

THOMAS MANTON



THE RICH  
YOUNG RULER

EXPOSITION OF MARK 10:17-27

MONERGISM

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# **The Rich Your Ruler**

## **An Exposition of Mark 10:17-27**

### **by Thomas Manton**

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## SERMON I

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?—MARK 10:17.

ANY reigning sin maketh us incapable of faith, and by consequence of salvation, of which we have a notable instance in the conference that passed between Christ and a young ruler of the Jews. The story begins in the words read, 'And when he was gone forth into the way,' &c. The words give an account of a question put to Christ. And here

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1. The time and place, when and where this question was put to him, 'When he was gone forth into the way.' In the 10th verse we read he was in some private house, where the pharisees did resort to him, and dispute with him about divorce; and ver. 13, 'They brought young children to him, that he might bless them.' Now when he had pleaded their right, and 'laid his hands upon them, and blessed them,' Matthew tells us that 'he departed thence,' chap. 19:15; and by the wayside, as he was in his journey to some other place, this

ruler comes to him. Thus doth our Lord find new occasions of doing good; in the house, and by the wayside. Acts 10:38, it is said, 'He went about doing good.' The life of Christ was a constant course of service to God and bounty to men; he went about, and he went about doing good. This is the time and place, when and where.

2. The next circumstance is the person by whom the question was put. The text saith only, 'There came one running to him.' What this one was we shall find by laying several scriptures together. (1.) This one is said to be νέανίσκος 'a young man,' Mat. 19:20; (2.) Πλούσιος 'a rich man,' ver. 22, 'He had great possessions.' (3.) Ἄρχων, 'a ruler,' Luke 18:18. What is meant by that? Possibly one of the chief pharisees, for they were called ἄρχοντες, rulers, Luke 14:1, or a ruler of the synagogue; or, as Grotius thinks, one of the magistrates of his town, or rather the head and chief of his family. The honourable families among the Jews had their heads and chiefs, whom they called their rulers. Now such a ruler, a young man, an honourable person, a head and chief of his family, he comes to Christ, and puts this question to him.

3. The manner of his address to Christ; it was voluntary, 'He came,' saith the text, that is, of his own accord. It was zealous and earnest, 'He came running to him.' It was humble, 'He kneeled down to him;' and besides, it was civil and respectful; he calls him 'Rabbi,' and gives him the title of 'good,' 'Good master.' He comes with a kind compellation which shows his reverence and respect to Christ. This was the manner of his address.

4. The question itself, which is weighty and serious, 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Out of all these circumstances take this observation—

Doct. That men may go very far in a sense of religion, and yet come short of true grace.

I give it with respect to the context. This young man is a pregnant instance. He went far, for, as this text delivers his character to us, you will find few his equals, and the most part of the world left behind him. Here is a young man, a rich man, a nobleman, that is troubled about salvation, and seems to forget himself and his dignity; he comes running to Christ, kneels to him, and puts a serious question; but yet he came short; the context shows that, for when he heard of Christ's terms, he went away sorrowful.

To make good the observation—

1. I shall show what was commendable in this young man.
2. Where the defect and fault was; for here seems to be nothing but what is fair and plausible; he comes, and he comes kneeling to Christ, and says, 'Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?'

I. There is something, yea, much commendable in him, and worthy of imitation, and that will appear by considering—(1.) The question which he puts; (2.) The quality of the person that propounded it; (3.) The manner how.

First, The question asked, 'What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' This, for the substance of it, is a good question and very necessary for all to ask. Our hearts would be in a much better frame than they are if we did ask it more and ask it oftener: Oh! how shall we do to be saved?

1. It is not a question about another man, but himself. We read of an impertinent question put by Peter to Christ: John 21:21, 'Lord, what shall this man do?' Many do not look inward, and are busy about the concernments of others; but here it is not, What shall they do, or what shall others do? But, Good master, what is my duty? what shall I do to be saved?

2. It is not a curious question, or the proposal of some intricate doubt and nice debate: Titus 3:9, 'Avoid foolish questions.' Curious questions argue wantonness; they that are heart-whole will dispute and wrangle about unprofitable needless points, but neglect those that are most weighty and necessary; and it is a true rule, Deficit in necessariis qui redundat in superfluis—Those that wholly give up themselves to vain janglings neglect more necessary and profitable matters. But the young man's question is not about curious speculations, but a weighty point, 'What shall I do to be saved?'

3. It is not about the body, but the soul. There are things necessary for the outward man; and questions of that nature are too rife with us: 'What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and what shall we put on?' Mat. 6:25. All men's care is about the body, and these worldly questions do most perplex their hearts, How shall I be clothed and fed? But this young man's question is not about any matter of the world, but the saving of his soul, How shall I do to live for ever with God?

4. About his soul; he doth not ask a frivolous or small thing, but a thing of the greatest moment in all divinity, 'What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' A weighty matter, the weightiest of all others: Mat. 6:33, 'Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;' Prov. 4:7, 'Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding.' And certainly such a question as this discovers a good spirit. (1.) That he was no Sadducee, for he inquires after eternal life, which they denied. The young man was one that did believe in heaven and hell, and inquires after the way how to escape the one and obtain the other. (2.) It discovers some thoughtfulness about it. Many of Christ's own disciples dreamed of an earthly kingdom; they were ever putting questions to Christ about it: Acts 1:6, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' But his thoughts were more upon the kingdom of heaven than upon a temporal reign, which they fancied to themselves. (3.) It discovered that he was very sensible of the connection that is between the end and the means,

that something must be done in order to eternal life. There are some men that would have heaven and happiness, but are loath to be at the cost: Num. 23:10, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his.' At oportuit sic vixisse; but we must live so, if we would die so. It is presumptuous folly to hope for the end without the means; there are means leading to the end, which must be inquired after and regarded by us. Well, then, so far the pharisee is right, that without 'holiness no man shall see the Lord.' (4.) This question so put discovers that he was sensible that a slight thing would not serve the turn, not a little saying and outward profession. This was not a vain and loose person, but a moral man, and one that had done much; yet, 'What good thing must I do?' (5.) This was the errand and great thing that brought him to Christ, to find the way to heaven and true happiness. The man was rich, but he saw that his happiness lay not in riches, but in everlasting salvation, and thereupon he goes to Christ to learn how he should do to obtain it. There were many which followed Christ upon other accounts; some for his miracles, he cured their diseases; others for the loaves, John 6:26; but he comes to him about eternal life.

5. This question was seriously put; he did not ask it in jest, but in the greatest earnest. When men are convinced, things now begin to be real, and seem other than formerly they did; they think, and speak, and talk like men in another world. Sin is another thing, they were wont to marvel what made men keep such ado about sin. What great harm was it to take a little forbidden pleasure? That it was hard measure to be held so closely to duty. But now they have other thoughts; some are anxious, all are solicitous and careful, and enter into consultation about the means of salvation. When the Corinthians were made sorry by Paul's letter, 2 Cor. 7:11, 'What carefulness it wrought in you.'

In short (that I may gather up all I have said), necessary questions are better than those which are nice and impertinent, and practical questions are better than speculative, and questions about spiritual and eternal things are better than those that only concern temporal.



Questions about the soul are better than those which concern the body, as far as the soul excels the body, and heaven excels the world. Where was the fault of all this? I will show that by and by; only I mention now, there was a leaven of legalism; he thought to earn heaven by his doing, 'What good thing must I do?' as Matthew repeats the question, Mat. 19:16. Thus far we have the character of the man fair; he was one that comes about a very serious and momentous question to Christ, a question that should be more on our heart.

Secondly, Let us consider the person by whom it was put, by a young man in the prime of his age, by a rich man in the fulness of his wealth, by a man of good rank as well as a good estate, by a ruler while he was in his power and empire.

1. We find him to be νεανίσκος, a young man. Julius Pollux tells us that νεανίσκος is one that had not yet accomplished his fourth septenary, that is, not yet full twenty-eight years of age. Young men are usually vain, and there is nothing they mind less than the salvation of their soul. If an old man had put this question to Christ, it had been the less remarkable; it is time for them to think of another world that have one foot already in the grave; but this young man comes to Christ to inquire after eternal life. Oh! that other young men would imitate his example, and go so far as he who yet fell short, as we shall see in the process of the story. There is an ignorant and profane conceit which possesseth many men's minds that it is not necessary for young men to study the scriptures, or to trouble themselves much with thinking of heaven and life to come, because they are young, and strong, and lusty, and likely to live many years; therefore they think it is more proper for them to follow the world, and to mind the things of this life, and let old men alone to think of heaven. But this is flat contrary to the word of God, which requires us to 'Remember our Creator in the days of our youth,' Eccles. 12:1. He that gave all deserves our best, that our first and flowery years should be consecrated to him, while the effects of his creating bounty are most sensible upon us: Ps. 119:9,

'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?' The world will say, What have young folks to do with so serious a work? When old age hath snowed upon their heads, and the smart experience of more years in the world hath ripened them for so severe a discipline, then it is time to think of repenting, and of cleansing our hearts from sin, and providing for our last end and great account. Oh no! God demands his right of the young man, that his heart be seasoned betimes with grace. In the word of God we read of Josiah, a young king; of Phineas, a young priest; of Daniel, a young prophet; and Timothy, a young evangelist. Oh! that young men would apply their hearts to religion, and make progress therein!

[1.] Consider how convenient and reasonable it is that God should have our first and best. The flower and best of our days is due to God, who is the best of beings. Under the law the first-fruits were God's; the sacrifices were all offered young and in their strength: Lev. 2:14, 'If thou offer a meat-offering of the first-fruits unto the Lord, thou shalt offer the meat-offering of the first-fruits, green ears of corn dried by the fire.' They were not to stay till they were ripened. God will not be kept out of his portion. When wit is dulled, ears heavy, body weak, affections spent, is this a fit sacrifice for God? In respect of eternal life, which we look for, we should begin betimes to lay a foundation. If a man has a great way to go, it is good rising early in the morning; many set out too late, never any too soon. And for the conveniency of it, young men are most capable of doing God service; they are best able to take pains in the service of God, and working out their own salvation; they are fittest in regard of strength of body and mind; the faculties of their souls are most vigorous, and the members of their bodies most active; they have quick wits, much firmness of memory, and strength of affection. It is not fit to lay the greatest load on the weakest horse; the weak shoulders of old men are not fit for the burden of religion.

[2.] Consider how necessary it is, because the lusts of youth being boiling hot, need the correction of a more severe discipline. Young men are inclined to liberty and carnal pleasures, and are more apt to

be led aside from the right way by the motions of the flesh, and are self-willed and headstrong in their passions, therefore they need look after the world to come, and to exercise themselves in holiness more than others do. As the boiling pot sendeth up most scum, so in the fervours of youth there are the strongest inclinations to intemperance and uncleanness. Who so eager in desires, so bold in enterprises, so confident and presumptuous as they? Therefore they ought to be most heedful, watchful, and seriously religious, lest they be caught in the devil's snares. We read of 'youthful lusts;' 2 Tim. 2:22, 'Flee also youthful lusts.' Therefore youth had need to be seasoned with the doctrine of the scriptures: 2 Tim. 3:15, 'And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.' The heat and violence of their lusts is broken with a care of the world to come.

[3.] Consider the profit of it.

(1.) The work is more easy the sooner it is taken in hand; whereas the longer it is delayed, the more difficult. Sin groweth stronger by custom, and more rooted: Jer 13:27, 'I have seen thy adulteries and thy neighings, the lewdness of thy whoredoms, and thine abominations on the hills in the fields. Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?' There is not such another tyrant in the world as sin; by every act it gathereth strength. A twig is easily bowed, but when it groweth into a tree, it is not moved. The man that was possessed of a devil from his childhood, how hardly was he cured! Mark 9:21. When the disease groweth inveterate, medicines do little good. If you would know what you should do to inherit eternal life, learn it young, and then 'the way of the Lord will be strength to you;' Lam. 3:27, 'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.'

(2.) You hereby provide for the comfort of old age. If you serve God in your good days, he will help you the better over those evil days wherein there is no pleasure: Isa. 46:3, 4, 'Hearken unto me, O

house of Jacob, and all that remain of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb; and even to your old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs I will carry you.' It will be then no grief of heart to you when old, that you were acquainted with God young; whereas, on the other side, the vanities of youth will be the burden of age. *Inania juventutis gaudia sunt acerba senectutis gravamina*—Ambrose.

(3.) Our great work, that must be once done, is put out of hazard when we think of heaven seriously while we are young. Most defer this main care out of hope of long life. The young as well as old may die; the far smaller part of mankind arrive to old age. Life is most uncertain, and such a weighty business as this should not be left at peradventures. Nadab and Abihu were taken away young, and in their sins; the bears out of the forest devoured the children that mocked the prophet. Therefore, the danger being so great, you should make sure of escape from hell, and of a title to heaven betimes. When children come to the full use of their reason, they stand on their own bottom, whereas before they are reckoned to their parents; and then woe to them if God crop them off in their flower, and they die in their sins when they are upon their own personal account. All this is spoken to show that younger as well as elder persons should inquire after eternal life.

