON JOHN III. 14, 15c

both of body and soul from the presence of God for evermore, and is

a perpetual living to deadly pain and torment. Tliis second death is

set forth by two solemn notions, ' The worm that never dieth, and the

fire that shall never be quenched,' Mark ix. 44 ; by which is meant

the sting of conscience and the wrath of God: Prov. viii. 36, 'AU

they that hate me love death.'

2. Christ is set forth by the brazen serpent. Here I shall show you — ■

(1.) The resemblances; (2.) The superexcellency of Christ above

this, and all the shadows and types of him.

[1.] The resemblance between Christ and the brazen serpent.

(1.) The brazen serpent was a remedy of God's own prescribing out

of his great mercy ; so is this remedy for lost sinners the mere fruit of

God's love : John iii. 16, ' God so loved the world that he gave his

only-begotten Son.' The causa irpoKarapKriKr), the occasion or outward

moving cause, was our misery ; the causa Trporjyovfxevrj, the inward

impulsive cause, was his own love and pity to lapsed mankind. God

found out the remedy ; we neither plotted it nor asked it ; he saw the

world of mankind was perishing, and involved in eternal ruin, and

because there was no intercessor, therefore his own arm wrought out

salvation. Herein the antitype differeth from the type. The stung

Israelites, having death in their bosoms, go to Moses ; Moses goeth to

God, for he saw there could be no help elsewhere ; then God said,

' Make thee a brazen serpent.' The motion came from them first, but

here it is quite otherwise ; God is the offended party, yet he maketh

the first motion : 1 John iv. 19, ' We love him because he loved us

first.' There God found out the remedy, but here his mere love began

the whole business, and did set at work all the causes that did concur

to our salvation ; we neither minded our danger nor asked our remedy.

(2.) The conveniency of this type to set out the low estate and humi-

liation of Christ. The form of a serpent was chosen to show that he

came in such mean estate as if he were a worm and no man : Ps.

xxii. 6, ' I am a w'orm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised

of the people.' So also Isa. liii. 3, ' He w^as despised and rejected of

men ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted w^ith grief ; and we hid as it

were our faces from him ; he was despised, and we esteemed him not ; '

as a vile and abominable creature, both ' despised and rejected,' scarce

deemed worthy the name of a man, or to have any converse or com-

munion with them. It is the leavings off of men, as we would say,

the very list and fag-end of mankind; so low and mean, that the

nature of man can hardly descend lower : Mark ix. 12, ' The Son of

man must suffer many things, and be set at nought ; ' it is i^ovSevcoOfj,

made nought worth, or nothing. Once more, the serpent, of all the

beasts of the field, was the creature which was cursed by God : Geuf

iii. 14, ' Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle,

and above every beast of the field ; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and

dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.' Yet by this form would

he represent Christ to the ancient church. God chose this to be a type

of Christ, w^iich we would have thought a dishonour and disparagement

to him. Yea, this serpent that was now set up was made of brass, not

of gold, to show that Christ would not appear in glorious estate and

majesty, but in the meanest and most abject form of any creature. All

SERMON UPON JOHN III. 14, 15. 459

together will help us to meditate upon the great abasement of the Son

of God. Qucmto vilior, tanto clarior nobis esse debet. The more he

humbled himself, the higher estimation should we have of our crucified

Lord. Never was any child of God before Christ under so much

misery as Christ himself was. His own heaven, his own Father, his

own Godhead, hid their face and consolation from him. God's wrath

pressed the weight of punishment with the full power of justice both

upon his soul and body ; those for whom he died despised him, he

himself being emptied of all things that make men respected in the

world, and depressed lower than ever any man was, as a worm to be

trod upon. He was made the matter of common talk and reproach in

all men's mouths ; condemned by the ruling part of the world, and

set at nought by the basest of the people ; derided and scorned in his

most holy behaviour, his bitter sufferings made a matter of sport and

laughter, malice feeding itself with pleasure upon his pain and misery,

and expressing itself with the basest signs of mockage which disdain

could devise, flouting at his saving doctrine, and insulting over him

as if he had been neither the Son of God nor an honest man. And all

this was counted little enough for satisfaction of justice, exacting of

him the due punishment of our sins. We tenderly resent contempt,

and cannot endure to be despised and thrust down, when the Sun of

righteousness went back so many degrees in the dial of honour.

(3.) The brazen serpent had the shape and figure of the serpent,

but not the sting and the poison. Figuram habuit, non naturam ; it

had the figure, not the nature of a serpent. Let us pause upon this a

little. God would cure the bite of a serpent by a serpent ; a serpent

stung, and a serpent healed : ' God sending his own Son in the likeness

of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh,' Eom. viii. 3 ;

that is, by Jesus Christ in our nature, who was made a sin-offering,

and therefore called sin there. The parties to be cured were men,

therefore ' the Son of man must be lifted up ; ' that title is given him

here in the text. Christ was debased by this title, by being called

' the Son of man,' but yet the sons of men are dignified by it ; ' he

came in the likeness of sinful flesh.' As the brazen serpent was in all

things like the true serpent, but without any hurtful quality, so Christ

in all points was like us, 'but without sin ;' Heb. iv. 15. He came in

the likeness of sinful flesh, yet was ' holy, harmless, and separate from

sinners.'

(4.) The precise place where the brazen serpent was lifted up. Moses

doth not tell us in the story where this matter is recorded ; but it may

be collected from other places. Moses telleth us that the Israelites

going from thence pitched their tents in Oboth, Num. xxi. 10 ; from

whence it follows that the place was Punon, for from Punon they came

to Oboth, Num. xxxiii. 42, 43. Now this Punon was a place belong-

ing to Idumeea, very famous for mines of brass or copper, as is com-

monly known in ancient writings, the brass being called from thence

' the metal of Punon.' Eusebius in the eighth book of his Ecclesiastical

History tells us that Sylvanus and thirty-nine more were beheaded for

the faith's sake, KaTci ra iv ^vvw ')(a\Kov jxeraWa, near the mines of

brass in Punon ; and Eutychius speaketh of divers christians condemned

to work in these mines. So also doth Epiphanius and Theodoret. So

4G0 SERMON UPON JOHN III. 14, 15.

tbat tlie brass out of wliicli the serpent was made was taken out of

tlie very place in which they were bitten ; it was the brass of Punon,

not without a mystery. Tliat body which Christ assumed was not

brought from elsewhere, but born there and formed there where he

"was manifested in the flesh for the salvation of the world ; and where

the mischief was, there was the remedy at hand.

(5.) The similitude chiefly holdeth in this, that as the brazen ser-

pent was lifted up upon the ])erch or pole, so was Christ lifted up on

the cross : 1 Peter ii. 24, ' Who his own self bare our sins in his own

body upon the tree.' The serpent first stung us by the fruit of a tree,

and Christ saved us by suffering upon a tree. David had foretold that

his hands and his feet should be pierced : Ps. xxii. 16, ' They pierced

my hands and my feet.' And the curse of the law was to be borne :

' Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a

curse for us ; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a

tree,' Gal. iii. 13. The apostle obviates an objection ; if the law do

curse all men, how are any freed from the curse of the law ? Even

by Jesus Christ, who took upon him the curse due to us, while he was

obedient to death, even the death of the cross ; for that kind of death

was pronounced to be accursed : Deut. xxi. 23, ' He that is hanged is

accursed of God.' He came as a surety in the sinner's name, and

would take our burden upon himself, and therefore chose a death of

all others most cruel and painful and contemptible, ordained for the

wickedest and vilest wretches, thereby to assure us of a full ransom

and satisfaction to divine justice for our wrongs, and to imprint upon

our minds the horrors of our sins. Well, then, here is the spectacle

ofi'ered to our faith, Jesus Christ hanging upon a tree. We should

look upon Christ crucified as if the thing were now a-doing before our

eyes: Gal. iii. 1, ' Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently

set forth crucified l)efore you.' Though it be past long ago it is present

to faith ; for he is lifted up, that by the eye of faith we should look to

him, and see not only the thing, but the end, use, and virtue of this

mystery. The brazen serpent was a sufficient remedy for the stung

Israelites ; none that looked towards it perished, the cure never failed;

and Jesus Christ lifted up, and being eyed, is sufficient to cure the

guilt of sin, and pain of conscience through sin, and to heal our dis-

eased souls, and free them from the power of corruption. For being

made a curse for us, the blessing cometh freely upon the believing

gentiles, even the gift of the Spirit : Isa. liii. 5, ' He was wounded for

our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement

of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.'

[2.] The superexcellency of Christ above this and all the shadows

and types of him. The type doth express the thing signified, but yet

the truth doth much exceed the shadow. The brazen serpent was but

'a sign of salvation ; ' so called in the Book of Wisdom, chap. xvi. 6.

But Christ ' is the author of salvation,' Heb. v. 9. The serpent bene-

fited only the Israelites, but Christ all nations, both Jew and gen-

tile : Isa. xi. 10, ' In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which

shall stand for an ensign of the people ; to it shall the gentiles seek,

and his rest shall be glorious.' It freed them from present death, but

yet so that they might die by other means ; but Christ hath freed us-

SERMON UPON JOHN III. 14, 15. 461

not only from tlie death of the body, but of the soul, and this for ever,

as in the text, ' That they should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

So John xi. 26, ' Whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never

die.' There natural life is preferred i but for a while, here eternal life

obtained. This benefit might last for a day or two, but ' Jesus Christ

is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever,' Heb. xiii. 8. Christ

ever retaiueth his healing virtue. This was but a piece of brass while

they lodged it in the temple, but Christ is a mediator to all eternity.

It was a great wickedness to worship the brazen serpent, therefore

Hezekiah broke it in pieces, when once he understood the people to be

guilty of that idolatry: 2 Kings xviii. 4, "He brake in pieces the

brazen serpent that Moses had made, for unto those days the children

of Israel did burn incense to it ; and he called it Nehushtan,' or a

piece of brass ; but it is our duty to worship Christ : ' All men must

honour the Son as they honour the Father,' John v. 23 ; and Heb. i. 6,

\* Let all the angels of God worship him ; ' Phil. ii. 9, 10, ' Wherefore

God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above

every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.' When

the Israelites worshipped the brazen serpent, it was broken in pieces ;

but they shall be broken in pieces themselves that deny Christ his due

worship : Ps. ii. 9, \* Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou

shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel ; ' Dan. ii. 44, ' And in

the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom

which shall never be destroyed ; and the kingdom shall not be left to

other people, but shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms,

and shall stand for ever.' The kingdom that will not submit to him

shall be broken in pieces : Luke xix. 27, ' Those mine enemies that

would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay

them before me.' Thus it sets forth Christ.

3. Faith is set forth, or the way and means how we come to have

benefit by Christ. It is not enough to look to what Clu'ist hath done,

but what we must do that we may be partakers of him. The way of

cure was by a look ; so it is believing in him that bringeth home the

blessing to our souls.

From this type we learn —

[1.] The necessity of faith. None had benefit by the brazen serpen-

but those that looked on it. The promise was made to those that

observed the command : Num. xxi. 8, ' Every one that is bitten, when

he looketh upon it, shall live.' If a man turned away his eyes and

refused God's remedy, the biting was mortal to him. As there is a

necessity Christ should die, so there is a necessity you should believe ;

for besides impetration there must be application ; and the work of the

Spirit is as necessary to apply grace as the work of the Mediator to

obtain grace for us. A deep well will do you no good without a

bucket, nor the purchase of salvation unless you apply it.

[2.] An encouragement of faith.

(1.) To broken-hearted sinners ; if you are stung with sin, you may

look to Christ. It was ground enough for any bitten Israelite to look

to this brazen serpent, because he had need ; he found himself bitten,

and thirsted for cure by this appointed means. A felt sense of sin is

"warrant enough to look to Christ as the offered remedy. Look not

^ Qu. preserved ' ? — Ed.

462 SERMON UPON JOHN III. 14, 15.

altogether to your sore, to your sins, but to Christ as the means of

healing. Indeed there must be a feeling and a sense of sin, or else

there is no work for Christ to do; what should a hale Israelite do

with the brazen serpent ? Their looking began in a sense of pain ;

none troubled their thoughts about it till they were stung. Com-

punction goeth before faith. The Israelites cried out, Oh ! what shall

we do for these fiery serpents ? So Acts ii. 37, ' When they heard this,

they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of

the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do ? ' An empoisoned

dagger was flung into their souls, and then, 'What shall we do?'

The jailer 'came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and

said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? ' Acts xvi. 29, 30 ; ' And they

said,' ver. 31, ' Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be

saved.' Only look upon the serpent. A sinner must first feel himself a

sinner before he will or can come to Christ, but then come ; ' The Son

of man is lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish

but have eternal life.' Some that know not themselves believers have

been welcome to Christ ; but never any that know not themselves

sinners.

(2.) To lapsed believers. The serpents were left to sting the

Israelites while they were in that place, only the brazen serpent was

lifted up. God did not presently take away the serpents, only he gave

a remedy for such as were bitten. Sin is not abolished, but whilst we

are in this station the remedy is still offered ; we are never so cured

but we may be bitten again. The disobedient Israelites needed this

motive and chastisement to keep them in awe ; we cannot imagine

that any would provoke these serpents to sting him that he might be

healed. So say I, as the apostle, 1 John ii. 1, ' These things I write

unto you, that ye sin not ; and if any man sin, we have an advocate

with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' For the present, stings

of conscience is one of God's rods over us, but when we fall, there is

forgiveness by Jesus Christ; as Peter of Alexandria destroyed the

idols, but only left one for a monument.

[3.] The nature of faith, which is a looking to Christ. It is usually

said that faith is 6(p6aX/jLo^ tt}^ '^i^X'/?, ' the eye of the soul.' Certain

it is that the act of faith is often expressed by seeing or looking, and

faith itself by an eye; as Zech. xii. 10, 'They shall look upon me

whom they have pierced.' So Isa. xvii. 7, ' At that day a man shall

look to his lilaker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of

Israel.' So John vi. 40, ' This is the will of him that sent me, that

every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have ever-

lasting life,' 6 Oeapcov kol irLcnevoiv. And faith is described to be

' the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not

seen,' Heb. xi. 1. By faith ' Moses saw him that was invisible,' Heb.

xi. 27 ; Heb. xii. 2, ' Looking to Jesus.' So faith itself is said to be

the eye of the soul : Eph. i. 18, ' That the eyes of your understandings

being opened,' Gal. iii. 1 ; ' Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been

evidently set forth crucified among you.' The mystery of Christ

crucified was so evidently set forth as if he had been crucified before

their eyes. So where the work of faith is impeded and hindered, it is

said ' the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which

SERMON UPON JOHN III. 14, 15. 463

believe not/ 2 Cor. iv. 4 ; that is, hindered their faith. Therefore I

shall here inquire — (1.) What sights are proper to faith ; (2.) What

kind of looking faith is.