2. This man was πλούσιος, a rich man, one who had great possessions. Rich men usually quench their reason in sensuality, and wallow in all manner of carnal delights, but cast off all thoughts of eternity. But this man, though he had enough to live happily in the present world, yet he thinks of the world to come. Oh! that all you that are rich in this world would go and do likewise! Usually men, when they are well at ease, look no further. This is a question rarely moved by men of that sort, 'What shall they do to be saved?' They think heaven is a fit notion to entertain the fancies of the poor and afflicted withal, a pleasant thought wherewith to comfort and relieve their sorrows; but this rich man, though he had great possessions, yet he hath his trouble upon him about his salvation. It

is true in general, of all men there will be but few saved, and among the rich but few of those few: 1 Cor. 1:26, 'Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.' Usually where is religion more bitterly scoffed at and vilified than among the rich and full-fed worldlings? They throng their hearts with pleasures, and make it their business to run from one carnal contentment to another, as if they would verify that fool's saying, Luke 12:19, 'Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.' All their time is spent in sporting, eating, drinking, dressing, and undressing; this is the business and entertainment of their lives. Oh! when shall we hear one savoury word from these concerning eternity and the life to come? But surely it is their duty, as well as of poorer men, to seek an interest in heaven and in the world to come, if indeed there be such a thing, as scripture and reason and conscience will tell us that there is. Certainly we shall not always tarry here, and there will a time come when it will be of no profit to us that we have lived more plentifully than others, unless we have made provision for a better life. Rich men are wont to command others, and we must command them whose office it is to come to them in a greater name. What to do? 1 Tim. 6:17, 'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches.' Charge them that they do not scornfully refuse the gospel, and think to bear it out with their wealth and greatness; so I interpret 'trusting in uncertain riches.' There will a time come when they shall stand on the same level with the poor, therefore let it be their great business to get in with God, and to be useful in their places; to sow to the Spirit rather than to the flesh, that they may be sure of a good estate in the world to come, and take hold of eternal life. This rich man was not satisfied with his estate; he comes with this question, 'What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?'

3. He was ἄρχων, a ruler, not a vulgar and obscure plebeian, but a man of eminency and authority, a nobleman (to speak in the English language), or the chief of his family. Men of this rank are usually either seeking how they may raise their name and estate in the world by the favour of princes, aiming to be built up every day a

storey higher, with new additions of honour and title; this is their great business; it little entereth into their thoughts to have their names written in the book of life; or else abusing their power and greatness, by opposing Christ, his interests, servants, and kingdom; and therefore the psalmist saith, 'Be wise now therefore, O ye kings! be instructed, ye judges of the earth,' Ps. 2:10. Most men have stumbled upon the corner-stone, and taken no warning by those that have been broken in pieces before them. Or else they are such as are afraid and ashamed to be reckoned among the followers of a despised Christ, as that which would lessen their grandeur, and make them of no reputation among men of their rank and quality; that they should be taken notice of, if they favour religion, and the things of God: John 7:48, 'Have any of the rulers or the pharisees believed on him?' that is, in the Jewish dialect, have any of the nobles and chiefs? But this man, though a ruler, he comes with his case of conscience to Christ, and he comes openly, 'What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' We have seen his question, and found it to be serious and momentous, such as becomes us all to make, and we have considered his person.

Thirdly, Here is the manner of his address, and thence you may observe—

1. The voluntariness of it. He came not called by others, but he came of himself; not driven by afflictions, or by any bodily or outward necessity, but came to Christ. Many of Christ's own disciples and menial servants came not so. Peter came not till Andrew brought him; yea, the other apostles were all called. Here we read of no calling, no inviting, but he came of his own accord, and that not upon the impulsion, or urging of any bodily necessity. Many came to Christ, but thanks to their calamities and necessities that drove them; they were blind and lame, or possessed with devils, or had their sick to cure; but this man comes without any collateral respect, nothing but a desire of satisfaction to his grand scruples, 'What shall I do to obtain eternal life?' This brings him to Christ.

2. The earnestness and fervour of his coming, 'He came running.' This nobleman seemed to forget and neglect the dignity of his condition; he doth not walk in state, but, when Christ was gone out of the house where he was before, lest he should miss of him, he runs after him. This shows his zeal and forwardness to meet with Christ, and to put this question to him. He had an earnest desire to confer with Christ, and is not ashamed even then to run after him when Christ was a despised person. When David danced before the ark, and Michal scoffed at him, as if it argued lightness, 2 Sam. 6:16, he said, 'If this be to be vile, I will be more vile.' It was disgraceful in that age for this ruler to come to Christ, much more to run after him. Nicodemus, a man of his rank, was convinced, yet he durst not publicly own Christ, but came to him by night, so as least to be taken notice of; but this man runs after him in the highway, and sets all other respects aside, that he might seek a salve for the sore which run upon him, so great and earnest was his desire to have his conscience satisfied, 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?'

3. Consider his humility and reverence to Christ; he kneeled to him, in token of civil honour and reverence to him, as an eminent prophet and teacher. He was not persuaded, as we that profess ourselves christians are, of the Godhead of Christ, only he took him for some great prophet and a man of God, therefore he cometh and tendereth his petition kneeling. One would think all this respect and fair meaning might be without any fault, and that he had a very good heart, a man that should come, and run, and kneel to Christ, and beg him to answer this question.

4. There is his compellation, 'Good master.' He came not treacherously to entrap Christ, as the lawyer that asked the same question, but not with the same intent: Luke 10:25, 'Behold a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' This man came not to tempt Christ, but to learn of him, out of a good intention and purpose, and with a mind and affection in some degree sincere. The man had some good qualities, for it is said, 'Jesus loved him;' he had moral sincerity, for

he did not dissemble; but he came not with a supernatural sincerity, for there was a reservation in his heart, as appears by the sequel; his resolution to follow Christ was not absolute, though he esteems him, and makes fair offers to him. We have seen the first part, namely, what was commendable; a young man, a rich man, a nobleman; he comes with such earnestness, with such a question to Christ, with such a desire to be satisfied, with an intention sincere.

II. But where was his defect? By all that hath been said, a man would think that all this while I have been describing some rare saint. Such is his zeal and forwardness after spiritual and heavenly knowledge, and such is our coldness and carelessness about everlasting concernments, that we should easily think, Surely this is enough, and wonder God should require anything more, and to go further than this man.

1. His fault was that he asked, in the pharisee's sense, what good thing he should do. That will appear by Christ's answer in the process of the story. If the question had been only, By what means must I be saved? or, What is the way to heaven? Christ would have answered him, as the apostles did in a like case Acts 16:31, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' If the question had been put to him in a broken-hearted manner, and by one that was sensible of his misery and inability, and had come to Christ and said, 'What shall I do?' he would have taught him. Now the pharisee's error was double—he thought that men might be saved by their own works, and that those works were in their own power. He thought of nothing else but of being saved by the merit of his own works, that those were full out-weight with God, and did deserve eternal life; as the Jews elsewhere: Rom. 9:31, 32, 'Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.' They were ignorant of the law and of themselves; ignorant of the law, and therefore sought justification by the works of the law, and not by faith; and ignorant of themselves, and therefore presumed of their own strength, as if



they were able to do whatever good was prescribed to them. As the Jews said to Christ, John 6:28, 'What shall we do that we might work the works of God?' They were confident of their own merit and strength. Here was his fault, that he was, as other Jews were, both ignorant of the law and ignorant of himself: of the law, that there is no standing before God by that covenant; and of himself, that he had full strength to perform it. Men by nature retain so deep an impression of the covenant of works, and are ignorant of the perfection of the law and their own impotency, that they know no way of attaining eternal life but by their own works, and doubt not but they shall do well enough; if Christ will tell them their duty, they will do it. In short, this young man was conceited of a righteousness as in himself and from himself, and if Christ had answered him according to that humour, he had done no more good upon him than if a physician should say to a lame man, Run, and you shall be cured. And therefore Christ's business was to bring him to a brokenness of heart by the knowledge of the law, of himself, and his own weakness, as you shall see afterwards.

2. His next fault was, his love of riches and worldly things, which is a dangerous obstruction, and a let to salvation. Fair intentions and good offers profit not where any one thing is loved more than God, where the world is not overcome, and the fleshly mind and interest is not mortified; for we must not confine it only to riches, but pleasure, and honour, or any such thing. For when Christ had taught them that he was Lord and sovereign, and could give laws—he gives him a law to try him, 'Sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come take up the cross, and follow me'—he went away sorrowful. Unless every affection and interest of ours be laid at the feet of Christ, we are not thoroughly converted to him. From this story, consider, whoever believes must determine God is his chiefest good, and Jesus Christ is the only way to God; there must be an intention of God as the last end, and a choice of Christ as the only means; there must be brokenness of heart, a renouncing the world, and an entire dependence on Christ as the only Saviour to bring us to God.

Use. This may humble us, that we go not so far, and to caution us that we do not rest here.

First, To humble us. Alas! most men go not so far as this young rich man, that comes thus seriously to Christ about a question of eternal life. It is a saying of Athanasius, *Utinam omnes essent hypocritæ*—Would to God all men would go so far as hypocrites. He means it not as to dissimulation, but partial obedience. It were a blessed thing for the world if all men went so far as this young man; so as—

1. To have their thoughts taken up about eternal life. The most part of the world never consider whence they are, nor whither they go, nor what shall become of them to all eternity. We busy our thoughts about our temporal interests, and are carking how we may live in the world, and maintain ourselves, but never take care how we shall live for ever. If you go from house to house, you will find this question very rare, 'What shall I do to obtain eternal life?' Go up and down among people everywhere, and you meet with no such language as this. Go to young and old, poor and rich, great and small; we have many thoughts in us how to dispose of our present affairs, but few think of the world to come. Should a man's thoughts be taken up about furnishing his inn, where he tarries but a night, and neglect his home? Thus we busy ourselves about the affairs of this life, when to-morrow we must be gone, and mind not the world to come, where we must abide for ever. Not once a year doth such a thought run in our minds; we never ask or speak about it, nor will we suffer any to do so; so far are we from being diligent and earnest to get it resolved, this is the least part of our care.

2. To be sensible it is no slight matter to have an interest in the world to come. Most men think they shall do well enough for heaven; a small matter will serve the turn for that, and there needs not such great solicitude about it. This was a moral man, no debauched person, yet he is troubled, and makes inquiry after eternal life. Many think a slight saying, God have mercy upon me, or a little overly trust upon the mercy of God will serve the turn.

3. To have such a sense as to choose fit means. He had heard the pharisees long, but was not satisfied; their doctrine was cold, without any spirit and life, and their zeal was all for externals and bodily exercise, that was of little profit. Eternal life was a thing sparingly spoken of by them, but more plentifully by Christ; therefore he goes not to the scribes and pharisees and chief priests, who arrogated to themselves the knowledge of mysteries. Many heap up teachers to please their own lusts.

4. To be so concerned as to be earnest in the means. This man ran after Christ when he missed him in the house, and they will not come to the congregations of the faithful where this great question is discussed, 'What they shall do to inherit eternal life?' Eccles. 5:1, 'Be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools,' and James 1:19, 'Be swift to hear.' But we are cold, slack and negligent. Many are even ready to thrust the means from them, and say unto God, 'Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,' Job 21:14. Those means that should do them good are tedious and irksome; therefore this should humble us, that we go not so far as this pharisee.

Secondly, To caution us; do not rest in a common work.

1. In a desire of heaven as your only happiness. Alas! this is a common thing both to regenerate and unregenerate: John 6:34, 'Lord, evermore give us of this bread.' Is any man such an enemy to himself as not to wish it? Num. 23:10, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his.' A natural man may discern that true happiness lies not in outward things, but in eternal life, as this man did, and accordingly may have a desire as he had.

2. Do not rest barely in a desire that moveth us to the use of some means, unless it bring us to a perfect resignation to God. This man had a good mind to heaven; he cheapens it, but is not willing to go through with the price. Many have good desires and intentions, but will not 'sell all for the pearl of price,' Mat. 13:44; they will not come

up to Christ's terms, namely, to lay every affection and lust at Christ's feet, and wholly resign themselves to be guided by him in his own way to happiness, and so they may go to hell notwithstanding all their desires.

3. If we would not rest in a common work, then two things we must take care of, which are opposite to the double defect of this young man—brokenness of heart, and unbounded resignation of ourselves to the will of God; bring yourselves to that, and the thing is done.

(1.) Brokenness of heart. This young man hath a great opinion and conceit of his own righteousness; being full of his own righteousness, he came to be approved by Christ rather than be directed. Here lay his great fault; he inquires the way to heaven, but yet believes himself to be in the way already, yea, far gone in that way; holy in his own estimation; therefore you must cherish an humble sense of your own nothingness, for Christ bid him do that.