(1.) The objects proper to faith are matters that lie out of the view

of sense, ra /x?) /SXeirofMeva, things that cannot be seen by any other

faculty or discerning power. Some things are invisible in regard of

their nature, and some things because of their distance from us, because

either they are past or to come. Things invisible, because of their

nature, are all spiritual things, which are not obvious to the eye of sense.

Sense is only conversant about bodily things, which may be seen, heard,

tasted, or felt ; reason can only see things in their causes. Things

invisible, by reason of their distance, are either things past, as the creation

of the world, or the sufferings of Christ ; or things to come, as the glory

and happiness of the other world. Let us explain this by applying it

to the matter in hand, the Son of man lifted up on the cross. This

was sometimes a matter of sense, namely, at the time when Christ suf-

fered ; and therefore then if a man had seen him, or looked upon him, it

had done him no good, as it did not to those that wagged their heads at

him and mocked him, though it did to the centurion, who cried out,

Mat. xxvii. 54, ' Truly this was the Son of God.' But in another regard

this is always matter of faith, namely, if we consider his deity, and

offices ; as the Son of God dying and healing wounded consciences, this

is a thing invisible in its nature. Therefore the soldiers that turned

subjects to him, and confessors of his name, even then when he is hang-

ing dead on the cross, they that could see his Godhead, and confess it

in its deepest humiliation, were believers ; they saw Christ not with the

eye of sense, but of faith. Now go to the other things invisible, viz.,

by reason of their distance, because they are either to come or past.

Christ crucified was sometimes a thing to come. The fathers had need

of clear eyes, who could see salvation at such a distance, and represented

under such dark figures and shadows ; yet some had such an eagle-eye

of faith : ' Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day ; and he saw

it, and was glad,' John viii, 56 ; and Heb. xi. 13, ' All these died in

faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off,

and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.' To us now it is a

thing past ; there needeth faith both to believe the history and the

mystery too. When we believe the history so clearly as if we saw it,

Gal. iii. 1, that is faith ; and the mystery : 1 Cor. ii. 2, ' For I deter-

mined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified ; '

and ver. 4, ' My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words

of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Sj>irit, and of power.'

This a7r68etft9 irvevfjiaro';, this 'demonstration of the Spirit,' is the

ground of faith, when the object is so lepresented that it maketh a

powerful impression, and so affected as if we had seen him with our

eyes. Well, then, it is some faith to believe the history, to see it as a

thing now done. So John xx. 29, ' Blessed are they that have not seen,

and yet have believed.' But to believe the end and the use, that was

always matter of faith, whether past, present, or to come. And herein

all believers stand upon the same level. Christ is not now lifted up

upon the cross, but it is our duty to lift him up, that poor sinners and

wounded consciences may look on him with an eye of faith : Isa. xi. 10,

-464 SERMON UPON JOHN III. 14, 15.

' There shall be a root of Jesse which shall stand for an ensign of the

people ; to it shall the gentiles seek ; ' Isa, xlix. 22, ' Behold, I will

lift up my hand to the gentiles, and set up my standard to the people ;

and they shall bring thy sons in their arras, and thy daughters shall be

carried upon their shoulders.' Christ is lifted up in the ministry

of the word as a sign of salvation to draw people to him, so to see him

as to follow him, and as to submit to him. If David prayed God to

' open his eyes to see the wonders of his law,' Ps. cxix. 18, we may

much more pray to God to open our eyes to see Christ, and own him

in the gospel, and to see him crucified in the symbols of bread and wine

for our comfort.

(2.) "We have showed you what is to be seen by faith, now what kind

of sight faith is. Not a bare speculation, but such as was the look of

the Israelites on the brazen serpent, serious, applicative, aJOfectionate,

engaging to thankfulness and obedience, when they went away and

were healed.

(1st.) Serious ; not a glance, but a fixed eye. A stung Israelite would

not cast a careless glance on the sign of salvation and health, neither

should we upon Christ. Ponderous thoughts take hold of the heart ;

musing maketh the fire to burn, and a steady sight hath the greatest

influence upon us.

(2d) Applicative. So Job v. 27, ' Hear it, and know thou it for thy

good.' The Israelite came for the cure of his own wounds ; so must

we look upon Christ as our own Saviour, with application to ourselves :

John XX. 28, ' My Lord and my God.'

{3d.) Affectionate, with desire and trust. With desire longing for

cure ; there must be hearty groans and desires : ' Our eyes are upon

thee,' 2 Chron. xx. 12. The having our eyes to anything noteth our

desire: Ps. cxxi. 1, 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from

w^hence cometh my help.' Earnestly desire to be partaker of these

benefits by Christ : 1 Peter i. 7, ' To them that believe he is precious ;'

and with trust : Isa. xvii. 7, ' At that day shall a man look to his

Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel ; '

that is, he shall seek to him, trust in him, depend upon him, because

what men trust to they are wont frequently and wistly to look after,

and to have their eyes fixed upon : Ps. cxxiii. 2, ' Behold, as the eyes

of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a

maiden to the hand of her mistress ; so our eyes wait upon the Lord

our God, till he have mercy on us ; ' Ps. xxxiv. 5, ' They looked to him,

and were lightened ; ' that is, comforted in the midst of their darkness

and trouble; Ps. cxli. 8, 'Mine eyes are unto thee, God the Lord;

in thee I trust.'

(■ith.) Engaging; we need to get open eyes to see him and contem-

plate him, till we see beauty in him that may allure us to love him,

and esteem him as the fairest of ten thousand, to renounce ourselves

and the vanities of the world, and betake ourselves to his discipline, to

see all is nothing in comparison of his excellency: Phil. iii. 8, 'Yea,

doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the

knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' A true knowledge of Christ is

called €7rlyv(ocrt^, Eph. i. 17, which is elsewhere rendered ' acknow-

ledging,' so as to give due honour, respect, and reverence to him. We

SEEMON UPON JOHN III. 14, 15. 465

may know strangers, and those whom we contemn and despise, but we

do not acknowledge them.

Use. Let us look upon the Lord Jesus for cure. He calleth upon

us in his word. ' Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the

earth,' Isa. xlv. 12. It is little that we can afford Christ if we cannot

afford him a serious look. It may be you will think that this is so

slight a w^ork that it will not produce any great effects in the soul ;

that a look should heal is strange. Surely, you will say, this is not a

full notion of faith, nor an act that will do us any good. I answer —

Indeed it will not if it be done slightly. Therefore let me tell you

that there are several notions of faith, which all have their use. Some

notions are fitted for soul-examination, as faith that worketh by love,

that conquereth the world, that purifieth the heart; these do best for

a deliberate search, and the stating of our interest. Some for anxious

thoughts at the first awaking of the soul out of the sleep of sin, as

coming, running, flying, and seeking. When the soul is under trouble,

and hangeth off from the grace offered, we press them to come ; as our

necessities are great, we press them to run. A soul deeply pressed

with a sense of its necessity and danger is always in haste, so we

press them to fly for refuge. When comfort appeareth not presently, we

press to seek, and to a diligent attendance on the appointed means.

Some for agonies of conscience after some former manifestations of

God's love ; these we exhort to staying and resting : Isa. 1. 10, ' Who

is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his

servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ? Let him trust

in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.' We press recum-

bency and adherence : Isa. xxvi. 3, ' Thou wilt keep him in perfect

l)eace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' Some

for agonies of death; and great and imminent dangers, when long

debates are not so seasonable, these we press to committing : 2 Tim.

i. 12, ' I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able

to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day ; \*

1 Peter iv. 19, ' Let them that suffer according to the will of God

commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a

faithful Creator.' Jesus Christ himself did so : Luke xxiii. 46,

' Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit , ' and David : Ps. xxxi.

5, ' Into thine hand I commit my spirit,' Some for holy duties, as

word, prayer, Lords supper ; we press to acceptance of Christ in the

word, to coming to Christ, or to God by Christ in prayer ; we accept

him from God in the word of promise, we present him to God in

prayer as the ground of our confidence and hope for the mercies prayed

for. In the Lord's supper, as religion is made visible, and we are to

make use of the help of sense, eye, taste, and hand, so we press you to

take, eat, and look ; this is a notion for this use when Christ is crucified

as it were before our eyes. Well, then, this is one great work, to look

to Jesus, the author and dedicator of our faith, to spy out Christ under

his memorials ; here he is set forth dying and hanging on a tree.

Pilate, when he had scourged him, brought him forth and showed him

to the Jews ; he said, ' Behold the man ! ' John xix. 5. We say, to

you in God's name, Behold your dearest Kedeemer bleeding and dying.

VOL. XVII. 2 a

466 SERMON UPON JOHN III. 14, 15.

Now he is evidently set forth to you, your business is to behold him.

And that this look may be serious, remember —

1. This is supposed, that you come hither as stun<jj with sin, and

that your hearts are deeply affected with your malady. Alas ! other-

wise here is no work to do. If men are not sensible of their malady,

why should they look after a remedy : Mat. ix. 12, 13, ' They that be

whole need not a physician, but they that are sick ; for I am not come

to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' None but the bur-

dened will look out for ease, or the self-condemned for pardon. If sin

be not sin indeed, grace will not be grace indeed. Christ was anointed

'to heal the broken-hearted,' Luke iv. 18.

2. Your sight of Christ must not merely be historical and literal,

the work of the understanding and memory, but of faith. A few cold

thoughts raised upon this occasion do not warm and comfort the heart.

You are to look to him so as that the heart be affected with mourning,

desire, and trust.

[1.] Mourning for sin. If you are sensible of your case you will do

so. A slight glance of the thoughts leaveth no impression. Look, as

the three Marys, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary the wife of Cleophas,

and Mary Magdalen, they were affected when they saw Christ dying,

John xix. 25, 26 ; of one of them it is said, Luke ii. 35, ' Yea, a sword

shall pierce through thine own soul also ; ' so do you : Acts ii. 37,

' When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart.'

[2.] Desire. Would not the stung Israelite desire a cure? So

must you : Mat. v. 6, ' Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after

righteousness, for they shall be filled.' Saith the church. Lam. iii. 51,

' Mine eye affecteth my heart.'

[3.] Trust. You see nothing by the eye of sense but his memorials,

which God hath instituted as helps of faith, yet to appearance as

despicable and as unlikely to produce any great effect as a figure of

brass to cure a raging wound. But things under an institution are

under a blessing : 1 Cor. i. 21, ' It pleased God by the foolishness of

preaching to save them that believe.' You may think a crucifix a

more lively representation. No ; that is not under the blessing of an

institution, as bread broken and wine poured forth is ; that is too much

a matter of sense, and begetteth bare thoughts, which stirreth up fond

pity and gross and wrong thoughts. This conveyeth a blessing : You

are to behold not only a dying man put to a cruel death, but the Son

of God in his deep exinanition ; not carnally to pity him, but to see

his love and the wrath of God and the desert of sin, that you may

abhor it ; to see the great price paid for our ransom, the necessity of

having the virtue of his cross, and finally our thankful subjection to

God. Behold him that you may bless and praise God for your

redeemer. The type had its effect, and shall not Christ? Oh!

labour to feel the comfortable effects of his death.

3. Beg of God the Spirit to open your eyes. Christ crucified is only

seen in the light and evidence of the Spirit : 1 Cor. ii. 4, ' My speech

and my preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom,

but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.' The eyes of our

minds are opened by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, for our light

is but darkness.

SERMON UPON JOHN III. 14, 15. 467

4. See him so as to expect not only comfort, but healing : Isa. liii. 5,

' With his stripes we are healed.' That heart is to be suspected that

looks to comfort more than duty. Look to him that you may live by

him : Gal. ii. 20, ' I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the

life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God,

who loved me, and gave himself for me.' Look to him that you may

be like him : 2 Cor. iii. 18, ' For we all with open face, beholding as

in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from

glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' Look to him that

you may loathe sin : Ezek. xxxvi. 31, ' Then shall you remember your

own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe

yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abomi-

nations.'

SERMONS UPON 1 THESSALOMANS V. 16.

SERMON L

Bejoice eoermore. — 1 Thes. v. 16.

The words are brief and short, and therefore they may be easily car-

ried away. They are independent on the context, and therefore will

need no long deduction. They press you not to a painful, but pleasant

duty ; therefore you should be readily induced to practise it. But yet,

when we look more intrinsically into the nature of it, it is not so easy

as we first imagined. Every one cannot receive this saying ; it is hard

to keep the heart in such an exact frame as to ' rejoice evermore, pray

without ceasing, and in everything to give thanks ; ' as Christ saith in

another case, ' He that is able to receive it, let him receive it,' Mat.

xix. 12. But what if we prove it to be a duty incumbent on all chris-

tians, and that at all times ? The text seemeth to enforce it, ' Eejoice

evermore.'

In which words take notice of two things —

1. The duty to which we are exhorted, ' Eejoice.'

2. The constancy and perpetuity of it, in the word. ' Evermore.\*

Delight and pleasure are greedily sought after ; in Christianity it is

not only part of our wages, but much of our very work.

Doct. That God's children should make conscience of rejoicing in

God at all times and under all conditions.

Here is a precept for it ; not only a liberty given, but a command.

If you look upon the words as a licence or liberty given, you may con-

ceive of them according to the apostle's speech of marriage : 1 Cor. vii.

39, ' She is at liberty to be married to whom she will, ^lovov iv Kvpiw,

but only in the Lord.' But it is not only a liberty given, but a

command ; for he addeth, ver. 18, ' This is the will of God in Christ

Jesus concerning you.' The will of God is the supreme reason of all

duties, and the will of God in Christ Jesus falleth upon the conscience

with a double force , the law of the mediator binding us to delight in

God, as well as the primitive duty which we owe to God as the Creator.

And that this clause respects all the three duties is evident to any con-

sidering mind. In the opening of this duty I shall show you — (1.)

What rejoicing the apostle intendeth ; (2.) How this must be constant

and perpetual ; (3.) The many reasons which do enforce this duty

upon us.

I. What rejoicing the apostle speaketh of. There is a double rejoic-

ing — a carnal rejoicing, and a spiritual rejoicing.

1. The carnal rejoicing is in the world, and the good things of this

470 SERMONS UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 16.

world apart from God : Luke xii. 19, ' Soul, thou hast much goods laid

up for many years ; take thine ease ; eat, drink, and be merry.'

2. The spiritual rejoicing is in God : Phil. iii. 1, ' Finally, my

brethren : rejoice in the Lord ; ' Phil. iv. 4, ' Rejoice in the Lord always,

a;nd again I say, rejoice.' These two sorts of rejoicing must be carefully

distinguished, for they differ in their causes. To the one we are

prompted by carnal nature, which taketh up with present things, and

the other is excited in us by the Spirit of God, therefore often called

'joy in the Holy Ghost.' The one is called the joy of sense, the

other the joy of faith. The joy of faith is in God, the joy of sense in

the creature ; the joy of faith is most in future things, the joy of sense

in present things ; the joy of faith is in the good of the soul, the joy

of sense in the good of the body or the provisions of the flesh ; the joy

of faith is built on the covenant and the promises of God : Ps. cxix.