(2.) Resignation of yourselves to God's will. Have a care of the love of riches, or any carnal affection. If you be wedded to any temporal thing, it will be your bane, and destroy all religion, and make you go away sorrowful after many fair offers and many good meanings. It is difficult for the rich, but even the poor have their difficulties too. He that starves as well as he that surfeits hath his difficulties in the way to heaven. Every man hath a tender part of soul, some carnal affection that he doth allow, reserve, and is loath should be touched; therefore, till there be an unbounded resignation, and we fully throw ourselves at Christ's feet, it is impossible ever we should come to the kingdom of heaven. The soul is never right with God whilst we stand haggling and dodging with God. No; give up yourselves to him without reservation, to be guided and ordered by him at his will and pleasure; as Acts 9:6, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' They that are sincere do not dispense with themselves in anything, and say, Thus far they will go, and, The Lord be merciful to me in this; but they absolutely follow Christ. See Luke 9:59, to the end. Herod did many things; this young man had a forwardness and urgent desire. Thus it is with many; heaven must fall into our lap, or we will have none of it; if it puts us to pains or cost, it is too

dear a bargain for us to deal withal; we snuff at God's terms as troublesome, and fling off. No; we should be glad to accept of mercy on any terms, and take heaven at God's price.

[1.] This unbounded resolution must be seriously made: Luke 14:26, '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;' Matthew 13:45, 46, 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.'

[2.] It must be faithfully performed. You must not only renounce but overcome when it cometh to trial, subdue your lusts, run all hazards for Christ, thwart affections, slight disgraces, nicknames, and scorns, and lay all down, nay, life itself, at Christ's feet: Matthew 19:27–29, 'Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee, what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel; and every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.' We must pluck out a right eye and cut off a right hand, Mat. 5:29, 30. Many will perform such duties as cross not any strong bent of their lusts, they will forbear some sins that are not so rooted in their natures, nor grown strong by custom, nor are set on by any forcible temptation, but fail in other things of greater moment, or more nearly concerning them.

There are four points of great weight and moment, which should ever be remembered by them that would make out their gospel qualifications, or new covenant plea of sincerity.

(1.) That any allowed evil habit of soul or reigning sin is inconsistent with that faith that worketh by love, and only maketh us capable of the great privileges of the gospel. That appeareth by the nature of conversion, which lieth in three things—a turning from the creature to God, from self to Christ, from sin to holiness: John 5:44, 'How can ye believe that receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?' 1 John 2:15, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;' Mat. 6:24, 'No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and mammon;' James 4:4, '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.'

(2.) That the usual bait of reigning sin is the world. The great difficulty of salvation lies in a man's addictedness to worldly things or temporal satisfactions. When these are highest in our esteem, or dearest to our hearts, it weakeneth God's interest and our care of salvation, and our sense of the world to come: 2 Cor. 4:4, 'In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not;' 2 Peter 1:9, 'He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off;' Phil. 3:19, 'Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.' The world taketh us off from the serious pursuit of heaven: Luke 10:41, 42, 'Martha! Martha! thou art careful, and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful;' and makes us shrink at trials: 2 Tim. 4:10, 'Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world.'

(3.) That our inclination to worldly things is various according to the temper and constitution of men. As the channel is cut so the river runs: Isa. 53:6, 'We have turned every one in his own way.' Some are carried away by pride, some by vainglory, some by sensuality, some by worldliness. Uprightness and sincerity lies in

observing the tender part of the soul, and preserving ourselves from that sin which is most natural to us: Ps. 18:23, 'I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.'

(4.) That many times, when pretences are fair there is a secret reserve in our hearts. The devil seeketh to deceive men with a superficial change and half reformation, and moveth them to take on the profession of religion, and yet secure their fleshly and worldly interest. The most dangerous cheat of our souls is by halving it between God and mammon: Mat. 6:24, 'No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and mammon.' When we are not so mortified as to subject ourselves entirely to Christ's direction upon the hopes of eternal life, or the happiness of the world to come, and to part with all things in the world, when it is necessary so to do; or else we must part with this salvation. Many think they are not worldly because they have some thoughts of heaven, and do something for it in seeking after it; but the business is whether you seek it in the first place, and make it your principal end and scope, to which all other things are subordinated and referred? whether you can forsake all rather than miss heaven? Jesus Christ, though he prized good beginnings, and would not discourage any, yet admitteth none to the privileges of grace that are but half converted, whose hearts are in secret league with the world, though they seem to be affected with the offers of eternal life.

## SERMON II

And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God.—MARK 10:18.

WE have seen the young man's question, here is Christ's answer, in which observe two things—

1. His expostulation with him, 'Why callest thou me good?'
2. His instruction of him, 'There is none good but one, that is God.'

First, For the expostulation, 'Why callest thou me good?' He doth not simply blame him for giving this title to him, but argueth with him about it—

1. To show that he loves no compliments or fair words, which proceed not from sound faith and love to him. Christ saw that he was ignorant of his divine authority, and foresaw that he would not take his counsel, and therefore expostulates with him, 'Why callest thou me good?' As elsewhere, Luke 6:46, 'Why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?' Cui res nomini subjecta negatur, is nomine illuditur—It is a mockery to give titles to any one when we do not answer it with suitable endeavours; as those that gave Christ honourable titles, 'Hail! king of the Jews!' but buffeted him, and spit upon him; and so here, 'Why callest thou me good?'

2. He takes occasion to draw him from his error of conceiving him as a mere man. The attribute of good belongeth truly and properly to none but God. Now, saith Christ, is that thy meaning, to acknowledge me for such? Our Lord was now about to try his obedience by a special precept, and therefore it was first necessary that he should be apprehended and acknowledged as God, and lawgiver to the souls of men. Mere moral goodness could not qualify him for that. Christ will be known to be God by those that come to him, or else they cannot worship him aright.

3. Our Lord would teach us by his own example to cast all the honour we receive upon God. We may own goodness in creatures, but not to the wrong of God; at least, all must be acknowledged to be transferred by him, and we must be faithful to the supreme giver. This is a common sin, that when God doth any good by the creatures, the minds of men stick in the creatures, and never look



up to God, and from thence came idolatry first into the world. Therefore, to cure this evil, when we receive any praise and commendation, we should refer it to 'the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift,' James 1:17. The apostles, that did not set up a trade for themselves, but went abroad as factors for Christ, were very jealous of usurping divine honour. When Peter had made a lame man walk, Acts 3:12, 'Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?' He was loath that the glory of God should be hidden. So Acts 14:14, 15, when the men of Lystra would have worshipped them, 'They rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do you these things? we also are men of like passions with you.' On the contrary, it cost Herod dear for owning the applauses of the people: Acts 12:22, 23, 'The people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man: and immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory, and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.' The receiver is as bad as the robber, and therefore Herod was smitten for taking what the people ascribed to him. We should be very tender in this point, when good is done by us or ascribed to us, to refer all to God, who is the author of all that little good we do for him. This is the constant practice of humble and self-denying spirits: Luke 19:16, he doth not say, 'my industry,' but 'thy pound hath gained ten pounds.' And when Paul had been much in labours, much in afflictions and mighty in spirit, he said, 1 Cor. 15:10, 'By the grace of God I am what I am;' and 'not I, but the grace of God that was with me.' So Gal. 2:20, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' As the heathens were wont solemnly to cast their crowns and garlands into their fountains, this is to crown the fountain of all our mercies. God's children, that are seen in the work, disappear in the praise, that God only may be acknowledged; and therefore they are rather buffeted than pleased with their own praises. Look, as Joab when he had conquered Rabbah, sent for David to wear the honour of the conquest, 2 Sam. 12:27, 28, so should we deal with God, cast all our crowns at his feet. If we do anything, let God have all the

glory. Christ himself hath taught us so to do, 'Why call you me good? there is none good but one, that is God.'

4. I suppose the chief reason was to beat down this pharisaical conceit. This young man was too highly conceited of his own and others' external goodness and righteousness before men, 'Good master, what good thing must I do?' not looking to the inward power of grace in the heart. The pharisees, whose leaven he was tainted with, had this conceit, as if men were of themselves good, and perfectly good; and therefore, to teach him humility and self-annihilation, he takes this advantage from the compellation given him, to inform him that in proper speech God only is good, and that humility and brokenness of heart doth better become men than the conceit of their own goodness and righteousness and self-sufficiency; and therefore, 'Why callest thou me good?'

Secondly, I come to Christ's instruction of him, 'There is none good but one, that is God;' and there you have two propositions—

1. That in some sense there is no man good.

2. That God only is good. 'Εἰ μὴ is put not exceptively, as if God were a man, but adversatively; no man is good, but there is one good, that is God.

Doct. 1. There is no mere man that is absolutely and perfectly good. It will be needful to explain this. I shall do it negatively, and affirmatively.

First, For the negative part.

[1.] It is not to be so understood as if in no sense man were good, for it is said in Luke 6:45, 'A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good.' Some degree and kind of goodness may be ascribed to men; and it is said of Barnabas that he was 'a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost,' Acts 11:24; and Joseph of Arimathea was said to be 'a good man and just,' Luke

23:50. Therefore certainly in some sense a man may be said to be good.

[2.] This is not so to be understood as if there were no distinction between men, but they were all equal in sin. No; but as Jeremiah had two baskets of figs, some very good and some very bad, so there are two sorts of men in the world, some good, some bad; some that walk after the spirit, and others that walk after the flesh; some that mind earthly things, and others that mind heavenly things. This is an everlasting distinction between man and man, that will outlive time. The distinction of great and small ceaseth at death, but the distinction of good and bad lasts for ever, and issueth itself into these two places, heaven and hell. It is a misconceit for any to go away with this thought, that because Christ says there is no man good, therefore there is no distinction between the state of nature and the state of grace, between the regenerate and unregenerate. There are some that are totally wicked, that make a trade to do evil; there are others that have a principle of goodness infused into them; some 'whose spot is not the spot of God's children,' Deut. 32:5, and others who though they have sin remaining in them, yet it reigns not over them.

[3.] It is not so to be understood as if it were unlawful wholly to acknowledge that goodness that is in others. We have God's own example to warrant us. God, as soon as he saw that anything was good, he uttered and declared it, and said it was good: Gen. 1:4, 'God saw the light, that it was good.' He said it first of light, then of other creatures. God would be no author nor example of smothering the due praise of good actions. That man hath little goodness in himself that will not own it in others. Indeed we are forbidden to 'call good evil, and evil good,' Isa. 5:20, as the world is usually guilty of this misnomer. None are good but those that flatter them in their sins, and none are evil but those that are zealous for God. This preposterous judgment is forbidden, but it is nowhere forbidden to call good, good, and to own the graces of others; that were enviously to defraud the virtuous of their due respect.

Secondly, Positively. How is it then true that no man is good?

Ans. Three ways—No man is of himself good, nor perfectly good, nor good comparing him with God.

[1.] No man is of himself good, but only by participation of God's goodness. As all the stars derive their light from the sun, so do we derive our poor weak ray wherewith we shine, from the Father of lights: James 1:17, 'Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.' It is God that makes us to do good, and receive good, for 'he worketh all our works in us,' Isa. 26:12, and hath a greater share in the good that we do than we have ourselves. All the tribute that we pay him, we have it out of his own exchequer; for we have all and every part from God; he giveth the will, the very first motion and inclination to any good; and he giveth the deed and the final accomplishment: Phil. 2:13, 'It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.' Our good works are more God's than ours; we may say of them, as Austin of his illegitimate child, *In eo nihil habui præter peccatum*—Lord, I had nothing in this child but my sins. So it is true of the fruit of our souls as well as of our bodies, nothing is ours but the defect, all the good is God's; yea, as he sweetly saith in another place, speaking of this very case, in his comment upon the 137th psalm, *Opus tuum vide in me, Domine non meum; nam meum si videris damnas me, tuum si videris coronas me; nam et quecunque sunt opera mea abs te sunt, ideo tua magis quam mea sunt*—Regard, O Lord, in me, not my work, but thine own; if thou regardest my work, thou damnest me; if thine own, thou crownest me, since whatsoever good I have, I have it from thee, and therefore it is rather thine than mine. Well, then, no mere man is good, that is, good of himself.

2. No man is good, that is, absolutely and perfectly good. The perfection of righteousness, so as to do good without sin, is not to be found in any man, no, not in the best man upon earth. In heaven indeed they are made perfect: Heb. 12:23, 'To the spirits of just men

made perfect. But here upon earth 'there is not a just man that doeth good; and sins not,' Eccles. 7:20, but either at one time or other he will sin; or in the same action none doeth good and sins not. Noah, Abraham, Lot, Moses, David, Peter, they had all their nævos, their blots and blemishes; nay, in all things, in their best actions there is somewhat faulty and defective. Nehemiah, where he doth appeal to God for the remembrance of his great works, he desireth God to spare him according to the greatness of his mercy: Neh. 13:22, 'And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come, and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath-day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.' And we read of Aaron's 'bearing the iniquity of the holy things,' Exod. 28:38; and 'in many things we offend all,' James 3:2. Some in all things, and all in some things, either by way of omission or commission. This is true of regenerate and unregenerate.

[1.] As to the unregenerate. When God looked upon his creatures as they passed his hands, he saw all was good, Gen. 1:31; but when he looked down from heaven upon men in their natural condition, and as they had made themselves and defiled themselves, so 'they were altogether become filthy and abominable, and there is none that doeth good, no not one,' Ps. 13:3; and 'there is none righteous, no not one,' Rom. 3:10; that is, pleasing and acceptable with God; it is true of them, none is good.

[2.] As to the regenerate, none is good, that is, wholly free from sin. Paul complains, 'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing,' Rom. 7:18. And Christ saith to his own disciples, those who were the children of God, those to whom he makes a promise of the Spirit, Luke 11:13, 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children,' &c. Even the children of God are evil in this sense, that is, not perfectly good. In optimis non nihil est pessimi—There is some evil in the best. (1.) There is evil in their natures; there are the relics and remainders of much sinful corruption, the flesh and spirit; like Hannah and Peninnah, always

vexing and thwarting one another: Gal. 5:17, 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.' The most of the sanctifying grace which we have is the least part of that which we want and that we should have. In the best, sin is like a wild fig-tree; cut off the boughs and branches, yet still there will be some strings that will be sprouting out again; or like the leprosy in the house that could not be cured by scraping, till it was pulled down to the ground. There is a tincture of the old leaven which remains in the best heart. (2.) There is evil in their best actions: Isa. 64:6, 'But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;' not only our sins, but our righteous operations; the productions of the soul cannot exceed the force of our principles, and if there be a double principle, there must be a double operation. (3.) There is new evil which we contract by our actions: John 17:10, 'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet.' He that is purged from sin, and washed, contracts new soil. In bono itinere pulverem colligis, saith Bernard—In the good we do we contract filth, as we gather new dust in our walking up and down. So that none is perfectly thoroughly good.

3. No man is good in comparison with God. That goodness that we have in participation from him will appear no goodness in comparison with him. If the heavens themselves, the purest part of the world, are not clean in his sight, how much more evil is man? Job 25:5, 6, 'Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not, and the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man that is a worm, and the son of man, which is a worm?' Elsewhere it is said, 'He chargeth his angels with folly,' Job 4:18. If he charge his angels with folly, that is, if he seeth mutability in the angelical nature, take it in itself, and without his confirming grace, there is folly in the angels, then what is man, whose foundation is in the dust? When the prophet Isaiah had seen God in a vision, and heard the angels cry, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts!' Isa. 6:3, what then? ver. 5, 'Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips,' &c. When he had seen God, then he bewails his own vileness. So Job 42:5, 6, 'Now mine eyes have seen thee, wherefore I

abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' The consideration of God's holiness and dignity obscureth all the glory and praise of the creature. As when the sun is up, the lustre of the stars is no more to be seen than as if they were not, so when God is thought on, and we are compared with him, there are none good, no not one. While we compare ourselves with one another, one may be called bad, another good; but when we compare ourselves with God, no man is good. Look, as it is in respect of entity or being, none is but God; when other things are compared with God, they are called things that are not; so it is true of goodness, we are not good when compared with a holy God. 'I am more brutish than any man,' saith Agur, Prov. 30:2. This was a lesson Christ would teach the pharisee, to bring him to humility and self-annihilation.

Use 1. I might take occasion hence to confute two popish errors. One is touching the state of perfection in this life, that some men endowed with special grace may keep the law perfectly; but if they could do so, they could be without sin, and perfectly good. Now who can say, 'I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin,' Prov. 20:9. Will they reply, that some are free from sin, but out of humility they forbear to say so, propter periculum inanis gloriæ, for fear of vainglory? But there is a truth in the thing, non tantum humiliter, sed veraciter dicunt; where are the saints that dare say they are free from sin? It is not a complimentary speech: 1 John 1:8, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' He doth not say, as Austin observes, *Nulla est humilitas in nobis*—There is no humility in us; but, *Nulla est veritas*—There is no truth. When Paul said he was 'the chiefest of sinners,' 1 Tim. 1:15, and 'the least of the apostles,' and 'not meet to be called an apostle,' 1 Cor. 15:9, it was not a fit of humility, but a pang of conscience that forced him to make that confession. Another error this confuteth is the doctrine of merit; for if no man be good, no man can merit anything at all at God's hands. The best of God's children have no other claim but the mercies of God and the merits of Christ: Rev. 7:14, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in

the blood of the Lamb.' It was not their innocence and faithfulness that recommended them to God; those that are most righteous in active or passive obedience need washing; it is Christ's satisfaction must make them white; they could not appear before God in their own holiness. Therefore Paul desireth, Phil. 3:9, 'To be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' They were cleansed from the guilt of their sins, not by their own sufferings, but by the blood of Christ.

Use 2. This should ever keep us humble in ourselves, for all the good in us is of God; and it should keep us in a self-loathing frame and posture of spirit, for there is none of us perfect, especially when we come to God.

1. It should ever keep us humble, for all the good that is in us, natural and spiritual, is not of ourselves, but of God: 1 Cor. 4:7, 'Who made thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou hast not received?' If we be proud of anything, it is that we are more in debt than others; for all is from God, for of ourselves we cannot so much as think a good thought: 2 Cor. 3:5, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.' A thought is less than a desire, and a desire less than an action; now we are so far from perfecting a good action, that we cannot frame a good desire, and so far from lifting up a good desire, that we cannot think a good thought of ourselves; and John 15:5, 'Without me you can do nothing.' He doth not say, *Nihil magnum*, no great thing, not work miracles, but *nihil*, nothing. All the glory is due to him.

2. It should keep us in a self-loathing frame and posture of heart, because the good that is in us is so imperfect and mingled with so much evil of sin. Time was when we were altogether evil, and made a trade and profession of sin: Gen. 6:5, '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.'



And now God hath infused a little good into us, it is like a flower in the midst of many weeds that are ready to choke it, or like fair water running through a sink, that doth always taint and defile it; and therefore this should make us 'loathe ourselves for our ways and doings, that are not good,' Ezek. 36:31. And especially when we come to God in our addresses to him, this should stir up self-loathing and holy shame in us; for then the third consideration comes in, that none is good in comparison with God. When we repair to God, we have actual thoughts of his purity and holiness, and therefore should be more deeply possessed with a sense of our own vileness and baseness: Job 40:4, 'Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee, I will lay mine hand upon my mouth;' Gen. 18:27, 'Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes.' If the seraphim clap their wings on their faces, as abashed at God's holiness, Isa. 6:2, oh! how much more should the saints, when they set themselves in God's special presence, and behold God, as it were, looking with a full eye upon them, and looking him full in the face, how should they loathe themselves in a sense of their own vileness!

Use 3. It instructeth us, since none is good, where our happiness lieth, not in the plea of innocency, but in the pardon of sin: Ps. 32:1, 2, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.' Which must be humbly sought out in the name of Christ; not blessed is the man who hath no sin, but blessed is the man whose sin is pardoned; so it necessarily brings us to submit to the righteousness of Christ: Rom. 10:3, 'For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.' The proud heart of man is loath to stoop, or be beholden to another; we prize a patched coat of our own rather than a velvet coat of another's. Nothing driveth us to a necessity of this submission so much as this consideration—

Doct. 2. That God only is good.

The goodness of God cometh under a twofold consideration—there is his goodness in himself, and his goodness to us. The one implies the perfection and excellency of his nature, the other his will and self-propension to diffuse his benefits; the one his perfection, the other his bounty. To speak of these distinctly.

First, The absolute perfection of his nature and being, which is such as nothing is wanting to it or defective in it, and nothing can be added to it to make it better. In the creature there is a more general and natural goodness, and a more special and moral goodness. The natural goodness is the due proportion of a thing to the law and nature of its being, when it is good in its kind; so this first goodness in God is the perfection of his nature. As Philo saith, ὁ οὐτως ὢν τὸ πρῶτον αγαθον, the first being must needs be the first good. As soon as we conceive there is a God, we presently conceive that he is good, as being the fountain and pattern of all the good that is in the creature. As the sun hath light in itself, and giveth light to all other things, so God, that is the principle of all good, must needs be apprehended to be good and perfect. In short, God is good, and only good, four ways—originally, essentially, infinitely, and immutably.

1. Originally. He is αὐταγαθος, good of himself, and from no other, which no creature can be. A creature is only good by participation and communication from God. The good he hath is from the Father of lights: James 1:17, 'Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.' If God had his goodness from any other, then he were not the first cause and the fountain of all things; then there would be something superior to God, and so he could not be God.

2. He is essentially good. Not only good, but goodness itself. Goodness in us is an accessory quality, or a superadded gift, but in God it is not a quality, but his essence. The goodness of God and the goodness of a creature differs, as a thing whose substance is gold differs from that which is gilded and overlaid with gold. A vessel of pure gold, the matter itself gives lustre to it; but in a gilded vessel,

the outward lustre is one thing, and the substance is another. The essence and being of an angel is one thing, and its holiness another; the holiness may be separated from the essence, for the essence and being of the angels was continued when their perfection and goodness was lost; so man's substance is one thing, his holiness another, but in God his goodness is his being. Our first parents continued their being when they lost their integrity; but God cannot be God if he be not good, for goodness is his very essence.

3. God is infinitely good. A creature's goodness is limited, but since the perfection of God is from himself, and not from another, there is nothing to limit it or to give it any measure, and therefore it must be infinite. The goodness of the creature, since it comes from God, is limited according to the measure wherein God will dispense it, to some more, to others less, according as his wisdom thinks fit. God is an ocean without banks or bottom; the goodness of a creature is but a drop from the ocean, or as a nutshell filled with the water of the sea. God loves himself as much as he can be loved. God is so infinitely good as he cannot be better: 1 Sam. 2:7, 'There is none holy as the Lord.'

4. God is immutably good; it cannot be diminished or augmented, for in infiniteness there are no degrees; it can never be more than it is, or less than it is; for God actually hath all possible perfection; there can be no addition made to it. And since he hath it by his essence, and from himself, there can be no subtraction from it, for then God would lose his being; but the goodness of a creature may still be increased to further degrees, or be diminished. No angel is so good but he may be better, and may be diminished and lessened into nothing. Our state is full of changes; as the sea hath its ebbings and flowings, so hath grace a gradual increase or decrease. At first man was peccabilis, he might sin; afterward peccator, a sinner; then he is purified by grace. God is pure, but we are purified, and we may lose all again, if we consider the nature of the thing, but not because of the promise of the covenant. We were once defiled, but God's goodness ever is and ever was in the same fulness.

Use 1. To humble us in our converses with God. He is good, but we are evil; he is heaven, but we are hell; he is perfect, but we are poor defective creatures. Therefore in all our approaches to him we should come the more humbly to him, and go the more holy from him; for it is sad when we come to the good God, and are never the better. If we go to the fire, we expect to be warm. Oh! when you come to the fountain of goodness, we should come away better.

Use 2. To make us thankful. Where we reap any good, comfort, or benefit by man or any of the creatures, we are to bless God, and to be thankful to him especially, from whom all that good cometh. Though we ought not to be unthankful to the instruments of good, yet we ought especially to bless God, for the goodness of the creatures cometh from him: 1 Sam. 25:32, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me.' So Gen. 9:25, 26, 'Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. Blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant.'

Use 3. If we would have good wrought in us, let us look up to God. As rivers are supplied from the sea, the gathering together of all goodness is in God: Exod. 31:13, 'I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.' All we have is a derivation from his fulness, and as a candle lighted at a torch doth not diminish the light of the torch, so God doth not lose by giving.

Use 4. Let us love God, and love him above all things, for he only is good. Goodness is that which is amiable and desirable; so when God is said to be good, we say he is of such an essence as is most amiable and desirable. Therefore let us love God above all things with our chiefest love, for he is most worthy of our love, and by preferring his glory above all things that are dear to us, being content for his sake to part with all which we have in the world, and also to long and wait for that time when we shall fully enjoy him. If the object of love be good, there is none good but one, which is God; he is good of

himself, good in himself, yea, goodness itself; there is no good above, or besides, or beyond him; it is all from him, if it be good.

1. He is primitively and originally good, good of himself, which nothing else is, and therefore he is called 'the fountain of living waters,' Jer. 2:13. The creatures are but dry pits and broken cisterns. Other things, what goodness they have is of him, therefore it is infinitely better and greater in him than in them.