Ill, ' Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever ; they are

the rejoicing of my heart.' The joy of sense on the blessings that flow

in the channel of common and general providence. Now the first sort

of rejoicing the apostle would not press us unto. Nature there needeth.

a bridle rather than a spur ; but to the latter, delight in God. and in

all things that come from God and lead to him.

This delighting ourselves in God must be the thing, which must be

further explained.

[1.] God himself, as God, is a lovely nature, and the object of our

delight ; for he is good, even before and without the apprehension of

his doing good : Ps. cxix. 68, ' Thou art good, and doest good ; ' and

'of him, and to him, and through him, are all things,' Rom. xi. 36.

God's essential goodness is not, I confess, the first inviting motive to

draw our hearts to him, but his beneficial goodness ; yet the infinite

perfection of his nature is also an object of our love and delight ; for

the creature was made for him, and our good and benefit is not the

last end. As the angels admire and adore God not only for his

benefits, but also for his holiness and sovereign majesty and dominion :

Isa. vi, 3, ' Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts ; the whole earth is

full of his glory ; ' so should we, who are to laud God and serve God

on earth as he is served in heaven, Mat. vi. 10. Admire him, and

delight in him for his holiness and the infinite perfection of his nature.

Surely we are not only to bless him, but praise him : Ps. cxlv. 2,

\* Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and

■ever ; ' and ver. 10, ' All thy works shall praise thee, Lord, and thy

saints shall bless thee.' These two words have their distinct reference ;

blessing to his benefits, and praise to his excellences ; and when we

praise God for his glorious being, we should do it in a delightful

manner : Ps. cxxxv. 3, ' Praise ye the Lord, for the Lord is good ;

sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant.' It is pleasant and

delightful to think of, or speak of, or show forth the excellences of

his heavenly majesty. Again, his holiness is an amiable thing, and

therefore the object of our delectation. If we must delight in the

saints because of their holiness, though they have never done us good :

Ps. xvi. 3, ' But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent,

in whom is all my delight ; ' if we are to account them the excellent

ones of the earth because of the image and beauty of God that is upon.

SEEMONS UPOX I THESSALONIANS V. 16. 471

them, then surely we are much more to love God, not only because of

his benefits, but because of his holiness. Yea, if we are to love the

law of God, and to delight in it, as it is pure : Ps. cxix. 140, ' Thy

word is very pure, therefore thy servant lovetli it ; ' then surely we are

to love God also because of the immaculate purity of his nature, and

to delight in him. At least this is one, though not the only nor the

first reason of our love to him and delight in him.

[2.j We are to delight and rejoice in God as he hath discovered

himself to us in Christ. That was the foundation of his beneficial

goodness, and the greatest discovery of the amiable nature of God

that ever was made to the creature : John iii. 16, ' God so loved the

world, that he gave his only-begotten Son ; ' Kom. v. 8, ' But God

commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners,

Christ died for us.' That we might not conceive God to be all wrath

and inexorable, unless upon hard terms, therefore Christ came as

the express image of his person, full of grace and truth. Well, then,

God reconciled in Christ is the life and spirit of all our joy and glad-

ness. In Christ we see him accessible, near to us, and within the

reach of our commerce, as dwelling in our nature. In Christ we see

him gracious and propitious to us, ready to do us good : Luke i. 46,

47, ' My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in

God my Saviour.' We have a great and a good God in Christ ; he is

God and our Saviour.

[3.] We rejoice in God as we rejoice in the fruits of our redemption,

or in all those spiritual blessings which are ofi"ered or given to us by

Christ; such as reconciliation, or God's admitting of us into the privi-

leges of his holy covenant : Eom. v. 11, ' We joy in God through

our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.'

Clear that once, and the cause of all our sadness and drooping dis-

couragements is taken out of the way. The bottom cause of our

bondage and fears is the quarrel God hath against us by reason of sin ;

we can never be soundly merry and comfortable till that be taken up ;

for as long as we apprehend him an enemy and an avenger, how can

we rejoice in him? So Ps. xxxii. 11, 'Be glad in the Lord, and

rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in

heart.' The Psalmist speaketh of the pardon of sins ; it is David's

Maschil, an instruction from his own experience ; he begins the psalm,

' Blessed is he whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered : blessed

is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not sin.' Then he con-

cludeth, ' Kejoice, ye upright.' A man that is condemned for some

criminal ofi'ence, and ready to be executed, oh ! what joy hath he when

he hath received his pardon ! So we should rejoice in God, who are

as it were brought back again from the gibbet, and have received our

atonement. So also in the gift of the Holy Spirit to sanctify and heal

our natures ; if the angels, who are but the spectators and lookers-on,

rejoice in the conversion of a sinner, should not the parties interested:

Luke XV. 10, ' There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over

one sinner that repenteth.' So in the hopes of glory : Luke x. 20,

'Kejoice, because your names are written in heaven ; ' Rom. v. 2, ' We

rejoice in hope of the glory of God.'

[4.] We rejoice in God when we delight to do his will, and are fitted

472 SERMONS UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 16.

for his use and service. To be set and kept in the way to heaven is a

greater comfort to us than if we had all the world 1 estowed upon us :

Ps. cxix. 14, ' I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much

as in all riches.' David had experience of both as a puissant king,

and as God's servant. So 2 Cor. i. 12, ' For our rejoicing is this, the

testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, not

with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our con-

versation in the world.' In carnal rejoicing men seek to conceal and

hide the grounds of their joy, as being ashamed of them ; the world-

ling in his bags, the voluptuous in the instruments of his pleasure.

The glutton will not point to his dishes, nor the drunkard to his pots,

and say, This is my rejoicing ; but a christian dareth own his joy.

This is my rejoicing, that God hath taught me his ways, and enabled

me to walk in them.

[5.] We also rejoice in God when we rejoice in the blessings of his

providence, as they come from God and lead to God : Joel ii. 23, ' Be

glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God ; for

he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to

come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the

first month.' So God's care in protecting us : Ps. v. 11, ' But let all

those that put their trust in thee rejoice ; let them ever shout for joy,

because thou defendest them : let them also that love thy name be

joyful in thee.' These common favours and benefits manifest God's

respect to us, and should be as a step to the Lord's people to lead them

up to rejoice in God. This was God's quarrel with his people: Deut.

xxviii. 47, 48, 'Because thou servest not the Lord thy God with joy-

fulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things,

therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, which the Lord shall send

against thee, in hunger and thirst and nakedness, and in want of all

things ; and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he hath

destroyed thee.' Whatever we have, we should look upon it as a token

of God's love to us, and so rejoice in them ; not as satisfied with these

worldly things, but as they direct us to God. Carnal men rejoice in

the creature, but in a carnal and sensual manner ; their joy neither

arisetli from God, nor endeth in God ; they neither look to God as

their author, nor make him their end ; and it is a naughty heart that

can rejoice in anything without God and apart from God.

II. How this must be constant and perpetual, ' Kejoice evermore.'

1. In all estates and conditions ; this joy must not be infringed.

God's children have or may have cause of rejoicing in God, whatever

their outward condition be ; and therefore they should make conscience

of it, whether their affairs be adverse or prosperous.

[1.] A state of worldly sorrow and affliction is reconcilable and agree-

able enough, or consistent with our rejoicing in the Lord. The scrip-

tures abound in the proof of this : 2 Cor. vi. 10, ' As sorrowful, yet

always rejoicing ; ' 1 Peter i. 6, ' Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now

for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temp-

tations ; ' 2 Cor. vii. 4, ' I am filled with comfort, and am exceeding

joyful in all our tribulations. So David : Ps. xciv. 19, ' In the multi-

tude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul' Paul

and Silas sung in the dungeon at midnight : Acts xvi. 25, ' At mid-

SERMONS UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 16. 473

night Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God.' Tribulation

disturbeth not the harmony of a well-composed mind. The reason is,

because there is more matter of delight in God than can be taken

from him in the creature : John xvi. 22, ' Your heart shall rejoice, and

your joy no man taketh from you.' Whatever falleth out, God's all-

suf3S.ciency and heaven's happiness are everlasting grounds of rejoicing.

(1.) God's all-sufficiency : Hab. iii. 18, ' Yet I will rejoice in the Lord ;

I will joy in the God of my salvation.' Your right and interest in

God is not made void by the blasting of the creature. So (2.) Hopes

of glory remain unshaken : Mat. v. 12, ' Eejoice and be exceeding glad,

for great is your reward in heaven.' Though the world be bent against

us with all manner of spite and hatred, yet there is more cause of

joy than sorrow. There cannot be more evil in our sufferings than

there is good in God and happiness in heaven.

[2.] A state of sorrow and affliction is not only consistent with this

holy rejoicing, but doth much promote it ; partly as afflictions conduce

to refine, and purge the soul from the dregs of sense, and make it

capable of the comforts of the Spirit: Jude 39, 'Sensual, having not

the Spirit.' Till our taste be clarified from the feculency and dregs

of sense, we cannot relish spiritual comforts, nor know their worth

and value. Whilst we flow in worldly comforts, the carnal gust

and taste is too strong upon us, and so we have mean thoughts of

God's consolations. They do best relish with the afflicted, as cordials

are for the fainting, not for those whose stomachs are full of phlegm

and filth. Partly as they occasion greater experiences of God : 2 Cor.

xii. 10, ' Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in

necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake ; for when I

am weak, then I am strong.' So Eom. v. 3-5, ' And not only so, but

we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh pa-

tience, and patience experience, and experience hope : and hope maketli

not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by

the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.' Partly as they are sanctified,

and increase grace ; and an increase of grace will bring with it an

increase of comfort : Heb. xii. 11, ' Now no chastening for the present

seemeth to be joyous, but grievous ; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth

the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised

thereby.' Now from all these considerations, though afflictions may a

little damp it, yet they do not extinguish it.

2. We must rejoice evermore, because it is not a duty to be done

now and then, or which doth only belong to some eminent christians,

that are assured of God's love ; but from our first acquaintance with

Christ till the last period of our lives it is of use to us.

[1.] Some act of joy our first entrance into Christianity is begun

with, before our interest is well settled and cleared. There are general

grounds of rejoicing which oblige all ; as that there is a good God,

and poor drooping spirits should apply themselves to him who hath

comforts for his mourners : Isa. Ivii. 15, ' For thus saith the high and

lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ; I dwell in

the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and

humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the hunible, and to revive the

heart of the contrite ones.' That there is a merciful and ablf 'Saviour

474 SERMONS UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 16.

a gospel, or new covenant, that bringeth glad tidings to sinners : Luke

ii. 10, 11, ' Fear not, for behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy,

which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the

•city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' The world being

fallen under God's wrath and deserved condemnation, it is matter of

joy that God hath found a ransom, and that he ofFereth pardon and

life to those who will seek it and accept it upon his blessed terms.

It is matter of joy before we have interest in these things ; a possible

conditional reconciliation with God, that dreadful controversy taken

up, heaven and earth kissing each other, that life and immortality is

brought to light, and such a blessedness discovered as satiateth the

mind of man, without which man would have been but as leviathan

in a little pool. In short, the gospel showing a sure way of reconcilia-

tion with God, and the everlasting fruition of him in glory ; the very

offers of it stir up a joy in us. And wherever the gospel cometb, it

hath at its first coming upon these accounts been entertained with

joy. As when Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, Acts viii. 8,

' There was great joy in that city ; ' not only joy, but great joy. So it

is said of the jailer, that new convert, Acts xvi. 34, that ' he rejoiced,

believing in God, with all his house ; ' he was but even recovered out

of the suburbs of hell, ready to kill himself just before, ver. 27, so that

a man would think he should easier fetch water out of a flint, or a

spark of fire out of the bottom of the sea, than to find joy so soon in

such an heart, yet he rejoiced, though he was still in danger of his

life, for treating those as guests whom he should have kept as prisoners.

So 2 Cor. viii. 2, we read of 'the abundance of their joy/ and 'deep

poverty,' because they were acquainted with the gospel. So Zaccheus

received Christ joyfully, because salvation was come to his house:

Luke xix. 6, ' He made haste and came down, and received him joy-

fully.' And the man that found the true treasure, 'for joy thereof

goeth and selleth all that he hath,' Mat. xiii. 44; he parted with all

his satisfactions, comforts, and contentments. This is so sure a truth,

that wherever the gospel of Christ is received in any degree and pro-

portion, though not to a converting degree, there is some joy. In

converts I have showed you, and you may cast in that text by way of

overplus: Acts ii. 41, ' Then they that gladly received the word were

baptized ; and the same day there Avere added to the church about

three thousand souls.' It is a degree not amounting to conversion.

Luke viii. 13, the stony ground ' received the word with joy.' Herod

had some kind of joy in hearing John the Baptist : Mark vi. 20, ' He

did many things, and heard him gladly ; ' and his other hearers

' rejoiced in his light for a season,' John v. 35. These had a joy, but

not in such a predominant degree as to be able to control their affections

to other things, and so this joy could not maintain itself or keep itself

alive. Therefore it is said, that ' we are his house, if we hold fast the

confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end/ Heb. iii. 6.

The first offers of pardon and life by Clirist do stir up this joy in us,

as the gospel showeth us a way how to come out of the greatest miseries,

and get an interest in the greatest happiness. The possible hope of

relief and deliverance cannot but affect us if we be serious.

[2.] As to our progress in the duties and hopes of the gospel, it is

SERMONS UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 16. 475

still carried on with joy. Therefore believers are described by it as

their vital act : Phil. iii. 3, ' We are the circumeision, which worship

God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence

in the flesh.' What is the constant work of a christian but a rejoicing

in Christ Jesus, or a thankful sense of our Eedeemer's mercy ? And

therefore the whole life of a christian is represented by keeping a feast :

1 Cor. V. 7, 8, ' Christ our passover is sacrificed for us ; therefore let

us keep the feast.' Seven days the Jews kept their feast of unleavened

bread, which figureth the whole time of our pilgiimage till we enter

into the everlasting sabbath. Every day is a holyday and a feast-day

with a christian, now Christ his passover Ls sacrificed for him ; partly

through a sense of God's love, partly through the testimony of a good

conscience, and partly through the hopes of glory. He is always rejoic-

ing in God, if he be in a right frame and liveth up to his gospel-privi-

leges. Let me chiefly instance in two duties — of prayer, and praise

or thanksgiving, which take up a great part of our commerce with

God ; and especially because they are connected with the duty we are

upon, for we must ' Eejoice evermore, praying without ceasing, and in

everything give thanks.' The duties that follow serve to act and

cherish this joy.

(1.) Eejoice evermore so as ' to pray without ceasing.' They that

delight in God will be often with him, and can come cheerfully, and

unbosom themselves to him, as a man would to his friend. They are

not dragged into his presence as into the presence of a judge, but they

come freely to him as children to their father. They that love God

as their portion and happiness will much converse with him ; they are

out of their element but when they are praying to God, or speaking of

God, or thinking of God ; therefore they are still with him. But this

is denied of the hypocrite : Job xxvii. 10, ' Will he delight himself in

the Almighty ? will he always call upon God ?' They may sometimes

cry to him, not because they love him and his service, but because they

love their own ease, and to be free from trouble ; their straits may

force a little service from them. Well, then, without delight we can-

not keep a continual course of communion with God in prayer.

(2.) For praise or giving of thanks : ' In everything give thanks ; '

that is both the fruit of our delight in God and a means to quicken it.

One that delights in God will have cause enough to give thanks,

whether the creature come or goes. Whatever is taken from him, his

joy is not taken from him. He can bless God for his mercies in Christ

when retrenched and cut short in the world ; though he hath lost

some comforts, yet others are yet remaining. Shall one cross embitter

all our comforts, as one string broken puts the whole instrument out

of tune ? They can bless God for taking as well as giving : Job i. 21,

' The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name

of the Lord.' If the Lord gave all, why may he not take away a part ?

A thankful heart can praise God for God himself, for choicer mercies

yet continued, for some outward mercies remaining. If God gave all,

and take but a part, have we any cause to complain ?

[3.] Still I prove this joy must be continued throughout the whole

course of the spiritual life, because the beginning, progress, and ending

is carried on by it ; the joy of God is our support in our declining

476 SERMONS UrON I THESSALONIANS V. 16.

time, the staff of our age ; for then christians grow more dead to the

world and worklly things, and are less moved by them, whether they

Keep or lose, have or want them ; and then they are nearer to eternity,

and have more of that ' Rejoicing in hope ' spoken of Rom. xii. 12.

This joy is a beginning of the joys in heaven ; here we have a sip,

there a full draught. Our delight in God now is of the same nature

with that which the saints and angels have in heaven. There is in-

deed a vast difference in the degrees ; here a little joy entereth into us,

but there we 'enter into our master's joy,' Mat. xxv. 23. But though

they differ in degree, yet the object and affection is the same. It is

the same God and the same glory which delighteth us ; only now they

are seen by faith, then they shall be objects of direct sight and fruition ;

we shall see him face to face. In short, rejoicing in God is a begin-

ning of the employment we shall then have in heaven, Therefore,

when we expect in a few days to be swallowed up of this joy, shall we

be no more affected with it now ? We that shall so shortly be so full

of joy, shall we be empty now ? Shall not we rejoice, who have now a

title to heaven, and shall in a little time be in the full and perpetual

possession of it ?

III. The many reasons which show we should have a greater

inclination to this blessed work than usually we have, and be oftener

in it.

1. Because God hath done so much to raise it in us. All the

persons of the Godhead concur and contribute their influence, in that

vvay of opera1.ion which is proper to each, to give us grounds of joy.

[1.] The Father giveth himself to us, and his favour as our felicity

and portion. God's love is the bosom and bottom cause of all our

happiness, which sets all other causes at work ; and when we have the

sure effects of it, can anything so bitter befall us that will not be

sweetened by the love of God? or so evil that this shall not be

ground of comfort to us : Ps. iv. G, 7, ' There are many that say, Who

will show us any good ? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy counte-

nance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the

time that their corn and their wine increased.' Carnal men must

liave something good to sense, but godly men take their full delight in

Cod. This doth them good to the heart ; it is not like a little dew

that wets the surface, but like a soaking shower that goeth to the root.

And ' more ; ' enough to draw us off from the world, enough to

swallow up all our infelicities ; yea, to encounter the thoughts of

death, hell, and judgment to come.

[2.] The Son is also matter of rejoicing to us, as our Redeemer and

Saviour. You are to consider what the Lord Jesus hath done to

deliver you from sin, and the bitter curse of the law, and the fears of

death, and the flames of hell. The eternal Son of God came to heal

our wounds : Isa. liii. 5, ' By his stripes we are healed ; ' to make our

peace with the Father by the blood of his cross, Col. i. 20 ; to vanquish

our spiritual enemies, and triumph over them, Col. ii. 14, 15 ; to be

the ransom of our souls, 1 Tim. ii. 6 ; the captain of our salvation,

Heb. ii. 10 ; the head of his church, Eph. i. 22 ; the treasury and

storehouse of all our comforts, John i. 16 ; and, in short, he hath

recovered us to God, and hath given us an interest in the comforts of

SERMONS UPON I THESSAL0NIAX3 V. 16. 4( i

liis gospel and the promises thereof, which are in him Yea. and in

him Amea ; and is not this matter of joy and rich comfort ? The

whole covenant breeds 'strong consolation' in the hearts of God's

people, Heb. vi. 18 ; and David saith, Ps. cxix. 111, \* Thy testunonies

have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my

heart.' It doth our hearts good when we take these things for our

happiness. Abraham rejoiced in the forethought or foresight of Christ's

day : John viii. 56, ' Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day,

and he saw it, and was glad.' And should not we rejoice, that Uve

under the clearest dispensation of it ? The benefits of our redemption

by Christ should be so esteemed that no affliction should be grievous.

The kingdom of Christ is everywhere represented as a kingdom of joy

and comfort: Eom. siv. 17, ' The kingdom of heaven is not meat and

drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy G-host.' And

if we be real members of it, we should see more cause of rejoicing in

Christ Jesus.

[3.] The Holy Ghost concuiTeth in his way of operation, as a sanc-

tifier, guide, and comforter. As a sanctifier he layeth the foundation

for comfort ; for it is the spirit of delusion that comforts us in our sins,

that by imaginary comforts he may keep you from those that are real,

solid, and everlasting ; but the true Spirit is a sanctifier, and therefore

a comforter ; he first poureth in the oil of grace, and then the oil of

gladness. Comfort and joy follow holiness, as heat doth the fire. And

then as a guide, either in his restraining motions, as he mortifieth sin,

or in his inviting motions, as he exciteth and quickeneth to holiness ;

these are helps to our comfort. Cannot a man live merrily without

sin ? And do you think a life of holiness irreconcilable with a Kfe of

rejoicing ? No such matter ; it is the ready way to joy, especially to

joy spiritual. But chiefly as a comforter ; he is purposely given us to

keep in this holy fire, and maintain a constant delight in God in our

souls. And therefore it is called ' Joy in the Holy Ghost' Where

God himself taketli upon him the office of a comforter surely there

will be comfort. Lite wUl quicken, light will illuminate, and the com-

forting Spirit will comfort in that season and degi'ee God seeth fit and

we are capable to receive. Now he comf orteth partly as sealing, partly

as giving earnest : 2 Cor. i. 22, ' Who hath also sealed us, and given

us the earnest of the Sphit in our hearts.' As sealing us, by stamping

the impress and image of God upon us, which is the mark of his

children, the sure evidence of his love, and the pledge of our happi-

ness ; and as giving us the earnest of a blessed estate to come ; that

life is begun, which there shall be perfected. Now consider all this.

When God himself will be our portion, om\* saviour, our comforter,

should not all this cause us to rejoice in God, whatever our condition

be in the world ?

2. AU the graces tend to this — faith, hope, and love.

[1.] Faith, that is a dependence upon God for something future

that heth out of sight. Now these invisible and future objects are so

great and glorious that they support and comfort the heart, how

afflicted soever our present condition be : 1 Peter i. 8, ' In whom

believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of gIor\';' Eom.

XV. 13, 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believ-

478 SERMONS UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 16.

ing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Grhost.'

In both these places faith implieth a firm belief of and dependence

upon Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, by whom alone God will give

us eternal life. This faith will breed a perpetual rejoicing in the soul,

if it be firm, strong, and operative.

[2.] Hope breedeth this joy also : Eom. xii. 12, ' Eejoicing in hope ; '

and Kom. v. 2, ' We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' Though

we be pressed with miseries for the present, yet there is a better estate

to come, the excellency and certainty of which causeth us to rejoice,

and giveth us a foretaste of it. Joy is chiefly for enjoyment, but there

is a partial enjoyment by hope, which is not only a desirous expecta-

tion, but delightful foretaste or preoccupation of the thing hoped for.

[3.] Love to God also causeth us to rejoice in him, for it showeth

itself in a complacency and well-pleasedness of mind in God as our

chief good : Ps. xvi. 5, 6, ' The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance

and of my cup ; thou maintainest my lot : the lines are fallen to me in

pleasant places.' Certainly they do not love God that do not value

and esteem him as better than all worldly things. Other things with-

out him cannot give any solid contentment to the soul, but he without

other things is enough ; he is all in all to the heart that loveth him.

Therefore if we be rooted and grounded in love to God, he will be the

delight of our souls and our exceeding joy, whatever we lose in the

world. Thus you see faith, hope, and love have a great influence

upon this joy,

3. All the ordinances and duties of religion were appointed to breed,

and feed, and act, and increase this joy in us. Eeading, hearing, pray-

ing, meditating, the Lord's supper ; all these duties were appointed to

quicken the soul to delight in God, and they must all be used to this

end. Eeading ; wherefore were the scriptures written but to beget in

us a comfortable sense of the love of God in Christ? 1 John i. 4,

' These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.' The

word doth beget and keep up our delight in God by those discoveries

Avhich it maketh of his goodness to us, in doctrines, counsels, and pro-

mises, that every time we look into God's blessed book we might have

a fresh delight acted and stirred in us. So for hearing ; its main end

is to increase our joy, therefore was the ministry appointed : ' not for

.jhat we have dominion over your faith, but as helpers of your joy,'

2 Cor. i. 24. That is the main end of our ministry, because the

gospel dispensation is a dispensation of grace. We must press repen-

tance, but it is to cure you of your vain rejoicings in order to more

solid comfort ; to put you out of your fool's paradise, that you may

prize and esteem your Saviour, and set more by him than by all

the pleasures, honours, and riches of the world. Holy mourning

is in order to comfort, the vain delight and carnal rejoicing^ is

checked and deadened, that we may raise in you the true joy.

We are helpers of your joy in God's way, and truly that is

the only way. We need not over-gospel the gospel, as honey needs

not to be sweetened with other things. So prayer; we put pro-

mises in suit that we may have new experiences of the love and bounty

of God : John xvi. 24, ' Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may

be full.' In prayer you come to solace yourselves with God and to

SERMONS UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 16. 479

unbosom yourselves to him as your best friend. Meditation on God's

excellences and benefits, it is still to maintain this delight in God :

Ps. cxl. 34, ' My meditation of him shall be sweet, I will delight in

the Lord.' The Lord's supper was appointed for the elevation of our

joy to the height ; it is our spiritual feast and refection, that we may

go on our way with joy ; as the eunuch, when baptized, ' He went on

his way rejoicing,' Acts viii. 39. Here the whole gospel is applied

and sealed to us ; and bread and wine doth not so much cheer the

body as the body and blood of Christ doth the soul. You come not

only to remember your privileges by Christ, but it is your solemn in-

vestiture ; here you take possession of Christ and all his benefits.

SEEMON IL

Bejoice evermore. — 1 Thes. v. 16.

Use. To press you to this spiritual rejoicing. God never hath our

hearts till he hath our delight. To enforce this exhortation, I must —

(1.) Take off prejudices; (2.) Persuade by arguments; (3.) Direct

you in the exercise of this great duty.

First, To take off prejudices and objections which may lie in the

hearts of men against this duty.

1. Prejudice. How can this rejoicing evermore stand with that

sense which we should have of afflictions coming from God ? Is it

not a stupid thing to be merry when God is angry ? Must we

rejoice in troubles notwithstanding the breaches God hath made

upon us ? I answer —

[1.] Carnal rejoicing is a very provoking thing, because it is an

affront to God's providence. It is a defiance of the dispensation we

are under when we are not affected with our own or our brethren's

misery, or our father's anger : Isa. xxii. 12-14, ' In that day did the

Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness,

and to girding with sackcloth : and behold joy and gladness, slaying

oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine : let us eat

and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. It was revealed in mine ears

by the Lord of hosts, Surely, this iniquity shall not be purged from

you till you die.' So James iv. 9, ' Be afflicted, and mourn and weep ;

let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness ; '

and chap. v. 1, ' Go to now, ye rich men ; weep and howl for your

miseries that shall come upon you ; ' and ver. 5, ' Ye have lived in

pleasure upon earth, and been wanton ; ye have nourished your hearts

as in a day of slaughter.' Now compare this with chap. i. 2, 'My

brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.' Never

any were reproved for rejoicing in God in calamities, but for carnality

and for rejoicing in sensual satisfactions. If you say the answer

Cometh not home ; you may rejoice in unjust dealings and persecutions

of men, or in trials ; but in corrective dispensations from the immediate

hand of God how shall we rejoice ? I reply — We are directed to this

480 SERMONS UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 16.

rejoicinjif in God in those calamities which come from God's immediate

hand : Hab. iii. 17, 18, ' Although the fig-tree shall not blossom,

neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail,

and the fields shall yield no meat, the flocks shall be cut off from the

fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls ; yet I will rejoice in

the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' Surely famine and

desolation come from God, and come as a punishment ; ' Yet I will

rejoice in the Lord.' This spiritual rejoicing is not irreverence, but

an honour to God when we are satisfied in him though all creature

comforts and means of subsistence are blasted ; and we show that we

have comfort enough in God, that is out of the reach of trouble, and

this can support us when all things beneath God fail : Job v. 22,

\* At destruction and famine shalt thou laugh.' Stupidity and carnal

mirth are very unseasonable, but to live above the creature and with-

out the creature is an high point of faith and love to God ; and to

rejoice in him when all outward causes of rejoicing cease, is so far from

being a sin, that it is an eminent duty. Our better part and happiness

is out of the reach of trouble, though it be never so grievous.

[2.] We must distinguish between the sense of afiliction and sup-

port under it ; for we must neither slight it nor faint under it : Heb.

xii. 5, ' My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint

when thou art rebuked of him.' These are the two extremes. The

sense of our condition is necessary, that we may not slight the aflBic-

tion ; and the support, that we may not faint under it. Both may and

must stand together ; for in all worldly cases ' we must weep as if we

wept not,' 1 Cor. vii. 30 ; and again, ' Sorrow not as those without

hope,' 1 Thes. iv. 13, and so be without all comfort. In short, the

sense is necessary for improvement, the support to make trouble easy.

(1.) If we have not a sense, we cannot make a right use of our suf-

ferings and afflictions, but our hearts will be more hardened in sin.

God is their author, repentance is their end, and their cause is sin :

Lam. iii. 39, ' Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the

punishment of his sins ? ' And therefore, though we be not to droop

and languish under our afilictions, yet we must consider the righteous

providence of God ; and the smart of his displeasure must awaken us

to repentance, otherwise the affliction is frustrated, and you leave the

thorn in your foot, which caused your first pain and soreness. If you

do not repent of your sins, and no cure is wrought, if you still let out

your hearts freely to the world, and the prosperities and delights

thereof, this is the highway to security and carelessness of soul con-

cernments.