2. He is the chiefest good. Other things are good in subordination to him. All the goodness that is in the creature is but a spark of that good which is in God. If we find any good there, it is not to detain our affections, but to lead us to a greater good; not to hold us from him, but to lead us to him, as the streams lead us to the fountain, and the steps of a ladder are not to stand still upon, but to lead us higher. If the prince should woo us by messengers, and we should leave him and cleave to the messengers, this were extreme folly, and a great abuse and wrong to the prince. By the goodness of the creatures, God's end is to draw us to himself as the chiefest good. Here is goodness in the creature, but it is mixed with imperfection; the goodness is to draw us to God, the imperfection to drive us from the creatures.

3. He is infinitely good. In choosing God for our portion, one hath not the less because another enjoyeth it with him; here is a sharing without division, and a partaking without the prejudice of copartners. We straiten others in worldly things so much as we are enlarged ourselves; finite things cannot be divided but they must be lessened, they are not large enough to be parted. But this good is infinite, and sufficeth the whole world; every one possesseth this portion entire, as the same speech may be heard of all, and yet no man heareth the less because another hears it with him, or as no man hath the less light because the sun shineth to more than himself. The Lord is all in all; the more possess him the better: as in a choir of voices, every one is not only solaced with his own voice, but by the harmony of those that sing in consort with him. Many a

fair stream is drawn dry, or runneth low by being dispersed into several channels, but that which is infinite cannot be lessened.

4. He is eternally good, immutably good, and so the most durable portion: Ps. 73:26, 'God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.' The good things of this life are perishing, and of a short continuance. We leave other good things when we begin to take possession of God. At death wicked men perceive their error, when the good which they have chosen cometh to be taken from them; but a man that hath chosen God for his God entereth into the full possession of him. Well, then, other good things may busy and vex us, but they cannot satisfy us; this alone sufficeth all; it giveth health, and peace, and honour, and glory. Necessities that are not satisfied by him are fancies, and the desires of them are not to be satisfied, but mortified. If we have not enough in God, it is not the default of our portion, but the defect of our capacity.

Secondly, Good is good as it implieth his bounty and beneficence. So he told Moses, Exod. 33:19, 'I will make all my goodness to pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy;' so Exod. 34:6, 7, 'The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.' Bonum est primum et potissimum nomen Dei—Damascene. Goodness is the first and chiefest name of God. We cannot conceive of him by anything that concerneth us so much as by his goodness; by that we know him, and for that we love him. We admire him with reverence for his other titles, but this doth first insinuate with us, and command our respect to him. The first temptation that ever was in the world was this, to weaken the conceit of his goodness to the creature; the devil would fain have persuaded Adam and Eve that God was not so good to them as they thought, but that he envied their happiness. The heathens had a conceit that the God-head was envious, harsh, and sour in his

restraints. Still the children of God find it a great temptation; nothing withdraws their heart from God so much as this, when the esteem of God's goodness is lessened; therefore the psalmist cries out, 'Truly God is good to Israel,' Ps. 73:1.

Now this goodness of God's or his bounty, is twofold—

1. Common and general to all creatures, especially to mankind: Ps. 145:9, 'The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works;' to all things, to all persons, he bestoweth many common blessings upon them, as natural life and being, health, wealth, and the like. Nay, he is good to the young ravens: Ps. 147:9, 'He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.' He is good to wicked men: Mat. 5:45, 'He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' Nay, even to idolaters: Acts 14:17, 'He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness.' God might have testified his godhead and being by acts of vengeance, but he would rather among the heathens testify it by acts of bounty; though they were a bad people, yet they had a good God.

2. His more especial goodness towards his church and faithful people, whom he blesseth with spiritual and saving benefits in Christ. So it is said, Ps. 84:11, 'No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly;' Lam. 3:25, 'The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.' There is a peculiar goodness which God hath to his people, and all his blessings to them come from it: 2 Thes. 1:11, 'That God would fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness.'

Use 1. The consideration of his goodness is matter of great comfort to the godly and faithful at all times but especially in the time of trouble and distress. At all times: Ps. 100:5, 'For the Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations.' Here is the stability of the saints, which keeps them in life, and

heart, and comfort in all conditions, but especially in a time of want and afflictions, inward or outward. It is a great cordial of the saints to think of the goodness of God. Do we want direction? Ps. 119:68, 'Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.' Do we want support and deliverance? Nahum 1:7, 'The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him.' Do we feel the burden of sin, or do we fear the wrath of God? Ps. 86:5, 'For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive.' When his old sins troubled him: Ps. 25:7, 'Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to thy mercy, remember me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord.' Do enemies insult, and boast, and threaten much? Ps. 52:1, 'Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually.' Though they have never so much might and power, and do never so much machinate against you, yet they cannot take away the goodness of God, therefore you have no cause to be discouraged. God may seem to break down the hedge, and forget his poor servants, and leave them as a prey to their enemies, yet he changeth not his affection to them. In the agonies of death here is our cordial and support. Austin, when he came to die, had this speech to those that were about him, *Non sic vixi, ut me pudeat inter vos vivere, nec mori timeo, quia bonum habeo Dominum*—I have not so lived as that I should be ashamed to live among you, and I have not so believed as that I am afraid to die, for I have a good God. This supports us, and is a very great cordial to our heart; he is a good God to all that put their trust in him.

Use 2. Let it move all to repentance: Rom. 2:4, 'Despise thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?' God is good, but not to those that continue in their sins. There is hope offered. Oh! come, try, see how good he will be to you: Ps. 34:8, 'O taste, and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him.' If goodness be despised, it will turn into fury. In point of gratitude the goodness of God should melt our hearts into godly sorrow for sin. The kindness from men melteth us, it is as coals of



fire, as fire melts a thing, and makes it capable of any impression. The borrower is a servant to the lender. God hath not lent, but given us all that we have. Oh! let it break our hearts with sorrow that we should offend so good and bountiful a God. Saul had but a rough military spirit, yet when he heard how kind David had been to him in sparing his life, 'He lift up his voice and wept,' 1 Sam. 24:16. Methinks when we hear how good God hath been to us all our days, this should make us ashamed of the insolences and abuses we have put upon him. Every man will condemn him that wrongs one that never hurt him. God hath done us no hurt, but a great deal of good. What! will you sin against God, that is so good in himself, and so good to all his creatures, and return evil for all his goodness to you? I beseech you by the mercies of God, deal not so unkindly; how can you sin against him, and abuse all his mercies?

Use 3. Honour and praise him for this in word and deed: Ps. 118:1, 'O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good.' You all have tasted of the goodness of God, now what shall be done to the Lord for this? Certainly we should be good, and do good, that we might imitate our heavenly Father.

## **SERMON III**

Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honour thy father and mother.—MARK 10:19.

IN former discourses upon this context, you have heard of a necessary question asked, and that by a young man, concerning the way to eternal life. He doth not put it upon good words, or anything less than good works really to be done, 'What good thing must I do that I may inherit eternal life?' Yet, because he spoke in a legal sense, Christ accommodates his answer thereunto. First he gives answer to his compellation, 'Good Master,' and now to his question,

to convince his conscience, and bring him to brokenness of heart, and now remitteth him to his rule.

1. He mindeth him of his pattern, 'Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, which is God.' This young man had too high a conceit of his own goodness, therefore Christ shows him that originally and absolutely that title belongeth to God only.

2. He refers him to his rule. Though we be not so perfect as God is perfect, yet if we answer our rule, the law given to us, it is enough for us creatures, and therefore the young man is put upon that trial. Thou art not good as God is good, so thou canst not be, for God alone is good; yet 'thou knowest the commandments, do not commit adultery,' &c. Observe here—

[1.] Christ directeth him to the commandments for an answer to his question. The question was, 'What must I do that I may inherit eternal life?' Christ saith, 'Thou knowest the commandments,' &c. That here is a direct answer to the question appeareth by comparing the evangelists; for we see, Matthew 19:17, 18, it is drawn dialogue-wise thus, 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery,' &c. If thou lookest to be saved by doing, keep the law perfectly.

[2.] For the particular commandments, he instanceth in those commandments for his trial which were more apt to convince him of his sin and of his imperfection: and here it is notable that they are all of the second table, 'Do not kill, do not commit adultery,' &c. And there is one clause, 'defraud not,' that is left out in Luke; and in Matthew instead thereof there is put this general clause, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' Mat. 19:19.

Three questions then are necessary for explication—

(1.) Why Christ refers him to the commandments?

(2.) Why the commandments of the second table are only mentioned?

(3.) Why, seeing it is plain that the six commandments of the second table are alluded unto, 'defraud not' is put for the last commandment, 'Thou shalt not covet?' for of the method wherein they are recited we need not move any doubt, for Christ beginneth with the negatives, and the affirmative precept is put last, as a thing not accurately to be stood upon.

Quest. 1. Why Christ refers him to the commandments? The reason of the doubt is this, because the fallen creature can never be justified or saved by his own works: Rom. 3:20, 'Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight;' Titus 3:5, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us;' 2 Tim. 1:9, 'Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace;' Eph. 2:8, 9, 'For by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.' The scripture doth always run in this strain; yea, Christ himself puts salvation upon another score, upon believing in him: John 3:16, '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.' Why then doth Christ refer him to the commandments? I answer—Christ speaketh not this as if any man could be saved and justified by the works of the law. It was far from our Saviour's meaning to foment such an error; but the scope of his speech is to show that it is in vain to inquire for the way to heaven while men trust to their own righteousness; and therefore good works and obedience to the law are proposed to convince him of his impotency, to humble him in the sense of his guilt, to drive him out of himself, and to draw him to seek salvation by a better covenant, or if not, to leave him without excuse. That this was Christ's aim, to show him his sin, and miserable condition, and disability to be justified by the law, will appear by these following considerations—

It was necessary this man should be treated in this way, for the many errors wherewith he was tainted required it; as (1.) To draw him again to the service of God from those traditions and human observances in which the pharisees placed most of their religion and piety; and therefore Christ mentions not 'the traditions of the elders,' but 'the commandments of God.' (2.) To draw him from the law ceremonial, which was to be abolished, to the law moral. He mentioneth not the ceremonial law, which the Jews strictly observed, but moral duties. (3.) To beat down his presumption, whereby he believed that the law was easy for him to accomplish. Such as seek justification and eternal life by works must be taught that to keep the whole law in all points without the least sin is the only way to heaven by works, which way to every man now polluted by sin is impossible. There was no better course to humble a pharisee than by referring him to his own covenant rightly understood, to let him see the perfection and spiritual sense of it, and so to bring him to a knowledge of sin, that he might learn to seek God's favour by the Mediator, who is the 'end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,' Rom. 10:4. That is to say, the end of giving the law by Moses was that men might thereby be brought to the knowledge of their sins, and so be necessitated to fly for refuge to Christ and his righteousness, who hath perfectly fulfilled the law for us. If any man think that this consisted not with the simplicity of Christ's instruction, especially when such a serious question was proposed to him, 'What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' and that it may seem to countenance their error who sought righteousness by the law to refer such to the commandments: I answer—

1. Christ used the same method that God did in giving the law upon Mount Sinai. Why did God give it then but to break a stiff-necked people, trusting to their own strength, by this exact yoke of duty, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear? That, seeing their manifold guilt, in which all are inevitably involved by the violation of the law, they might be burdened and condemned in themselves, and so fly to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins

of the world, as he was represented to them in the sacrifice and burnt-offering. That this was God's end in giving the law, see Rom. 5:20, 21, 'Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord;' and Gal. 3:19, 'Wherefore then serveth the law? it was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.' Suitably here Christ having to do with a man that was puffed up with an opinion of his own righteousness and strength, as if he had already discharged the whole duty of the law, and was ready and able to do whatsoever should be further required of him in order to eternal life, to humble him, Christ referreth him to the commandments, and so layeth a groundwork of convincing him of base idolatry, in loving riches more than God and eternal life; so that his end was not to foster and increase his presumption, but by urging the law which he professed to stand to, to convince him of his own baseness, and the necessity of seeking another righteousness.

2. Practical conviction is best, and men never see their unworthiness so much as when they are held to their own covenant, and we are so far to condescend to the humours of men as to convince them and condemn them in their own way. As Festus told Paul, Acts 25:12, 'Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar shalt thou go.' As a presumptuous sick man, that is strongly conceited he is able to leave his bed and walk up and down, the best way to confute him is by trial. Or a phrenetic person, or a man that is distempered with melancholy fancies, wise physicians indulge the humour a little, that by dealing with them in their own way they may afterwards the better dispossess them of their vain conceits. If men will go to heaven by doing, let them know what doing is required: Gal. 4:21, 'Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?' If men will betake themselves to stand to or fall by the sentence of the law or covenant of works, let them see how it will succeed with them.

3. It was a truth Christ spake, 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;' but we must consider his intention. Though men's trusting in their own works is displeasing to God, yet good works are not displeasing to him; and therefore there can be no hurt in pressing men to these, yea, by the rewards propounded in the legal covenant. Therefore Christ might say, 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;' the old legal proposal showing how valuable they are in their own nature, and the words being also capable of a gospel sense: Heb. 12:14, 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord;' Eph. 2:10, 'For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.'