(2.) You must not faint and despair, as if all joy and comfort in

God were lost. For —

(Ist.) We are not utterly undone as long as we have God for our

portion: Lam. iii. 24, 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, there-

fore will I hope in him.' Though the creature be blasted, he is alive

still, and should be the joy and delight of our souls ; for then we are

tried, whether he be so or no.

(2d.) God is a loving Father when he corrects. Our chastisements

are effects not only of his justice, but mercy ; it is a rod in the hand of

our Father wherewith we are scourged: John xviii. 11, 'The cup

SERMONS UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 16. 481

■vvliich my Fatlier hath given me, shall I not drink it ? ' and so it is an

act of love and kindness to us.

(3d) Our Father hath mercy enough to turn it to our benefit :

Heb. xii. 10, ' They verily for a few days chastened us after their own

pleasure, but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holi-

ness.' And shall we mourn for that which is for our benefit? If we

rejoice in God and holiness it will not be so. If God will stir us up to

more humility, contempt of the world, confidence in himself, and to

place our delight in him alone, shall we be dejected and displeased, as

if some great wrong had been done us ?

(4^7i.) If this afffiction fits us for everlasting happiness, there is cause

of joy still left : 2 Cor. iv. 17, ' For our light affliction, which is but

for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight

of glory.' One that must have eternal glory, and eternal glory pro-

moted by such a means, should not grudge at a little suffering and

affliction, which is the common burden of the sons of Adam.

2. Prejudice. Christ hath pronounced those blessed that mourn for

sin : Mat. v. 4, ' Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be com-

forted ; ' how then can we rejoice evermore ?

Ans. 1. Mourning for sin is necessary to cure our vain rejoicing, or

delight in carnal vanities ; and at our entrance into Christianity this is

a duty highly incumbent upon us, because of sin and the curse which

we naturally lie under. Certainly while we are out of Christ we have

nothing to comfort us, nothing to answer to the terrors of the law, or

to reply against the accusations of conscience, and the fears of ap-

proaching misery and judgment; and what should we do, if we be

sensible of it, but bemoan ourselves, and seek after God with weeping

and supplications ? God's first work in conversion is to put men out

of their fool's paradise, who are satisfied with the creature without

himself. Therefore humiliation and a broken-hearted sense of misery

is required to deaden the relish and taste of sin, and that men may

more prize jmd esteem the healing grace of Christ, and set more by it

than all the pleasures, and riches, and honours of the world. Can a

man see himself lost, and in danger of condemnation, and not be

grieved ? But all this while joy is in the making, and we are pro-

viding everlasting comfort for ourselves ; for God is ready to ease us

as soon as our need requireth and our care will permit : Isa. Ivii. 15-17,

'For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,

whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him

also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the

humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not

contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth ; for the spirit shall

fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of

his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him ; I hid me, and was wroth,

and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.' And he saith after-

wards, ver. 18, ' I have seen his ways, and will heal him : I will lead

him also, and restore comfort to him, and to his mourners.' The Lord

is ready to come in with sweet and heavenly cordials when the phjsic

•worketh but a little kindly : Jer, xxxi. 18-20, ' I have surely heard

Ephraim bemoaning himself thus ; Thou hast chastised me. and I was

chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke ; turn thca me, and I

VOL. 2YIT. 2 H

482 SERMONS UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 16.

shall be turned, for thou art the Lord in}' God. Surely after that I was

turned, I repented, and after that I was instructed, I smote upon the thigh ,

I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of

my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son ? is he a pleasant child ? for since I

spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still ; therefore my

bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy on him, saith!

the Lord.^ Well, then, this sorrow may be well allowed, because it pre-

vents greater sorrow, namely, the pains of hell. It is better to mourn

for a while than for ever ; better to have healing grief than tormenting

grief; to mourn now, while mourning will do us good, than to howl

at last, when all sorrow will be fruitless, and only a part of our pun-

ishment, not of our cure. And besides, this sorrow maketh for com-

fort : Mat. v. 4, ' Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be

comforted.' When the shower is fallen, the sun cleareth up, and

shineth in his full strength and beauty. The vain rejoicing being

deadened, we have grounds of everlasting joy, by considering the

means God hath appointed for our deliverance from sin, and death,

and the flames of hell.

Ans. 2. Mourning for sin and joy in the Lord may stand well

together ; for grace and grace are not contrary, but grace and sin.

Those who most mourn for sin do most rejoice in the Lord, and those

who most rejoice in the Lord do most mourn for sin ; as that christian

Niobe wept much because she loved much ; and ' she loved much,

because much was forgiven her,' Luke vii. 47. As many times the

sun shineth when the rain falleth, so there is a mixture of spiritual

rejoicing and holy mourning ; a deep sense of God's love, and yet a

mourning because of the relics of corruption. Well, then, carnal

rejoicing is opposite to holy mourning, but not joy in the Lord, there-

fore these two must be mixed. Sorrow is a servant to faith, and love,

and joy in the Holy Ghost ; and joy and thankfulness for the mercy

of God in Christ is an help to godly sorrow : the one serves to mortify

sin, the other to strengthen grace. None are so displeased with them-

selves for offending so good a God as those that have tasted how good

and gracious the Lord is. But more thoroughly to reconcile this holy

mixture to your thoughts, take these considerations —

[1.] Godly sorrow is better than all the pleasures of sin : 2 Cor.

vii. 10, 'For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be

repented of.' Many have repented of their vain pleasures or of their

carnal mirth, but never any repented of their godly sorrow. Many

have cursed the day of their birth, but never any cursed the day of

their new birth. Whoever had any loathsome remembrance of those

hours which they spent in reconciling themselves to God, though it

were done with grief and bitterness of spirit ? Oh ! the remem-

brance of that happy time is ever sweet and grateful to them !

[2.] That mourning for sin containeth in itself the matter of joy is

evident, because a poor christian is glad when his heart can melt for

ain. A day of serious and sound humiliation is more to him than all

carnal pleasures whatsoever ; he would not exchange the comfort that

he find^th in his penitent tears for all the mirth in the world. He

findeth tLis helpeth to mortify sin, which would mar his rejoicing in

God ; it helpeth him to value Christ and taste the sweetness of his

SERMONS UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 16. \* 48S

love ; they are more glad of that measure of grace received than if

they were masters and rulers of the world. To be affected with the

dishonour done to God is included in their love and esteem of him,

and iioweth from their dehght in him,

[3.] Though they groan under the relics of sin, yet they are glad they

are but relics ; that they are in any measure gotten out of their former

estate is a comfort, though that they are gotten no further be a grief

to them. The mourning christian would not change estates with the

best and greatest of ungodly men, which showeth there is some solid

complacency and delight in their present condition, though not that

full joy which they shall have in heaven, when sin shall be no more.

Joy is not perfect till holiness be perfect, yet there is joy still, though

it be not perfect joy. Here there is gaudium ineffahile cum suspiriis

inenarrabilihus, a joy mixed with sorrow ; groans unutterable, and joys

unspeakable and glorious.

Secondly, Having removed the prejudices, let me now persuade

you to rejoice evermore by the two arguments of necessity and utility.

1. The necessity of it.

[1.] That you may own God as your God ; delighting in God is a

duty of the first commandment : ' Thou shalt have no other gods

before me ; ' that is, rejoice in no other, but in me only, as thy full and

all-sufficient portion and happiness; and therefore it is a part, not of

instituted, but of natural worship, such worship which we are to give

God, though he had never given direction about it, which immediately

resulteth from the owning and choosing of God for our God ; for if

God be not loved and delighted in more than anything, or all things

else, he is not our God. ]!^ow, then, is there not a necessity, if you

would worship God as God, that you should rejoice evermore, and

delight in him as sufficient to your happiness, whether the world

cometh or goeth, whether your creature comforts and relations con-

tinue with you or be taken from you ? God still must be the heart's

delight and your exceeding joy : Ps. xxxvii. 4, ' Delight thyself also

in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.'

[2.] The necessity appeareth by this, how can you be thankful, and

prize and value those blessings which you have from God by Christ,

unless you rejoice evermore, whatever your condition be in the world ?

Surely Christ when received must be received with all love and thank-

fulness, else you do not know the worth and value of his grace ; and

this esteem is never so much shown in words as in deeds, when you can

delight in him more than all things else : Ps. iv. 7, ' Thou hast put

gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their

wine increased.' Delight in him so as to lose all for him : Phil. iii. 8,

' For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them

but dung that I may win Christ ; ' Heb. x. 34, ' And took joyfully the

spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven

a better and an enduring substance.' And you can esteem a naked

Christ ground enough of comfort, though you be stripped of all things.

The heart is not sound with Christ, till we be so taken up with the love

and praise of our Eedeemer that we have scarce leisure to observe

whether we be rich or poor, or to regard the honours and dishonours

of the world.

484 SERMONS UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 16.

[3.] How can you profess to follow the conduct of that Holy Sph-it

who hath undertaken to be your comforter, unless your solid delight

and comfort be in God and heaven ? I know the Spirit is not so

necessarily a comforter as he is a sanctifier ; but I speak of that dis-

position of soul which belongeth both to his sanctifying as well as his

comforting operation, and is necessary to grace ; and that is to place

your happiness not in this world, but in God and heaven, and so to

place it there as that this may be a support to you in poverty and dis-

grace and pain, that nothing may be able to overcome your joy : John

xvi. 22, ' Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from

you.' Surely this is a necessary work of the sanctifying Spirit, to

teach you to fix your comforts there, where they may be out of the

reach of the world, that you may have everlasting grounds of delight,

whatever man can do unto you.

2. The utility of it, both with respect to our spiritual benefit and

profit, and our acceptance with God.

[1.] With respect to the temper and frame of our own hearts, or

our spiritual benefit. There are two parts of regeneration, mortifica-

tion and vivification ; and this rejoicing evermore promoteth both of

them.

(1.) As to mortification. It is most profitable to wean us from

carnal vanities. The love of sensitive delights is the root of sin ; some

carnal lure there is, which enticeth and draweth us away from God :

James i. 14, ' But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his

own lust and enticed.' This carnal favour is our undoing ; pleasure

being born and bred with us, and deeply ingrained in our natures, is

hardly removed ; yet if it should be cherished, it would wholly fasten

our souls to earthly things, to riches, pleasures, and honours. Now

that we may not be deceived ajid inveigled with the delights of the

flesh, we should think of another joy, which may be continual and

perpetual, that so this higher joy may drive out the carnal joy, as a

greater nail driveth out the lesser. Man cannot be without some joy,

nor can delight lie idle in the soul ; it must be occupied and taken up

either with the delights of the flesh, and the toys and trifles of the

world, or acted upon God and heavenly things. The brutish part of

mankind employ their oblectation about trifles, and love pleasures more

than God ; but the renewed part make God their exceeding joy, and

favour the things of the Spirit : Kom. viii. 5, ' They that are after the

flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit,

the things of the Sphit.' These latter employ their oblectation aright,

and being acquainted with better things, the carnal gust dieth away in

them by degrees ; as men left off the use of acorns when they found

out the use of wheat or bread-corn, or as dainty fare maketh us de-

spise coarser viands. When our dehght findeth a better object, it is a

great check to those dreggy contentments and petty satisfactions which

obtrude themselves upon our senses at every turn ; the taste of them

is marred, they become sapless to a christian who hath higher and

chaster delights. Every life hath its taste, and every man's joy is in

worldly vanities, or in God, and other things as they have respect to

God. He that is acquainted with God and hidden manna cannot

relish the garlic and onions and flesh-pots of Egypt : ' We will be glad,

SERMONS UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 16. 485

and rejoice in tliee ; we will remember thy love more than wine,'

Cant. i. 4. So that you see it is a great help to mortification to

rejoice evermore in God. Delight puts out delight, as the sun doth

the fire.

(2.) As to vivification. It quickenetli us to the life of holiness ;

'The joy of the Lord is your strength/ i^eh. viii. 10. There is a

natural dulness and deadness in holy duties which we find in ourselves,

which is only cured by delight in Gixl, which is as oil to the wheels.

Everything goeth on easily and smoothly which is carried on with joy

and dehght ; that maketh us yield to duties which otherwise would

be tedious and irksome to us. Shechem yielded to be cii'cumcised for

the delight which he had in Dinah, Gen. xxxiv. 19 ; so the apostle

saith, ' But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear

unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy/ Acts xx. 24.

Whatever is done without delight is ingrate and harsh ; the mortifying

of a lust is like the cutting ofi" an arm with a rusty saw ; the perform-

ing of a duty like the bringing of a bear to the stake. Delight

sweetens things, and puts a litie into them. Obedience is done readily,

when it is done out of a thankful and delightful sense of our Eedeemer's

love : Ps. xl. 8, ' I delight to do thy will, my God ; yea, thy law is

in my heart.' So 1 John v. 3, ' For this is the love of God, that we

keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.'

Well, then, this joy is very profitable, both as to mortification and

vivification ; it is a joy that maketli us better. Carnal joy maketh us

worse ; it filleth the minds with vanity and folly, and bringeth a

slavery upon the heart : Titus ii. 3, ' Serving divers lusts and pleasures ; '

but this delight doth not corrupt you, but perfect you.

[2.] With respect to God's acceptance. This rejoicing evermore is

more honourable to God, and more pleasing to God.

(1.) It is more honourable to God to rejoice in him evermore, as a

cheerful servant is a credit to his master. We show forth the goodnes.s

of God by the joy of our faith and continual delight in Goil, however

it be with us in the world. God standeth upon his credit that he

doth not weary his people : Micah vi. 3, ' my people ! what have I

done unto thee ? and wherein have I wearied thee ? testify against;

me.' He is not a rigorous and an hard master, but every way good

and kind. The Thessalonians that received the word in much afflic-

tion, with joy of the Holy Ghost, were ensamples of all that believed

in Macedonia and Achaia, and from them sounded out the word of

God to others, 1 Thes. i. 6-8. These propagate their profession, and

recommend it to others. Surely God is a good master; he hath

made joy both our work and our wages, our way and our end. What

is our great end and hope but ' to enter into our Master's joy ? ' Am)

what is our constant business and work but to ' rejoice evermore ? "

Why then should we dishonour God by our uncheerfulness, and jiTstify

the prejudices of the world, who draw an ill picture of religion in their

minds, as if it always looked sour, and with a tormenting and discon-

tented look ?

(2.) It is most pleasing to God, the life that he is best pleased withal

God, that loveth a cheerful giver, loveth a cheerful sufierer, a cheerful

practiser of godliness. Men love a thing done cheerfully, because it

486 SERMONS UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 16.

betokeneth love in tlie party that doeth it. Surely this rejoicing ever-

more is very pleasing to God, because he doth so often call for it : Ps.

xxxvii. 4, 'Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the

desire of thy heart ; ' Phil. iv. 4, ' Eejoice in the Lord always, and

again I say, Eejoice ; ' Ps. Ixviii. 3, ' Let the righteous be glad, let

them rejoice before God ; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice ; ' and in

many other places. Surely that which God calleth for so often and so

earnestly should be more cared for by a christian. Be sure of this,

that a cheerful spirit is more pleasing to God than a troubled, discon-

tented spirit. When Isaac longed for savoury meat, such as his soul

delighted in, a profane Esau taketh his bow to get it for him. When

God hath told us how much this is pleasing to him, should we not

make more conscience of it ?