Quest. 2. Why the commandments of the second table are only mentioned? for since those duties which belong to the first table are more excellent, as concerning the worship of God, and they are more strict and inward, and therefore would seem to be fittest to bring the man to a sense of his condition, why doth Christ refer him to the second table? I answer—

1. In these the pharisees conceived themselves to be most perfect, and yet these were a sufficient touchstone whereby to try and discover their unfruitfulness and their imperfection. Certainly if they be defective here, there is no standing by the law. If a man cannot go, surely he cannot run; if he cannot spell, surely he cannot read; if men be defective in the duties of the second table, certainly they are not able to keep the law.

2. These are most plain and easy to be understood, and the sins committed against them are most evident and apparent. The duties of the second table are of the lowest hemisphere, and wherein a man can do most if he can do anything; these duties are more written in a man's heart than first table duties. Heathens were fools in worship, as the apostle represents them, Rom. 1:22, 'Professing themselves to be wise they became fools.' Yet as to the duties of the

second table, they were just, charitable, and temperate, and had a great command of their passions, though they were very sottish in their worship: for the benefit of human society God hath left second-table notions more clear upon man's heart.

3. In the externals of the first table the Jews seemed very zealous, but negligent they were of the second; and herein they commonly fail who hypocritically make fair shows of devotion and outward respect to God in worship; as Isa. 1:11, 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats;' when they neglected judgment and justice. So Isa. 66:3, 'He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol.' So Micah 6:7, 8, when they talked of 'rivers of oil, and thousands of rams,' the prophet tells them, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' that they should make conscience of justice and equity in their dealings, and be merciful and charitable. Second-table duties are of greater value than outward ceremonies; therefore, when Christ would convince such a man as this, he refers him to the second-table duties.

Quest. 3. Why μή αποστερήσης, 'Defraud not,' and 'deprive not,' is put for the last commandment, 'Thou shalt not covet?' Certainly that is intended, as is evident to any that shall consider Christ's answer; it fitly shows what kind of coveting is forbidden in the last commandment, namely, such covetings as tend to another's loss. It is a question that hath exercised some how to state the sin forbidden and the duty enjoined in the law.

1. The sin forbidden is coveting, by which is not meant the whole corrupt inclination of our nature, for that is not forbidden in any one commandment but in the whole law; nor all the first stirrings of

that corruption neither, for a great part of them are opposite to religion, and they are forbidden in the first table; nor all those stirrings of corruption which tend to the loss and hurt of our neighbour, for when they proceed to a deliberate consent and purpose, they are forbidden in other commands, of not killing, not stealing, &c. But those first lustings by which the soul is urged to desire any good thing that is our neighbour's, though at first we have not a set purpose to get it by unlawful means, yet when we have a lustful desire of anything that may tend to our neighbour's loss, as Ahab had a lustful desire of Naboth's vineyard as a conveniency, though he promised to give him a better in the room of it, or to give him the worth of it in money; he would have it upon a valuable consideration, by sale or exchange, 1 Kings 21:2. So here, an inordinate desire to have some good thing out of our neighbour's, hand, that is the sin forbidden by 'defraud not,' or 'deprive not,' when we would mend our own portion with the diminution of his.

2. The duty of the law is to rest contented or satisfied with our own portion, or the lot which God hath afforded us, so as not to desire to increase it, or to have anything to ourselves with the loss of another. It is notable that instead of what is here said, 'Defraud not,' it is, Mat. 19:19, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' which, though it be a general that runs through the whole second table, yet it hath a special regard to the tenth commandment, and shows we are to desire the good of others as well as our own, and to think our neighbour as fit to enjoy anything that belongs to him as to think ourselves fit to enjoy that which is our own; to have a full complacency with our own, without a lustful wishing we had anything that is theirs. Not coveting their goods, or desiring any advantage by their loss, or lessening, is the sin forbidden.

Well, now, out of all we may conclude thus: The young man, as to the present posture and frame of his heart, was not fit to be taught faith in Christ, nor the doctrine of the gospel; being conceited of perfection by the works of the law, he was not fit to be sent to the



gospel. In effect Christ saith to him thus: Examine thyself truly, whether thou hast or canst keep the law, for till that point be over, thou art not fit for other things. Go take the second table, the easier part of the law, art thou not defective there?

The point that may be observed from hence will be this—

Doct. That the best way to convince justiciaries or self-righteous men is by holding them to their own covenant, or the covenant of works. Or thus: The true way to prepare men for Christ is to cause them to see their misery and impotency by the law.

To evidence this I will show—(1.) What is the covenant of works; (2.) I will prove that all men by nature are under this covenant; (3.) This is that covenant which natural conscience sticks to; (4.) This covenant, rightly understood, is the most ready way to convince a justiciary, or to prepare men for Christ.

First, What is the covenant of works? I answer—It is the covenant made with Adam in innocency, in which life was promised under the condition of perfect obedience to be performed by a man by his own natural strength.

The parties contracting in this covenant are, God on the one side, and man created in the perfection of nature on the other side, God and Adam with all his posterity; and the terms of this covenant are perfect and unsinning obedience, and this perfect obedience to be performed by us by our own strength: Gal. 3:12, 'The law is not of faith, but the man that doeth them shall live in them;' that is, the law covenant only promiseth life to him that observeth what the law prescribes, and so hath perfect inherent righteousness of his own; it offers life upon no easier terms than constant, universal, perfect obedience. Now the sanction and confirmation of this covenant is by a terrible curse explained by the apostle: Gal. 3:10, '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.' The law pronounceth a curse upon every man who fulfils it not in every tittle and every job of it, and who continues not so to do from the first minute of his life to the hour of his death, which fallen man can never do; and therefore as long as he is under this covenant, he remains under God's curse and wrath. If he omit anything that is required, or commit anything that is forbidden, so that though he should but once sin, he is under the curse.

Secondly, I shall prove that all men by nature are under this covenant till they be reconciled to God by Christ. This covenant concerns all Adam's children until they have a new claim in the second Adam, for God contracted with Adam as a public person, representing all his posterity, and so it concerns not him only, but all his heirs. Take them in their infancy, they are under this covenant, therefore they are said 'to be by nature children of wrath as well as others,' Eph. 2:3. All men are under the deserved curse of the law by reason of sin. Or take them in their grown estate: John 3:18, 'He that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God;' that is, because he is not freed from the covenant of works and the curse of the law by the Son of God. Every unbeliever is condemned already by the sentence of the law, which they lie still under before they lay hold upon Christ, the only remedy for their deliverance. The sentence of the law stands in force till you get it repealed by Christ. And some men will find that this covenant is in force against them at the day of judgment, for then there will be proceedings against them according to it. All the world are judged according to one of these two covenants: James 2:12, 13, 'Some shall be judged according to the law of liberty, others shall have judgment without mercy.' Impotency doth not free any of Adam's sons from this covenant, because this impotency was contracted by our own sin, and doth not make void God's right; as a creditor doth not lose his right by the debtor's inability to pay him. If a man bind himself and his heirs to pay such a sum of money, and he will vainly spend his patrimony, and so render himself unable to pay it, he and his heirs

are still liable to a process as long as the debt remaineth unpaid or unremitted. We and all ours are bound to perfect obedience for the future, and to make satisfaction for sin past, which we, that are poor creatures, sold under sin, are never able to do. Therefore this covenant doth absolutely put us into such a state as that there is no remedy for us but by flying to Jesus Christ

Thirdly, This covenant is that which natural conscience worketh on, and seemeth most so to do; so that when we urge men with this covenant, we do but beat them with their own weapons. When the covenant of works was made with Adam, all mankind were then in his loins; it was made with him in their name; and therefore men by nature do still retain a deep impression of this covenant, as appeareth in that as soon as conscience is awakened, it judgeth men according to this covenant; as Rom. 1:32, the apostle speaks of the heathens, 'Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death.' The benumbed consciences of heathens, when they came to themselves, they were afraid of judgment according to the tenor of this covenant; and the same is seen in the endeavour of a natural conscience to do something that may make a show of good works, and a tolerable plea by this covenant; as in that pharisee's plea, Luke 18:11, 12, 'I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.' Christ speaks it of those that trusted in their own righteousness; the pharisee brings a little trash, a few inconsiderable things, 'I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I possess;' and this is his righteousness. Again, that natural conscience works towards this covenant seems plain by the strange affectation of the righteousness of works which is in all men's hearts, and unwillingness to hear of any other: Rom. 10:3, 'They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.' A man would fain have a personal inherent righteousness in himself; he is loath to be beholden to any other; he would patch up any righteousness of his own, and is prone to trust in it; a proud creature will not submit. Nay, even the regenerate,

God's own children, though they are well instructed in the righteousness of faith, and sufficiently see the impossibility of a righteousness of works, though they have been under brokenness of heart, yet they are ever lingering after this covenant, with a natural desire of it, and to rest in their own duties; and that was the reason of that expression of Luther, Every one of us hath a pope in his own belly; something that pleads there for the merit of works.

Fourthly, This is the most ready way to convince a justiciary, and to prepare men for Christ by a sight and sense of their own sin and misery and impotency by this covenant; and this for several reasons

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Reason 1. Because every man is apt to flatter himself with a spurious covenant of works of his own making, which is the main let and hindrance to keep him from Christ and salvation. There is a twofold covenant of works—one genuine and true, and of God's own institution; another apocryphal and feigned, a bastard covenant of works, and of man's invention; namely, that which a creature unable to perform the duty of the law, or to get from under the curse thereof, frameth out of his own brain, as by doing something in order to our acceptation with God, though not doing all that is required; and to make recompense for the defects in the weighty things by abounding in externals. There is a covenant man makes of himself, by a short exposition of the law, that he may have a large opinion of his own righteousness. It is not for the interest of their quiet and peace that the ell should be longer than the cloth, therefore, because they know they are not able to stand by the true genuine covenant of God's making, they make a covenant of their own, that so a blameless conformity to the outward letter of the law may make a recompense for their other defects, abounding in human inventions and observances of vain rites, as if this would make them acceptable with God. This is the great thing which keeps him off from submitting to the gospel way of faith and repentance, and humbling himself before the Lord.

Reason 2. It must needs be a powerful instrument to prepare men for Christ, because this covenant shuts up a sinner without any hope of relief, unless Christ and grace open the door to him. There are three places of scripture which speak fully to this purpose: Rom. 3:19, 'That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God;' ὑπόδικος τῷ Θεῷ, liable to his process and wrath, nothing to say for themselves, no plea to make by the first covenant: Rom. 11:32, speaking of the Jews, he saith, 'For God hath concluded them all in unbelief.' By this covenant they are as it were shut up in prison, with no way to escape unless grace and mercy open the door. So Gal. 3:22, 'The scripture' (that is, the law covenant) hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.' This covenant accusing, convincing, and condemning all mankind for sin, it doth as it were shut them up under the fearful curse, as a malefactor is shut up in prison; so that a man is forced to lay aside all confidence of any righteousness in himself, and fly for refuge to the promises; and to the righteousness of Christ. Let us see how this covenant shuts men up, and inevitably concludes them lost and undone. If this could be powerfully and thoroughly done, the work of conversion would not be at such a stand. Though all men be in such a cursed condition, yet it is a matter of no small difficulty to convince men of it, or to affect their hearts sensibly with it. Therefore if there were any way to shut them up without all hope, where there is not the least wicket or door open for escape from deserved wrath, then the work would powerfully go on, and they would be necessitated to fly to Christ. Let us see then how this law shuts men up, because the duty of it is impossible, and the penalty intolerable.

1. The duty is impossible. So full and exact is that righteousness that is required by the law covenant in order to life, that it is impossible for the fallen creature ever to perform it: Rom. 8:3, 'What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh.' The law promiseth no good to sinners, but only to the innocent; it reveals no way of taking away sin past, but only of punishing sin, no way for

man once a sinner ever to recover himself; therefore it is become weak, that is, impossible, through our flesh. The weakness of the flesh will not permit it to be fulfilled in that exactness which is required of us. If it could be exactly fulfilled for the future, yet there would be no hopes of life, because of sin past; therefore, to hope our good meanings, good intentions, and endeavours should help us, is to no purpose. A man must, from the first moment of life to the last minute thereof, be perfectly exact with God. Now man, that could not keep himself in innocency, it cannot be thought that he can recover himself when lost.