Thirdly, I must direct you how to perform this great and necessary

duty.

1. Be prepared for it. The precept belongeth to the renewed and

reconciled : Ps. xxxi. 1, ' Eejoice in the Lord, ye righteous ; for praise

is comely for the upright.' Delight is not forced by arguments, but

drawn forth by inclination ; therefore till we have a nature and heart

suited to it, we shall never perform it. Canticicm novum, et vetus

homo male concordant — The new song and the old man do not well

agree. Well, then, be prepared. It is easy to rejoice after a natural

and worldly manner, but not easy to rejoice in the Lord. We are

never prepared till our state be altered, heart altered, and life altered.

[1.] Our state must be altered. For naturally we are children of

wrath, condemned by the sentence of the law, and under the curse ;

ind doth it become condemned men to rejoice, and go to their execu-

tion dancing ? No ; you must take hold of another covenant, the hope

that is set before you, and then you provide matter of joy, yea, of

\* strong consolation,' Heb. vi. 18. By taking sanctuary at the Lord's

grace, the heirs of promise have strong consolation. When the eunuch

was solemnly admitted into God's covenant by baptism, ' He went on

his way rejoicing,' Acts viii. 39. By repentance towards God, and

faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we enter into the new covenant, and

that is a state of peace, life, and joy. In the new covenant God offers

himself to be your reconciled Father, Christ your Saviour, and the Holy

Ghost your sanctifier ; are you willing to consent to this ? And then,

why should not you rejoice in the Lord ? for you have enough in

God.

[2.] Our hearts must be altered ; for every man's relish and com-

placency is according to the temper and constitution of his soul : Eom.

viii. 5, ' They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh,

but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.' Know his

complacency, what it is that a man is pleased with most, and you know

the man. An old corrupted heart and mind cannot delight itself in

God : 1 Cor. ii. 14, ' But the natural man receiveth not the things of

the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he

know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' But those that

have a divine nature put into them cannot satisfy themselves in the

world : 2 Peter i. 4, \* Ye may be partakers of the divine nature, hav-

ing escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.' They

SERMONS rPOX I THESSALONIANS V. 16. 487

can easily spare the pleasures of tlie flesh, and leave these husks for

s\vine to feed on. A change of heart inferreth a change of delights

and pleasures ; for the new heart is nothing else but new desires and

delights ; when vou have a new understanding and a new heart, then

you will discern and relish spiritual things.

[3.] The life must be altered. For holy walking and fruitfulness

in obedience raiseth the greatest joy : John xv. 10, 11, ' If ye keep my

commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my

Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have

1 spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your

joy might be full ;' Acts ix. 31, ' Walking in the fear of the Lord, and

in the comfort of the Holy Ghost.' The godly life is the only sweet life :

2 Cor. i. 12, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience,

that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by

the grace of God, we had our conversation in the world.' If you will

but learn what it is to live in the love of God, and the belief and hope

of life eternal, and in universal obedience to the laws of Christ, you

will soon see what it is to live in a state of joy and comfort. If you

fall into great and wounding sins, no wonder if your rejoicing in God

be disturbed. Surely a tender heart cannot make light of sin, but it

will cost them broken bones and broken hearts.

2. Act it continually. Partly for that the grounds of rejoicing are

everlasting, an eternal God, an unchangeable covenant, Jesus Christ,

the same yesterday and to-day and for ever ; a kingdom that cannot

be shaken, an infinite and eternal weight of glory. jS'ow these things

should ever be thought of by us, that we may keep up our delight in

the Lord. Partly because we need it continually to enliven our duties,

to sweeten our crosses, and to wean us from our carnal vanities ; for

otherwise our duties will go off heavily, our crosses will swallow us up

with too much sorrow, or our hearts will be apt to be ensnared by

sensual delights, unless we remember that we are continually to rejoice

in God and heavenly things. Partly because this delight cannot be

maintained in the soul unless it be continually exercised; by constant

acting it we keep it, and increase it, till at length it cometli to be pre-

dominant in the soul, and able to control our affection to other things.

It is said of John tlie Baptist's hearers that ' they were willing to

rejoice in his light for a season,' John v. 35 ; and of the stony ground,

Luke viii. 13, ' That they received the word with joy, and believed for

a while, but in time of temptation fall away.' Herod heard John the

Baptist gladly for a while, Mark vi. 20. God's offering eternal happi-

ness in Christ may aflect us for the present, but this rejoicing faileth,

being over-mastered by the appetites and desires of the flesh. There-

fore to root it and increase it, that it may be firm to the end, it must

be continually acted and exercised.

3. Take heed you do not forfeit it, or damp it by any great and

wounding sin. As David speaketh, Ps. li. 8, ' Make me to hear joy

and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.'

Sin cloudeth the face of God, wasteth our comfort and joy : Ps. xxxiL

3, 4, ' When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring

all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me ;

my moisture is turned into the drought of summer ;' Eph. iv. 30, ' And

488 SERMONS UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 16.

grieve not tlie Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemp-

tion/ When the Comforter is offended, he showeth his dislike, and

withdraweth when we grossly omit any known duty or commit any

foul sin ; he will show himself displeased with it, and withdraw his

gracious and comfortable presence : Isa. Ivii. 17, ' For the iniquity of

his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him ; I hid me, and was

wroth.' On such occasions he is wroth and smiteth ; he is wroth, and

hideth himself, and then our comfort and delight in God ceaseth.

Therefore we should deal more dutifully with the Spirit, neither

grieving him by the omission or intermission of necessary duties,

nor by the commission of any hardening sin, by some error of the con-

cupiscible or pursuing faculty, or the irascible or eschewing faculty ; by

sins of the tongue, which most easily bewray corruption, for words

discover the temper of the heart. I observe that ' grieving the Spirit,'

Eph. iv. 30, is put in the middle between a dissuasive from corrupt

communication, ver. 29, ' Let no corrupt communication proceed out

of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying.' When

men endeavour to make themselves glad by carnal discourse, which

argueth an heart set for carnal delights, and is contrary to rejoicing in

the Lord : Eph. v. 4, ' Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jest-

ing, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks ; ' and on

the other side, ver. 31, ' Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and

clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you.' By discontent,

impetuous rage, passionate commotions, contumelious speeches, envy,

revenge, we hinder our joy in the Lord. Now all this must be

carefully avoided, lest we contract deadness and numbness of con-

science.

4. If by sin you have wounded your conscience, and brought smart

and mourning upon yourselves, abide not in that estate, but humble

yourselves ; renewing your repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus

Christ, suing out your pardon, and getting your wounds healed. Beg

of God to restore the joy of his salvation, that your broken hearts may

be revived, and your broken bones restored and set in joint again : Ps.

li. 8, ' Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou

hast broken may rejoice ; ' and ver. 12, ' Eestore unto nie the joy of thy

salvation.' Never rest till you come again to delight in God, with an

hearty resolution not to break with God any more : Ps. li. 6, ' Behold,

thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou

shalt make me to know wisdom ; ' Ps. Ixxxv. 8. ' I will hear what God

the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace unto his people, and to

his saints ; but let them not turn again to folly.' \_ God is ready to

receive lapsed penitents, that are sensible of their errors, and are

willing to return to their duty : Ps. xxxii. 5, ' I acknowledged my sin

unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid ; I said, I will confess my

transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my

sin;' Isa. Ivii. 17, 18, Tor the iniquity of his covetousness was I

wroth, and smote him ; I hid me, and was wroth ; and he went on

frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will

heal him, I will lead him also, and restore comfort to him, and to his

mourners.' Your case is sad and grievous, but not desperate and

SERMO^-S UPOX I THESSALOXIAXS Y. 16. 48 9

bopeless ; you may have comfort upon God's terms, mournincr for sin

that sin may be made bitter to you, and you may not hazSrd your

peace for trifles another time; and putting yom- business into the

bands of your Eedeemer, the advocate must make your peace for vou '

T nu'- : i ^°-T ™'''' ^'°' ^^ ^^^® a^ advocate with the Father'

Jesus Christ the righteous.' \*

SEEMON UPON 1 THESSALONIANS V. 17.

Fray loitJiout ceasing. — 1 Thes. v. 17.

In the words we have — (1.) A duty, pray ; (2.) The continuance of

the duty, always, aStaXeYTrrco? ; from both observe —

Boct That constant and frequent prayer to God is a duty required

<5f christians.

In handHng this doctrine I shall show —

(1.) What prayer is ; (2.) How it is to be carried on without ceas-

ing ; (3.) The reasons of the doctrine.

I. What prayer is ; and here I shall speak — (1.) Of the nature of

prayer ; (2.) Of the several kinds of it.

First, For the nature of prayer. ' Prayer is the offering up of our

desires to God, in the name of Christ, for such things as are agreeable

to his will'

1. It is an offering up of our desires. Desires are the soul and life

of prayer, words are but the body. Now as the body without the soul

is dead, so are prayers unless they are animated with our desires : Ps.

X. 17, \* Lord, thou ha«t heard the desire of the humble.' God heareth

not words, but desires.

2. These desires are offered unto God, or brought before the Lord

in this solemn way : Zeph. iii. 10, ' My suppliants, even the daughters

of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering ; ' that is, shall reverently

express their desires to God. An offering was either a sacrifice, and

prayer is a spiritual sacrifice : 1 Peter ii. 5, ' Ye are an holy priest-

hood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.'

As a man did then present himself and his offering before the Lord,

so do we present ourselves and our desires, and pour out our hearts

before him. Or an offering might be the mincah, or meat-offering,

which was baked or fried in a pan, and then presented to the Lord :

Ps. xlv. 1, 'My heart inditeth a good matter;' not raw indigested

services must be performed to God, such as are the eructations of the

flesh ; or incense was offered to the Lord : ' Let my prayer be set before

thee as incense,' Ps, cxli. 2. And we read of ' Vials full of odours,

which are the prayers of the saints,' Kev. v. 8. Incense was a mixture

of sweet spices, which, being set on fire, the fumes thereof ascended

into heaven ; so do our holy and ardent desires ascend unto God.

3. They are desires presented in the name of Christ, in whom

alone we are acceptable to God : John xvi. 23, ' Whatsoever ye shall

ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.'

492 SERMON UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 17.

4. They are desires of things agreeable to the will of God : 1 John

V. 14, ' And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask

anything according to his will, he heareth us.' All our desires must

be regulated by his revealed will, and subordinated to his secret will,

so far as God seeth it fit for his glory and our good ; for upon other

terms he is not bound to us.

Secondly, The kinds of prayer, so there are sundry distinctions.

1. There is mental prayer : Exod. xiv. 15, ' Wherefore criest thou

unto me ? ' ]\Ioses cried unto the Lord, and yet no words are men-

tioned. And vocal prayer : Ps. v. 3, ' My voice shalt thou hear in the

morning, Lord ; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee,

and will look up.' When prayers are put into language, or formalised

into some outward expression. Again —

2. "There is sudden and ejaculatory prayer ; as Neh. ii. 4, ' The king

said unto me, For what dost thou make request ? so I prayed unto the

God of heaven.' That is, some sudden dart of prayer, such as, 'Prosper,

I pray, thy servant ; ' lifting up his heart in a sudden desire to God,

to direct or give success to his petition. And solemn prayer, and of

greater length : Eom. xv. 30, ' That ye strive together with me in your

prayers to God for me ; ' which words imply a prayer full of earnest

I^leadings.

3. There are public or church prayers: 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 'I exhort

therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and

giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in

authority ; ' where he giveth directions how the prayers of their public

assemblies should be ordered. And private or family prayer: Acts

X. 2, Cornelius is said to be \* a devout man, and one that feared God

with all his house, and gave much alms to the people, and prayed to

God always ; ' that is, a man that worshij^ped God with his family, as

good men use to do. And it is said, 1 Chron. xvi. 43, that David,

after public services, ' returned to bless his house ; ' that is, to pray for

his family, as he had done for the people before. And secret and

closet prayer, concerning which Christ giveth direction: 'When thou

prayest, enter into thy closet,' Mat. vi. 6. Again —

4. There is ordinary and extraordinary prayer. Ordinary prayer is

performed upon ordinary causes, such as daily necessities : Ps. Iv. 17,

' Evening, and morning, and noon, will I pray, and cry aloud, and he

shall hear my voice.' Extraordinary prayer is upon special weighty

occasions, which requireth more than ordinary continuance of time and

afiection : Joel i. 14, ' Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather

the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the

Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord.' Now all these kinds of prayer

are to be made conscience of, and none to be neglected ; and in none

of these cases must we cease to pray when God requireth it at our

hands.

II. What it is to pray without ceasing. This needeth to be ex-

plained, because some strain it too far, others straiten it too much ;

and we must state the matter so as to avoid the extremes on both

sides.

First, One extreme is that of the ancient Euchites, and because

they seem to be befriended by the letter of the text, we must clear the

SERMON UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 17. 493

matter a little. Their senseless error was, as if the act of prayer were

never to be discontinued, and therefore they omitted all other duties,

and would only pray.

Secondly, The other extreme is of those who keep not up a constant

frequent return of this duty. We must obviate both.

1. For those that would never intermit this exercise.

[1.] We must show them their error by explaining the word. A

thing is said to be done continually and without ceasing, which is done

at the constant times and seasons as often as they return. As David

told Amasa, 2 Sam. xix. 13, ' Thou shalt be captain of the host before

me continually ; ' that is, as often as the army was led forth ; so 2 Sam.

ix. 12, ' Mephibosheth did eat bread at the king's table continually ;'

that is, at the constant stated times of eating. So Eom. ix. 2, ' I have

great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart ; ' that is, as often

as he thought of them. So also is the word ' without ceasing ' used,

1 Thes. ii. 13, 'For this cause we thank God without ceasing; ' that is,

as often as he was with God. So 2 Tim. i. 3, ' Without ceasing I

have remembrance of thee in my prayers, night and day ; ' that is,

evening and morning, as often as he went to God.

[2.] The matter may bear a good sense if you interpret the apostle's

direction either —

(1.) Of the habit of prayer, or the praying temper ; that frame of

spirit or affection which is fit for prayer must never be lost : Ps. civ.

9, ' But I give myself unto prayer.' In the original there is no more

\* but I prayer,' as if he were wholly made up of prayer and supplica-

tion ; this was the work he was given to, or most intent upon.