2. The penalty is intolerable: Gal. 3:10, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' The law is a mouth that speaketh terrible things, it curseth a man in his person, comforts, basket, store, in all things that he hath; all the miseries of this life are included in this curse: Lam. 3:39, 'Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?' Death itself is part of it; it is 'the wages of sin,' Rom. 6:23, and the pains of hell: Matthew 25:41, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.' When the law shall take a sinner by the throat, and say, Pay me what thou owest, alas! what can a poor creature do to avoid the curse or overcome it? Every one of us, in thought, word, and deed, have broken the law of God; now wherewith shall we appease his wrath? We have nothing to give God, or that he will accept at our hands; we cannot hide or withdraw ourselves from the presence of the Lord, for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. We cannot abide this curse, for who can dwell with devouring burnings? Oh! what shall we do then to escape this horrible curse? There is no way but by flying from the sentence of the law to the throne of grace for mercy and pardon. There is no other hope left us, for they that do not betake themselves to the covenant of grace must stand or fall by the sentence of the law; so that this is the most powerful engine to awaken men's consciences, and prepare them for Christ. Therefore for good reason Christ sends this confident young man to the law, 'Thou knowest the commandments.'

Reason 3. There is none passeth into the new covenant till he be driven by the old, and therefore certainly this is the way to prepare a man for Christ, to have some sense and feeling of it in our own heart, and we see we are cursed and undone creatures, and so lie at God's feet with brokenness of heart: Rom. 8:15, 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.' There is a spirit that goes along with every covenant; the spirit of bondage begets fear in all that are under the first covenant, and the spirit of adoption begets hope in all that are under the second covenant: Gal. 2:19, 'I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.' Before we can lay hold of the second covenant, we must be dead to the law. Men are slight and careless until the curse of the law puts them so hard to it, that they are made to despair of getting heaven and salvation by obedience to it. Oh! then, they think of a new life and a new claim. The curse of the law follows them close, makes them utterly despair in themselves; then they are fit to live unto God. The apostle tells us this is the great use for which the law now serveth: Rom. 5:20, 'The law entered, that the offence might abound;' Gal. 3:19, 'Wherefore then serveth the law? it was added because of transgression;' that is, to convince sinners of their lost estate, that men might be sensible of their sins, and so forcibly constrained to make after another righteousness. None pass from one covenant to another but they have a taste of the first.

Use 1. To inform us how the two covenants agree, and are subservient to one another; for these two are not contrary, being both truths revealed by God; they have a mutual respect. The law serveth to make sin known: Rom. 3:20, 'For by the law is the knowledge of sin;' and the gospel holdeth forth the remedy of sin: John 1:29, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' The law points out our need of Christ, 'who is the end of the law for righteousness,' Rom. 10:4. The gospel maketh an offer of Christ, that in him we may have what we could not attain by the law: 1 Cor.1:30, 'For of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and

redemption.' The law discovers those duties wherein a man made righteous ought to walk and testify his thankfulness: Eph. 4:1, 2, 'I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness,' &c. The gospel furnisheth him with spiritual strength to walk in those duties which the law prescribeth: 2 Cor. 3:6, 'The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.' *Lex jubet gratia juvat*—The law commands, but grace helps us. Thus they fairly agree, and are mutually useful.

Use 2. To awaken our consciences to consider upon what terms we stand with God, and by what covenant we can plead with him, by the covenant of works, or by the covenant of grace. If we be yet under the covenant of works, and have not got the sentence of the law repealed, O miserable creatures! there is no hope: Ps. 130:3, 4, 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' If God should deal with us in a way of strict justice, according to the tenor of the law and the covenant of works, no man can escape condemnation and the curse. There is another covenant, but how will you decline judgment according to the first covenant?

1. There is no hope of your pleading another covenant till you own the first covenant to be just, and with brokenness of heart you look upon yourselves as shut up under the curse, and you acknowledge yourselves lost and undone sinners. The great thing that this young man wanted was brokenness of heart, and therefore Christ would have him see himself in the law. The heirs of promise are described to be those 'that have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them,' Heb. 6:18. It is an allusion to those that fled for their life. If one had killed a man by chance, and not out of malice prepenes, there was a city of refuge appointed; and if he fled there before the avenger of blood, the next of kin, seized upon him, the man was safe. None are brought in to Christ, but they come as those that have the avenger of blood following them: they are driven, and must away from the first covenant by a deep sense of their misery. Men that are heart-whole, and have only doctrinal notions about the



two covenants, without feeling the force of either, and being driven out of themselves to lie at God's feet for mercy, they as yet remain under the old covenant, and need be prepared by this breaking work. Indeed, degrees are different, but all feel some trouble, some great horror and despair, but others with anxiousness and solicitude; the curse is at their heels, therefore they desire to be found in Christ. Now have you felt anything of the spirit of bondage? The deepness of the wound is not to be looked after, but the soundness of the cure; but yet some wound there will be. And therefore, till there be some grief, and shame, and sorrow, and bitter remorse because of sin, a smiting upon the thigh because of the indignation of the Lord, and humbling ourselves before God, we are not fit for mercy. We are not heirs of the promise if we do not hasten to the hope set before us.

2. They that do as yet trust to their good meanings and endeavours, and seek salvation by their own doing, must yield perfect obedience to the law of God, or else they cannot obtain eternal life; we make this to be our covenant, by sticking to any one work of ours: Gal. 5:2, 3, 'Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing; for I testify again to every one that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.' If another man had spoken this, possibly you would have judged him rash and uncircumspect; but 'I Paul say unto you;' I that have an apostolical authority, I that know the mind of Christ, I testify this again and again, that observing any one ceremony, as part of a man's righteousness necessary to salvation, cuts off the observer from all benefit by Christ; he is a debtor to the duty of the whole law, he obligeth himself to perfect obedience, without which the law cannot justify any; he saith it again and again, that man might take heed. This trust in his own righteousness in effect is a renouncing the gospel covenant. Christ must be our whole righteousness, and a complete Saviour, or not at all. If we rely upon anything besides him, or jointly with him as a meritorious cause of salvation, we lose all hope and comfort by Christ. This is the great concernment of the

soul, therefore to be inculcated with such seriousness and earnestness.

3. By living in any known, allowed, reigning sin, shows we have no claim to the second covenant. Saith David, Ps. 19:13, 'Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; so shall I be upright, and shall be innocent from the great transgression.' Our qualification under the second covenant is not a soul exactly perfect, but a soul sincere. Now, if any sin hath dominion over us, our sincerity is gone: Rom. 6:14, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.' There were no cogency in the argument if men under grace could live under the dominion of any one sin; they are shut up by the curse. We must look to Christ, and give up ourselves to him. This man in the text had the love of the world reigning in his heart, and Christ turns him away, and afterwards it is said, 'He went away sad.'

Use 3. To instruct us, if we would be prepared for Christ, what we must do; we must study the law, the purity of it, and the binding force it hath on all under it.

1. We must be able to understand it. Christ saith to the young man, 'Thou knowest the commandments;' he appealeth to him as to one that had some knowledge of the law. Those that live in the church should not be ignorant of the commandments or law of God, but well acquainted with them. God complaineth, Hosea 8:12, 'I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.' To be strangers to the word of God, little conversant in it, and to make little use of it, is a great affront done to God. We should acquaint ourselves not with the letter only, as little children learn it by rote, but with the sense and purpose of it.

2. Meditate often thereupon: Ps. 1:2, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' Deep and ponderous thoughts have most efficacy; without a study of the law

men are without the law while they have it: Rom. 7:9, 'I was alive without the law once.' Who more zealous for the law than Paul? Gal. 1:14, 'I profited in the Jew's religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers;' but while he did not ponder of it, he was without the law.

3. Judge yourselves by it. One great use for which the moral law serveth is to bring men to a sight and sense of their sins and imperfections, and humble them before God: Rom. 7:7, 'I had not known sin but by the law, for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet;' and to undeceive them of conceits of their own goodness and righteousness. Look into thy bill, what owest thou?

4. Beg the light of the Spirit to show thee thy sin and misery: Rom. 7:9, 'When the commandments came;' in the light and evidence of the Holy Spirit, 'sin revived and I died.' Men that have the letter of the law may be without the light and power of it. Without the Spirit we guess confusedly concerning things, as the man that saw men like trees walking, and have but general, cursory, confused thoughts.

## **SERMON IV**

And he answered, and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.—MARK 10:20.

You have heard of a necessary question propounded by a noble young man to Christ, 'What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' We have spoken to Christ's answer. Now in this verse we have

the young man's reply, 'All these have I observed from my youth;' wherein there is expressed, or pretended at least—

1. An universality of respect to the will of God, 'All these have I observed.'

2. An early beginning to do so, 'From my youth.' He was still a young man, but by these words, 'from my youth,' he means, ever since I had the use of reason, as soon as I began to distinguish between good and evil, straight and crooked. Certainly this answer were good if it were true. Some goodness there is in it, therefore we will observe something from it; for it is said in the next verse, when he had answered thus, 'Jesus, beholding him, loved him.'

First, It is good in the first respect, as an universality of obedience is pretended; and I may drop this note—

Doct. They that would keep the commandments must observe not only one but all.

It is true of the law of God, as it belongeth to the covenant of works or to the covenant of grace.

1. As it belongeth to the covenant of works: Gal. 3:10, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are Written in the book of the law to do them.' Every sin, the least, is damnable by that covenant, and deserveth a curse; if he should omit anything required, or commit anything forbidden, the curse seizeth upon his throat. So James 2:10, 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.' As one condition not observed forfeits the whole lease, therefore it concerns this legalist to make good his plea and conceit of perfection by the law, to say, 'All these things have I done.'

2. But is not the covenant of grace more favourable? No; it gives not allowance to the least failings, but binds us to make conscience of all, as well as of some.

[1.] Because the authority is the same: Exod. 20:1, 'God spake,' not one or two, but all these words; they are all ratified by the great God and lawgiver; so that the same reason that moves us to one, moves us to another also, that we do it out of conscience to God: we must 'walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work,' Col. 1:10. That we should obey parents, keep the sabbath, not steal, be careful of his institutions, not worship him by an idol; this is pleasing to God, and so is that.

[2.] The heart can never be sincere when we can dispense with anything which God hath commanded; and you cannot have the testimony of a good conscience approving your sincerity when you allow yourselves in the least failing: Ps. 119:6, 'Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments.' I confess it is chiefly meant of our final judgment; but in all conditions in the world, if we would be found faithful with God, and not left to shame, we must respect all his commandments: Luke 1:6, Zachary and Elizabeth 'were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless;' and, saith David, Ps. 66:18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' If you would not break your confidence and freedom of heart when you come to God in prayer, but come with assurance of welcome and audience, not one sin must be regarded. When we set up a toleration in our own hearts, and dispense with any one duty, it is either some pleasure or profit or honour that maketh the duty contrary to us; but this will not stand with sincerity, that any petty interest or affection of ours should be preferred before the will of God; for these men do not serve God, but their own lusts, when they will only obey God so far as pleasure, honour, or profit, or some lust, will permit them to yield obedience to him.

[3.] God giveth grace to keep all. Wherever he renews and sanctifies, is throughout; he fills the soul with the seeds of all grace, so as to dispose and incline us to every duty, whether to God or man, the world or our fellow-saints: 2 Peter 1:7, 'Add to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.' An infant as soon as

born into the world, though it hath not the bulk, stature, and strength of a man, yet it hath all the essentials of a man, and is a perfect man. In the new birth the inward man is perfect in parts; all grace is given that is necessary for all conditions: 'Ye are enriched in all things in Christ;' there is a suitableness to the whole law of God: Rom. 7:22, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man.'

Use. To reprove those that would keep some commandments, but not all. Herod did something at the motion of John the Baptist, but he would not leave his incestuous marriage with his brother's wife. Some persons may be very forward in some good things, but they will not leave this or that sin, their swearing, or lying, or uncleanness, or vain company, or gaming, or idle fashions; they refrain some sins, but not all; some duties you shall have them very forward in, but not all; they are halving it with God. There is such an union betwixt all the parts of the law of God, that one cannot be violated without a breach of all the rest. As one leak in a ship, if let alone, may sink it, so one sin indulged and allowed may prove the bane of the soul; and therefore take heed of obeying God by halves, and think not to please him, or have any true comfort in thy conscience, by any such obedience. The young man so far spake well, if he had spoke truly, 'All these have I kept.'