(2.) It may be interpreted of a vital prayer. All duties may be

resolved into prayer and praise. Now as the life of a christian is a life

of love and praise, a kind of confession or hymn to God, so in other

respects it is a prayer. Semper oral, qui semper bene agit ; he that

liveth in a constant obedience to God and dependence upon him, doth

in effect always pray to him. Now thus doth a christian, both as to

life natural and spiritual : Ps. xxv. 5, ' On thee do I wait all the day.'

Every minute we depend upon him for the direction and support of

his Holy Spirit. So Prov. xxiii. 27, ' Be thou in the fear of the Lord

all the day long.' He liveth in an awful regard, loath to displease

God because all cometh from him. Now this is virtually a prayer,

because he still elevateth his thoughts and desires towards him, and

iooketh for all from God.

(3.) This praying without ceasing may be interpreted of our con-

tinuance in the duty, till we obtain the ends of prayer ; and that some

competent time is to be spent in it. Prayer is the lifting up of the

heart, or the offering of our desires to God in some affectionate manner.

In extraordinary occasions the time may be longer ; as Christ spent

whole nights in prayer : Luke vi. 12, ' He went out into a mountain

to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God,' On ordinary

occasions the time may be shorter, but the general direction is, con-

tinue in prayer : Eom. xii. 12, ' Continue instant in prayer.' A short

good-morrow is too slight a compliment for the great God ; such inter-

parlance with him is necessary as may warm the heart and serve the

ends of prayer.

494 SERMON UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 17.

(4.) Praying without ceasing may express our perseverance in prayer

without fainting : Luke xviii. 1, ' He spake a parable unto them to this

end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint ; ' when we will

not let God alone until he bless us. We must not yield to despon-

dency, though we be not heard presently, but let us pray the more

earnestly, though the prayer seemeth to be checked and contradicted

by God's providence, as the woman of Canaan gets ground by dis-

couragements, Mat. XV. 22-28. We must reiterate our petitions for

one and the same thing till it be granted ; as Paul prayed thrice : 2

Cor. xii. 8, ' For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might

depart from me.' A seeming repulse and denial maketh us the more,

vehement ; for the language of God's rebukes is, not to pray no more,

but pray on still ; it is yielding to a temptation to desist.

(5.) This praying without ceasing is to be interpreted of the univer-

sality and the frequency of the return of the occasions and opportunities

of prayer ; and we may be said to do that without ceasing which we

do very often. So that though the act of prayer be intermitted, the

course of prayer should not be interrupted ; for we are to pray at all

times, in all conditions, and in all businesses and affairs.

{1st.) At all times, never omitting the seasons of prayer, stated or

occasional. There are stated times of prayer; something must be

done every day. Thus our Lord directeth us to pray : Mat. vi. 11,

' Give us arjfxepov, this day our daily bread.' Though it be mentioned

but in one petition, yet it referreth to all the rest. We need daily

bread, daily pardon, daily strength against temptations. Yea, there

seemeth to be a double standing occasion ; every day in the morning

for direction, in the evening for protection ; as God appointed a

morning and evening sacrifice : Num. xxviii. 4, ' The one lamb shalt

thou offer in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at even.'

If any be contentious, let me tell you, it is an ill spirit that doth dispute

away duties rather than practise them. So there are occasional times

when God by his providence inviteth us to it, as by some special afflic-

tion : Ps. 1. 15, ' Call upon me in the day of trouble,' or some business

in hand, wherein we are to ask his leave, counsel, and blessing : Ezra,

viii. 21, 'Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river Ahava, that we

might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for

us and our little ones.'

(2d) In all estates and conditions, afflicted and prosperous. In an

adverse or afflicted estate : James v. 13, ' Is any among you afflicted ?

let him pray.' That gives vent to our sorrow, and turneth it into a

spiritual channel. In a prosperous estate we are to pray that we may

not forget God. Carnal men never come to him but when they have

extreme need of him : Jer. ii. 27, ' But in the time of their trouble

they will sa}'. Arise, and save us.' That our hearts may not be cor-

rupted, but our joortion sanctified to us, for everything is ' sanctified by

the word of God and prayer,' 1 Tim. iv. 5. Thus God must hear

from us, sick and sound, in pain and well at ease, whether we are

abased or abound.

(3d) In every business, civil or sacred; 'In all thy ways acknow-

ledge him, and "he shall direct thy paths,' Prov. iii. 6. In business

secular. Abraham's servant beggeth success in his errand : Gen. xxiv/

SERMON UPON I THESSALO^^ANS V. 17. 495

12, ' Lord God of my master Abraham ! I pray thee send me good-

speed this day.' In matters sacred : 2 Thes. iii. 5, ' The Lord direct

yonr heart into the love of Grod.' So that a serious sensible christian

seldom wanteth an errand to the throne of grace, and if we be not

strangers to ourselves, we cannot be strangers to God.

2. To the other extreme we now come, when men are rare and un-

frequent with God, upon the pretence that they are not bound to pray

always, and the time of duty is not exactly stated in the New Testa-

ment. To these we oppose other considerations.

[1.] Though there be not an express rule particularly set down how

often we should be with God, yet duties are required in the strictest

and most comprehensive terms, and God's expressions about them are

very large. For here God saith, ' Pray without ceasing ; ' and Eph.

vi. IS, ' Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,

and watching thereunto with all perseverance." So Col. iv. 2, ' Con-

tinue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.' So Ps.

Ixii. S, ' Trust in the Lord at all times, ye people ; pour out your hearts

before him.' So Luke xxi. 36, ' Watch ye, therefore, and pray always.'

So that here is no gap opened to loose and vain spirits to countenance

them in their neglect of God. The scriptures rather speak over than

under. Nature is apt to encroach upon grace, as the sea upon the

banks, and sloth and strangeness to God will soon creep upon us ;

therefore the crooked stick is bent the other way. Eather pray always

than be always in the world, and always in pleasures ; at least take the

due occasions. Though these expressions be not to be understood as

if we should do nothing else but pray, yet they imply frequency in this

duty, at all times when opportunity calleth for it.

[2.] The examples of the saints should move us. David prayed

three times a day, at morning, noon, and night : Ps. Iv. 17, ' Evening

and morning and noon will I pray, and cry aloud.' So did Daniel,

and would not omit it in times of persecution : Dan. vi. 10, ' Now when

Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and

his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled

upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before

his God, as he did afore time.' Now, though every one's necessities,

abilities, or condition of life will not permit him to do so much, yet in

the general we must conclude from thence that we miTst be constant

in our daily worship and attendance upon God.

[3.] The ceasing of the daily sacrifice was accounted to be a great

part of the misery occasioned by the abomination of desolation: Dan.

ix. 27, ' And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and

the oblation to cease, and for the over-spreading of abominations he

shall make it desolate, even until the ci'osummation, and that deter-

mined, shall be poured upon the desolate.'

[4.] Now God trusts love, and would not particularly define the

times of our duty and immediate converse with him, surely we should

be more open-hearted and hberal to him. God expecteth much from

a willing people : Ps. ex. 3. ' Thy people shall be willing in the day of

thy power.' Our attendance upon God shoidd be rather more than

less, since it is left to our choice.

[5.] God himself was angry with his people, and complaineth of

496 SERMON UrON I THESSALONIANS V. 17.

their neglect of him : Jer. ii. 32, ' My people have forgotten me days

without number.' Time out of mind, as we say in an English

phrase, have I not heard from them. Now these considerations show

this expression should not be too much straitened.

III. The reasons why constant and frequent prayer is our duty.

1. With respect to God, that we may acknowledge his being and

sovereignty over us and all events that concern us and ours.

[1.] We acknowledge his being in prayer, for, ' He that cometh to

God must believe that he is,' Heb. xi. 6. Men of all religions call

upon that which they think to be God ; as in the storm, the pagan

mariners ' cried every man unto his god,' Jonah i. 5. Men take their

god to be their sure refuge in all their troubles, distractions, and

fears. Now the people of God know him by experience to be the only

true God that heareth prayer, therefore they own him as such : Ps.

Ixv. 2, ' thou that hearest prayer ! unto thee shall all flesh come.'

Now this owning of God must not be done in a few rare and disused

prayers, but in a constancy of prayer, that we may often call to mind

his being and attributes. It is a sin not only to deny God, but to for-

get him : Ps. ix. 17, ' The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all

the nations that forget God.' We are apt to forget God, who is an

invisible being, though we have all things from him, and he be neces-

sary to us continually ; therefore we must often remember him, and

present ourselves before him, and inure ourselves to a reverence of his

majesty. God complaineth, Jer. ii. 32, ' My people have forgotten me

days without number.'

[2.] We acknowledge his supreme providence by taking all out of

his hands, and so are kept more humble and in a constant dependence.

We do not enjoy our mercies by chance or by good fortune, but by

the gift of his providence. That we may not be forgetful of this, God

will have us pray often, yea, thus solemnly take our daily bread out of

his hands : Mat. vi. 11, ' Give us this day our daily bread.' The bread

you eat is not your own, but God's ; you intrench upon his prerogative

when you use it without asking his leave.

2. With respect to the nature of prayer. It is the converse of a

loving soul with God, the nearest familiarity which a soul dwelling in

flesh can have with him. Now acts of friendship and communion

must not be rare and unfrequent, but constant and often, therefore

called an acquainting ourselves with God: Job xxii. 21, 'Acquaint

now thyself with him, and be at peace.' Acquaintance implieth fre-

quent commerce and intercourse. Men that often visit one another,

and meet together are acquainted. Prayer is a giving God a visit :

Isa. xxvi. 16, 'Lord, in trouble have they visited thee.' The keeping

up of this acquaintance is necessary both to our present comfort and

future acceptance.

[1.] For our present comfort, it giveth you boldness to come to God

in all your necessities and straits, if you daily wait upon him. Fre-

quency of converse begets familiarity, and familiarity begets confidence.

When God and you grow strange, you cannot come with that freedom

to ask his help as those that familiarly converse with him do : Eph.

iii. 12, 'In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence, by the

faith of him.' A child is not afraid to go to his father, nor a man

SERMON UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 17, 497

unto his friend, to pour out his complaint into his bosom ; nor a servant

of daily attendance to open his suit to his master ; they ' know his

name,' Ps. ix. 10, and are acquainted with him.

[2.] For our future acceptance : Lukexxi. 36, 'Watch 3'e, therefore,

and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these

things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man,'

viz., at his coming. They that are constant in prayer make up their

accounts with God daily, and so may with the better confidence attend

his coming. When you have been frequently with him, frequently

entertained by him and accepted with him, had your prayers heard

and desires granted, it is a great encouragement in the hour of death,

when you are to leave the world, and come immediately before him.

On the other side, for men to appear before a God whom they never

knew nor heartily loved, and with whom they were never acquainted

as to any intimate communion and converse, this is a sad case. Alas !

at the best it is to an unknown friend, but indeed it is to a certain

enemy. They never had experience of his kindness which they would

own, nor interest in his love, and now are forced into his presence

against their will. Alas ! how soon will the time come when men

would fain set about prayer, but it is too late. They have then neither

leisure nor skill to pray ; and the prayers they then make are not the

fruits of faith and love, but of despair and horror. They cry, Lord,

Lord ; but Christ saith, ' I know ye not ; ye are workers of iniquity.'

But on the other side, they are fitted for everlasting communion with

God who are acquainted with him already ; and when they come to be

translated, they do but change place, not company. Heaven is an

access to God, and the throne of grace is the porch of heaven. We

begin the heavenly life here by these frequent converses with God, and

our access to him now.

3. With respect to the new nature, or the temper and disposition

of the saints. Prayer is the cry of the new creature, a work natural

and kindly to the saints : Zech. xii. 10, ' I will pour upon the house

of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of

supplication.' A spirit of grace will soon break out into supplications,

and vent itself that way: Acts ix. 11, ' Behold, he prayeth;' Zeph.

iii. 9, 'I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all

call upon the name of the Lord, and serve him with one consent.' In

the margin it is a \* pure lip.' God's true children are carried to him

by a kind of natural motion, as light bodies move upward ; they are a

sort of men that are seeking after God : Ps. xxiv. 6, ' This is the

generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, Jacob ! Selah ! '

Therefore we should quite check and cross the bent and inclination of

the new nature, unless we be much in prayer and often with God.

4. With respect to the necessities of the saints. Our wants are

continual, as well in spiritual as in temporal things. That we need

daily bread is evident to sense, and that we need daily pardon and

daily strength against temptations should be as evident to faith. The

soul hath its necessities as well as the body ; yea, they are greater, and

of a more dangerous nature. Sometimes we lack wisdom, and who

shall give it us but God ? James i. 5, ' If any of you lack wisdom,

let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth

YOL. XVII. 2 I

498 SERMON UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 17.

not, and it shall be given him.' Sometimes we Inck strength, and that

is to be sought in prayer : Eph. iii. 10, ' Tliat he would grant you,

according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with all

might hy his Spirit in the inner man.' Sometimes we lack life and

quickening, and to whom should we go but to the life-making Spirit,

to him who quickeneth all things? In short, the throne of grace

was set up for a time of need, and therefore, when our necessities drive

us to it, we should not hang off: Heb. iv. 16, ' Let us therefore come

boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find

grace to help in time of need.' We always need to be delivered from

evil ; we always need to be established in good. Sometimes we need

a blessing on what we have, that our comforts may be sanctified to

us ; sometimes a blessing on what we do, that we may begin it and

end it in God. All our relations increase our necessities, so do all our

enjoyments ; new mercies occasion new necessities ; and in the variety

of our afflictions we have still somewhat to do with God. The receipt

of one mercy discovereth the need of another.

5. With respect to the utility and profit of it. It is endless to instance

in all things, I shall confine the discourse to spiritual profit, and there —

[1.] The three radical graces, faith, hope, and love, are acted and

increased in prayer: Jude 20, 21, ' But ye, beloved, building up your-

selves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep

yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercies of our Lord

Jesus Christ unto eternal life ! ' Mark there, praying in the Holy

Ghost is to be referred in common to them all, to building up your-

selves in your most holy faith, to keeping yourselves in the love of

God, to looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal

life. Surely frequent prayer keepeth every grace active, and more

ready than if it were seldom used.

(1.) For faith in this duty : the mysteries of our most holy faith are

reduced to practice ; even that great mystery of the trinity, and their

distinct personal operations ; we find the benefit of it in prayer : Eph.

ii. 18, 'For through him we both have an access, by one Spirit unto

the Father/ To tlie Father as an all-sufficient fountain of grace:

Gen. xvii. 1, 'I am the Almighty God' By Cln-ist, who hath pur-

chased leave, welcome, and audience : Heb. x. 19, ' By a new and

living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is

to say, his flesh.' And by the Spirit, who hath given us an heart to

come, inspiring us with holy motions, enlivening our affections : Rom.

viii. 26, ' Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities ; ' that we

may open our hearts to God. If prayer be prayer indeed, not a few

cold heartless words, then is faith solemnly acted.

(2.) Love is acted and increased in this duty, while we desire of

God all things in order to God, and show forth our hearty groans after

everything that will bring us nearer to himself; praying first for

God's love, then tlie grace of the Redeemer, and all other subordinate

blessings and helps as they relate thereunto. Yea, this very opening

our hearts to God is a solace to us, and the fruit and act of our delight

in him. Tlie groans of the Spirit are the immediate issues of love,

and come from a heart strongly bent to God and heavenly things.

As faith directeth us to God as the first cause, so love to the chief

SERMON UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 17. 499

end, the glory of God, and regulateth all our choices and desires by

it. The fruit of prayer increaseth love : Ps. cxvi 1, 2, ' I love the

Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications ; because

he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as

long as I Uve/

(3.) Hope is acted and increased by it, because in prayer this grace

is predominant, the certain and earnest expectation of the promised

glory. Our thoughts of heaven at other times are cold and heartless ;

here we enter into the holiest ; we beg heaven, and all things in order

to heaven, because we expect it from the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

There is desirous expectation in hopes, and prayer is but the expression

of our desires, and a certain expectation in hope ; so in prayer we

plead promises, and show the groimds of our trust, why we look and

wait for it, that God will preserve us, and bear our expenses to heaven.

[2.] The three duties pressed in this place are much promoted by

frequent prayer : 'Eejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, in every-

thing give thanks.'

(1.) ' Eejoice evermore.' "We cherish our rejoicing, or peace and

tranquillity of mind in all conditions, by frequent praying. This vent

and utterance easeth us of our burden. If anything troubleth us, we

go to God, who is able and willing to help us : Job xvi. 20, ' My

friends scorn me, but mine eye poureth out tears unto God.' It is our

comfort that there is a throne of grace before which to bring our com-

plaint. So Phil. iv. 6, 7, ' Be careful for nothing, but in everything

by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be

made known unto God, and the peace of God, which passeth aU under-

standing, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ'

' Be careful for nothing ' is parallel to ' rejoice evermore.' What help

have we to pray ? ' Let your requests be made known unto God ; ' and

the effect of prayer is ' the peace of God.' When the air is imprisoned

in the bowels and caverns of the earth, there are shakings and terrible

convulsions till it gets a vent ; so is the soul tossed and turmoiled with

many tormenting thoughts till we open our hearts to God. Hannah,

when she had prayed, ' went her way, and did eat, and her countenance

was no more sad,' 1 Sam. i. 18. Now should we not be frequent in

this duty, which will keep up our delight in God, and our tranquilhty

of mind in all conditions on the confidence of his all- sufficiency ?

(2.) 'Pray without ceasing.' The duty is promoted by the duty;

pray without ceasing and you will pray without ceasing. The way to

be fervent is to be frequent. A key that is seldom turned rusts in the

lock ; wells are the sweeter for the draining. We lose the habit of

prayer and fitness for prayer when we are seldom with God, and there

is such an intermission l)etween duties. The more we walk, the fitter

we shall be to walk ; and the more we pray, the fitter we shall be to

pray. They find so much sweetness in it that experiment it by practice,

that they cannot be without it. It is the strangers to prayer that

need to be persuaded- When we intermit this necessary work, we

lose our fitness. He that hath often prayed will pray : Ps. cxvL 2,

' Because he hath inclined his car unto me, therefore will I eall upon

him as long as I live.'

(3.) For the last duty, ' In everything give thanks.' They thijt

500 SERMON UrON- I THESSALONIANS V. 17.

pray often see all things come from God, and tliey return all to God

again ; they take it out of his hands, and. use it for his glor}^ Usually

what we win by prayer we wear witli thanksgiving. Others do not

and cannot observe providence as much as they do that pray often and.

upon all occasions look to God. Besides, prayer sweeteneth the mercy:

' For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition,

which I asked of him : therefore have I lent him to the Lord as

long as he liveth ; he shall be lent to the Lord,' 1 Sam. i. 27, 28.

[3.] It is useful to preserve in us a sense of our duty to God, as

it obligeth us to be more cautious and watchful. Who should be so

careful of their conversations as they that come often into God's pre-

sence ? They had need to be careful on a double account —

(1.) That they may be in a readiness always to pray : Eph. vi. 18,

' Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and

watching thereunto with all perseverance ; ' 1 Peter iv. 7, '' Be sober,

and watch unto prayer.' If we would be often with God in prayer,

we must watch against anything that would hinder our communion

and intercourse with God, that we may look God in the face with

comfort ; as those that are always to appear in the presence of earthly

princes must be more decently clad than other men. How shall we

pray at night when we have been offending God all the day.

(2.) The very praying often inferreth an obligation of greater strict-

ness, that we may be such out of duty as we profess to be in duty : 1 Peter

i. 17, 'And if ye call on thePather, who without respect of persons judgeth

according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here

in fear ; ' 2 Tim. ii. 19, ' Let every one that nameth the name of Christ

depart from iniquity.' What ! confess sin, and yet commit it ? What !

pray so zealously, and live so vainly ! confute and contradict your

prayers by your lives ! ask grace so earnestly of God, and cast it away

so carelessly in your conversations ! Leave off one or the other, for

hypocrisy is a double provoking thing, more than open profaneness.

Use 1, Is to reprove those that never call upon God, or very rarely,

either in their families, or closets, or both. This cometh to pass —

1. Sometimes through a defect of their faith ; they do not believe

God's being and providence, and the promises of his holy covenant as

made with us. They do not believe his being : Ps. xiv. 1, ' The fool

hath said in his heart, There is no God ; ' and ver. 4, ' They call not

upon the Lord.' The practical atheist doth not pray : Job xv. 4,

' Thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God.' As the

awe and reverence of God abateth in them, they cast off prayer, espe-

cially in secret. God's children may be straitened in prayer, but they

do not restrain prayer. Conscience is clamorous; prayer would fain

break out, but they smother these checks and sentiments of religion

till they wholly quit a course of praying. Sometimes they deny provi-

dence: Ps. Ixxiii. 11, 'They say, How doth God know? and is there

any knowledge in the Most High? ' and ver. 13, 'I have cleansed my

heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency; ' Mai. iii. 14, 'Ye

have said, It is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have

kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the

Lord of hosts?' Or else they do not soundly believe the covenant

of God as made with them in Christ : Eom. x. 14, ' How shall they

SERMON UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 17, 501

call upon him in whom they have not believed?' We cannot address

ourselves to God in Christ, if we are not rooted in the faith of the gospel.

2. Sometimes through a defect of their love to God. They have no

deh'ght in him, and therefore call not upon his name : Job xxvii. 10,

' Will he delight himself in the Almighty ? will he always call upon

God ? ' They may sometimes cry to him to be free from trouble, but

they do not always call upon him, nor keep up a constant use of prayer.

They are weary of God : Isa. xliii. 22, ' Thou hast not called upon me,

Jacob ; thou hast been weary of me, Israel.' They that left their

first love left their first works, Eev. ii. 3, 4. Or else they are glutted

with worldly happiness, and so God is neglected: Jer. ii. 31, ' We are

lords, we will come no more unto thee.' They are well and at ease,

or else they are besotted with carnal pleasures, that they have no

heart to come to God : Luke xsi. 34, ' Take heed to yourselves, lest

at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunken-

ness and cares of this life.' The heart is withdrawn from God, and

stolen away by carnal vanities.

3. From a defect in their hope ; tliey despair either of assistance or

acceptance.

[1.] Of assistance. Having such a wandering, lean, and barren

understanding, and dead afi'ections, they think they shall be never

able to pray. And though God hath promised a Spirit of grace and

supplication, and is ready to give it to those that do not give way to

these evils, but strive against them, and the Holy Ghost is appointed

to teach them to pray, yet they give way to this dulness and deadness,

out of an indulgence to tbe ease of the flesh, and slothfulness and

despair of God's help : Isa. Ixiv. 7, ' And there is none that calleth.

upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.' There

is the lazy despair, as well as the raging despair, when men will not

stir up themselves, and overcome the seeming difficulties which at

first a course of prayer meeteth with.

[2.] Of acceptance. They have lost their peace by some grievous,

wounding sin, and then have not the heart to go to God; as David

kept silence, and hung off till he recovered his peace, Ps. xxxii. 3.

So others have ofi'ended God, and represent him to themselves as an

angiy judge rather than a gracious father, and so run away from

him as guilty Adam did to the bushes. Gen. iii. 8, rather than come to

him. In part this may be in God's children when they have grieved

the Spirit ; but mostly it is in the wicked, who go on impenitently

in some grievous and heinous sin, and so can have no heart to go on

in a course of lively prayer. The presence of God is terrible to a

sinner because of the conscience of their own sinful courses ; they

expect nothing but wrath and vengeance from God, and they will not

take God's way to reconcile themselves, and make their peace with

him, but only put off the thoughts of that they cannot put away, and

neglect God rather than seek to appease him.

Use 2. It informeth us of a necessary truth ; if we must pray ever-

more, then there must be an endeavour to keep up our hearts still in a

praying temper, or in a disposition to go to God upon all occasions,

that when God offereth these occasions, there may not want a suitable

frame of heart. The disposition and temper of heart fit for prayer

502 SERMON UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 17.

must never be lost. Satan is a great enemy to tliis commerce with

God, and our hearts soon grow unfit for it. It is a difficult thing to

keep up this praying frame, yet this must be a christian's constant

work and care. The whole spiritual life is but a watching unto prayer.

Now this praying frame lieth in three things —

1. A broken-hearted sense of our spiritual wants. We have a quick

and tender feeling of bodily wants, for these are evident to natural

sense, and we love the body more than the soul, and are tender of our

bodily interests ; but we should be alike affected with soul-necessities,

or else there will be no life in our prayers, God 'filleth the hungry

with good things, and the rich he hatli sent empty away,' Luke i. 53.

The poor in spirit do most mourn before the Lord, and hunger and

thirst after righteousness : Mat. v. 3-6, ' Blessed are the poor in spirit,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn,

for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall

inherit the earth. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after

righteousness, for they shall be filled.' Now, that which hindereth this

brokenness of heart is carnal pleasures, which bring on a brawn and

senseless deadness upon the soul. Therefore the apostle saith, 1 Peter

iv. 7, ' Be sober, and watch unto prayer.' Now sobriety is a sparing

use of sensual and worldly delights, or a moderation in all earthly

things. This you must labour after, if you would keep up your cor-

respondency with God by prayer in a lively manner.

2. A strong and earnest bent of heart towards God and heaven, and

so towards spiritual and heavenly things : Isa. xxvi. 9, ' With my soul

have I desired thee in the night ; yea, with my spirit within me will

I seek thee early.' Tlie soul that is set to seek the Lord is most fit

for this duty. But unless the heart be thus set towards God and

heavenly things, prayer will be as a customary task ; we shall ask for

fashion's sake, pray from our memories rather than our conscience, and

from our conscience rather than heart and affections ; or from affections

actually excited and stirred, rather than from an heart renewed, or

that habitual bent and tendency towards God which is at the bottom

of prayer. The heart sensibly stirred in one duty may do well for the

time, but it is soon lost, and controlled and mastered by contrary

affections. That which doth habitually dispose and incline you to

pray always is the fixed bent of heart towards God and heaven. There

are three agents in prayer, as in every holy duty — the human spirit, the

new nature, and the Spirit of God. The human spirit, or my natural

faculties, that by my understanding I may work upon my will and aftec-

tions, and rouse up myself ; for the Holy Ghost doth not work upon a

man as upon a block. Then the new nature, which inclineth us to God as

our chief good and last end ; for the Holy Ghost doth not blow as to

a dead coal. Then the divine Spirit, which exciteth those graces in

us which incline us to God ; as faith or a belief of his being, provi-

dence and covenant, love and desire of the full fruition of him in the

heavenly glory, and hope of the means and end ; of the means by

which we attain the end, and the end that we shall thus enjoy by the

means. These are the three agents in prayer and every holy work.

I must do something as a reasonable creature, something as a new

creature, and the Spirit influenceth all. The second we are now speak-

SERMON UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 17. 603

ing of, the new nature or inclination to God ; which inclination is not

barely natural as the inclination of creatures without life, as in fire

or hght bodies to ascend, or in a stone or heavy bodies to descend ; but

voluntary, as in a rational agent, and therefore it is not so indecliuably

set but it needeth to be strengthened, excited, and increased in us ;

and this I now press you to if you would keep up your praying

frame.

3. There is a liberty or confidence which ariseth from our peace and

friendship with God : 1 John iii. 21, ' If our heart condemn us not, then

have we confidence, ix-apprjo-iav, towards God.' When we walk unevenly,

we grow shy of God; our mouths are shut, our prayers choked in the

utterance. Therefore we should take heed we do not interrupt our

peace : 1 Peter iii. 7, ' Dwelling as heirs together of the grace of life,

that your prayers be not hindered.' Our access to God in prayer can-

not be carried on so cheerfully unless we walk orderly and peaceably

in our relations. A christian is very careful that he may not interrupt

his communion with God, but must avoid heinous wounding sins. And

because, do what we can do, daily infirmities will break out, he often

renews his covenant with God, that his heart may be settled.

Use 3. To exhort us to pray without ceasing, Consider —

1. The throne of grace, which God hath erected in the midst of his

people, standeth always upon. God doth not keep terms and days of

audience. The high priest was not to be too familiar with God to

come to him, but once in a year ; but we may come every day : Heb.

iv. 16, ' Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we

may obtain mercy, and find grace to help ia time of need.' Let us

then be often with God.

2. God's compassions and mercies never fail. There is an inexhausted

treasure and stock of grace: James i. 5, 'If any of you lack wisdom,

let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth

not, and it shall be given him.' Compare this with Prov. xxv. 17,

' Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house, lest he be weary of

thee, and so hate thee.' You may come too seldom, but you can never

come too often to God.

3. We owe this respect to God, that we must not go about his

service by fits, but constantly. As the Queen of Sheba pronounced of

Solomon's servants, 1 Kings x. 8, ' Happy are thy men, happy are these

thy servants, that stand continually before thee, and that hear thy

wisdom ; ' much more may it be said of the servants of God, Prov. viii.

34, ' Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates,

waiting at the posts of my doors.' It is a blessed thing to be much

with God.

4. We never want occasions of praying, either for ourselves or for

the church of God. Therefore we ought always to live in the sense of

our own emptiness, and in the faith of God's fulness and willingness

to supply our wants ; always sensible of our need to pray, and always

confident of God's readiness to answer and pray accordingly.

5. Love will not suffer us to keep long out of God's company.

They that delight in one another must have their frequent meetings

and frequent interviews. An instance of this we have in Jonathan

and David : 1 Sam. xviii. 1, ' The soul of Jonathan was knit with the

604 SERMON UPON I THESSALONIANS V. 17.

soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul, and therefore

he could not be long without his friend David. If we have a love to

God, we cannot keep long out of God's company, but will be with him

pouring out our hearts to him. Consider these things, that you may

quicken yourselves to this duty of ' praying without ceasing.'

END OF VOLUME XVII.

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