Secondly, There is another thing that is good in the reply the young man maketh, that is his early beginning: I have kept all 'from my youth.' It is certainly a good thing to begin with God betimes, and to frame our hearts to the will of God as soon as we come to years of discretion, and that upon a threefold reason—

1. Because it will be a help to us all our lives afterwards, before affections are forestalled and pre-engaged, to begin with God, and to have the inclinations of youth set right by a good education, to be restrained from our own will, and be trained up in a way of abstinence from bodily pleasures. A sober education prevents much sin: Ps. 119:9, 'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.' Mark, it is not

wherewith shall a young man guide or direct, but cleanse his way. When men are well principled and seasoned in youth, it sticketh by them; nay, the vessel is seasoned already. The word cleansed presupposeth some defilement. A child is not like a vessel which newly comes out of the potter's shop, indifferent for good or bad infusions. No; the vessel is fusty already, and hath a smatch of the old man: we come seasoned into the world, for we were born in sin and in iniquity: Ps. 51:5, 'Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' Well, then, to begin betimes, what good may we get by it! Our work is to stop the growth of sin, and that we do not settle in an evil course, and that will be a great advantage to us all our life after. On the other side, the want of a good education is a great disadvantage to grace, a maim hardly cured; it leaves a scar, and makes a man limp as long as he lives, if he doth not begin with God betimes, though afterwards he be converted; for when a man is not framed betimes to God, he suffers the canker of self-will to fret so deep, that reason, law, and religion hath much ado to bring them to the denial of themselves. To give you an instance in Adonijah, 1 Kings 1:5, 6, 'Who exalted himself, saying, I will be king.' A rough self-willed young man; he would have sovereignty and a crown, and not stay for it till David was dead, or submit to the appointment of a successor: 'I will be king;' and why? It is said, 'His father had not displeased him at any time, in saying, Why hast thou done so?' He had too much of his will when he was a youth. As Plutarch noteth of Coriolanus, a noble Roman, that for want of a good and seasonable education, being left young under the tutelage of his mother, and she left him to his own will, was so impatient and wilful that no man could hardly converse with him. O christians! when religion begins late, and men have to do with corruptions habituated and confirmed by long time and loose education, it cannot show itself with such lustre and advantage. Therefore it is good to break the will of young ones, to train them up to bear the yoke from their youth; otherwise though they should be subdued by grace and in a great measure broken, yet this disadvantage remains with them to their dying day. Those that are seasoned well with sober education, either they are not so bad as

others, or it worse becomes them to do evil, and they cannot sin without many checks of conscience which others have not. Therefore a good and sober education is a great advantage, to be trained up from our youth, though it be but to moral virtue.

2. While parents and governors are careful to season those tender vessels, the Lord is pleased many times to replenish them with grace from above, and to give in his blessing upon their education, and many have been converted that way. We read of Obadiah, 1 Kings 18:12, 'But I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.' Josiah, 2 Chron. 14:3, 'In the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father.' So Timothy, 2 Tim. 1:5, 'When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also.' His mother and grandmother were full of faith and sobriety, and they were seasoning of him, and training him up from his youth to be acquainted with the will of God; and what a notable instance of abstinence and sobriety did he prove: 2 Tim. 3:15, 'And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.' Certainly it is much to have youth brought up in knowledge and in the power of godliness. Families are societies to be sanctified to God as well as churches, and governors of families have a charge of souls as well as pastors of churches, and therefore they should be careful of them, and may wait for God's blessing upon the education of youth. There be many offer their children to God in baptism (and they do well in so doing), but educate and train them up for the world and the flesh which they renounce in baptism. You will bewail any natural defect of your children, and seek to cure it while they are young, if they have a stammering tongue, a deaf ear, or a lame leg; certainly you ought much more to bewail the want of grace. We murmur at outward defects, which is a taxing of providence, it being a fruit of the Lord's dominion; but these belong to our care: 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it,' Prov. 22:6. Dye the cloth in the wool, and not in the web, and the colour is



more durable. God works strangely in children, and many notable things have been found in them beyond expectation.

[3.] It prevents many sins which afterwards would be a trouble to us when we are old. Oh! many think that the tricks of youth are long since forgotten and forgiven; but alas! the guilt of them may fly in our faces afterward; nay, though they be pardoned, and the persons reconciled to God. The sins of youth trouble many a tender conscience in age; witness David, Ps. 25:7, 'Remember not the sins of my youth.' And Job, chap. 13:26, 'Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.' A good man may remember old sins with new fears that they are not pardoned. While it is easy to sin, it is easy to believe the pardon of sin (marvel not at the expression); while we are young, and sin freely, we think God will forgive those sins, and they will soon be forgotten; but as a man grows up into more tenderness of conscience, and into a greater awe, and sense, and esteem of God's holiness, what a holy God he serves, he finds it the more difficult to believe the pardon of sin. Good men have with much bitterness of soul called to mind the sins of their youth, when they see the sins of their younger days are so many, and the breaches of God's law so innumerable, whereby they have offended God, that either through ignorance or inconsideration they have so sinned against God that they have much ado to believe the pardon of the multitude of their youthful sins. New afflictions may awaken the sense of old sins, as old bruises may trouble us long after upon every change of weather. There are some that feel the sins of their youth in their bodies, when the pains and aches of their miserable age are the fruits of their youthful vanities and intemperance; as it is said, Job 20:11, 'His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust.' They carry the marks of their youthful sins; their bones feel them till they lie down in the dust. Nay, God's children, that have repented, and God hath been reconciled to them through Christ, they have many a bitter remembrance of their youthful follies and vanities, that make their hearts ache at the thoughts of them: Jer. 31:19, 'Surely after that I was turned I repented, and after

I was instructed I smote upon my thigh, I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.' Therefore upon these considerations certainly it is very good to begin with God betimes, that it may not be a disadvantage to us after God shall call us to grace; for though the Lord may bless the education of youth with supernatural grace, yet youthful vanities may prove very bitter in the remembrance of them when we grow old.

Use. This is spoken to reprove us, because we always think it too soon to begin with God. Where is this timely care and forwardness? Alas! we cannot say, 'All these have we kept from our youth;' but when we come to look to the commands of God, we may say, 'All these have we broken from our youth.' While they are young, most men live profane, and without all fear of God. Certainly there was some goodness in this man's speech, and that occasioned me to observe it, for 'Jesus, beholding him, loved him.'

But was it true? 'All these have I kept from my youth.' In a sense it was true, in regard of outward conformity, but not true in regard of that perfect obedience which was required.

1. It was true in regard of outward conformity. Externally he had kept them all, though not in the just extent of the law, yet he was as to men unreprouable, being no adulterer, no murderer, no extortioner, no thief; he did not lie certainly in this profession he made, he spoke as he thought, and out of simplicity and error rather than deceit; the man lived blamelessly, and did nobody harm, and therefore saith, 'All these have I kept from my youth.' Outward obedience and conformity to the law is a good and commendable thing in itself, yea, necessary, and required of us, but we are not to rest in it; but to escape the vices and pollutions of the world is so far praiseworthy. There are many that are openly profane and wicked in life, swearers, drunkards, sabbath-breakers; these come short of this young man, who yet came short of the kingdom of heaven. What will these say for themselves? Will they pretend that their heart is good? Can a pure fountain send forth impure streams? If the heart

were good, would the life be so naught? If there be light in the lantern, will it not shine forth? If there be grace in the heart it will appear.

2. It was not true in regard of that perfect obedience which the law requireth, and so he ignorantly and falsely supposed that he had kept the law well enough, and done all those things from his youth. The falsity and presumption of this answer will appear by considering—

[1.] What the scripture saith of the state of man by nature: Gen. 8:21, 'The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.' And he saith, 'All these have I kept from my youth.' Oh! how much do they forget themselves that boast of their own perfection!

[2.] The falsity of it appears by the sense of the commandment produced, 'Thou knowest the commandment,' saith Christ, 'Do not commit adultery,' &c., which will reach the most perfect man upon earth. It was a command of the second table, which wrought such tragical effects, and that stirred up those stings of conscience, and agonies of heart in Paul: Rom. 7:7, 'I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet;' and thereupon he groundeth that general, ver. 14, 'The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.'

[3.] The falsity will appear by comparing him with other holy men of God; how differently do they express themselves from this man, that was so full of confidence! Compare him first with Josiah, who, when he heard the law read, 'he rent his clothes,' 2 Kings 22:11; and here Christ recites the law, 'Thou knowest the commandment;' and this young man saith, 'All these have I kept from my youth.' Oh! what a difference is there between a tender self-judging heart and a conceited justiciary! A tender conscience is all in an agony when it hears the law, and will smite for the least failing, as David's heart smote him for cutting off the lap of Saul's garment. Again, compare him with the man that brought his son that was possessed with a

dumb devil; he brought him to Christ to be cured, and Christ asked him, Dost thou believe I can do it? and he cried out with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief,' Mark 9:24. That was a humble spirit indeed; there is a work of faith, 'Lord, I believe;' but he acknowledgeth mixtures of weakness, 'Help thou my unbelief.' But here is no lamenting of defects, 'All these have I kept from my youth.' Good souls, in the best actions they perform, will bewail the mixtures of sin; when they own anything of grace, they are still acknowledging their weakness and many infirmities. We may, and we must, acknowledge the good that is wrought in us, but still we may and we must be sensible of the mixtures of infirmity in our best actions. Again, compare him with Paul; he was one that had cause to stand upon his privileges as much as any; he had all those things which the finer sort of hypocrites can plead and rely upon before they come to Christ. Before he became a christian, he was 'as touching the righteousness which is by the law blameless,' Phil. 3:6. He had a life free from all scandal and any outward vice; yet when he comes to look upon this, he says, 'I count all 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,' ver. 8. Paul was broken-hearted, touched with a sight of sin and deserved wrath; but this man, what an utter stranger was he to this blessed work of brokenness of heart! 'All these have I kept from my youth.'

In short (that I may gather up the discourse), here was wanting Josiah's tenderness, who rent his clothes, and the other man's humility, and Paul's self-denial; therefore certainly his answer shows that he was not truly acquainted either with the law or with himself. So that the note which I shall prosecute will be this—

Doct. That men are too apt to think well of themselves, or of their own goodness and righteousness before God.

Here is a young man drunk with a foolish confidence, and therefore boasteth that he had ever performed his duty. And to be sure he

hath more fellows in the world, some that are as confident as he, but upon far less grounds. It is said of the scribe that came to Christ, Luke 10:29, 'But he willing to justify himself;' that is the temper and disposition of man. So Rom. 10:3, 'For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.' So Rev. 3:17, 'Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' Oh! how apt are many to conceit of themselves beyond what they ought!

Object. But what is the cause that men are so apt to overrate their own righteousness and goodness before God? I answer—Ignorance, error, self-love, negligence, and security.

First, Ignorance; they are ignorant of the law, and of the gospel.

1. Ignorant of the law, of the spiritual meaning of the law. They think they are well enough if they refrain from outward gross sins, and so say, 'All these have I kept,' because they keep it in an outward way; as that pharisee, Luke 18:11, 'God, I thank thee I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.' Men please themselves in this, as if open and gross sinners were only liable to the wrath of God. Oh! how natural is it to us to cut short the sense of the law, that which may suit it to our own practice and our own course of duty! Ignorant persons think that no man is an idolater, or guilty of the breach of the first commandment, but he that doth grossly and openly worship stocks and stones, and beasts and serpents; and none a murderer but he that hath killed a man; none an adulterer but he that hath defiled his neighbour's bed; none a thief but he that robs by the highway side, or that pilfers another's goods. They look to the gross and outward sense of the law, and not to the inward spiritual meaning thereof. The Lord Christ rebukes this ignorance, Mat. 5:22, and shows that rash anger and contumelious words are sins; and he is a murderer not only that doth kill another, but he that breaks out into

passion, that calls his 'brother, fool, he is in danger of hell-fire;' that lustful glances are adultery; that the law requires, not only an external conformity in manners and actions, but purity and righteousness in all our thoughts, internal motions, and the affections of the heart. Therefore the poor ignorant, self-deceiving man, that triumphs over sin as if it were wholly dead in him, because it breaks not out into open wickedness and enormous offences, is wholly mistaken; as Paul was alive without the law. Oh! this man is foully mistaken, for he knows not the law aright; for it doth not only command some external duties, and forbid some of the grosser sins, but reacheth the heart; it condemneth lust, evil concupiscence, and inordinate motions and stirrings. A man that keeps the law only outwardly can no more be said to keep the law than he that hath undertaken to carry a tree, and only takes up a little piece of the bark.

2. They are ignorant of gospel righteousness, which consists in the remission of sins and imputation of Christ's righteousness applied by true faith. What is the reason men are so apt to overrate their own righteousness? 'They are ignorant of the righteousness of God,' Rom. 10:3. They do not know the true plea in the gospel court, which is not innocency, but a broken-hearted confession of sin. That perfection of personal obedience which the legal covenant requireth they acknowledge not; and being ignorant of the second, they patch up a piece as well as they can of the duties of the law ill understood, that the ell may be no broader than the cloth. Ignorance then is one great cause of this disposition in men to justify themselves, ignorance of the legal and gospel covenant; they are ignorant of the nature, merit, and influence of sin, and of the severity of God's justice.

Secondly, Another cause is error. They are leavened with sottish principles, and that disposeth them to a conceit of their own righteousness. I shall name several of them.

1. That they live in good order, and are of a civil harmless life, and are better than others, or better than themselves have been heretofore, and therefore are in good condition before God; and yet a man may be carnal for all this. I will take this principle asunder. Take the positive part: A man may live in good order, be of a civil and harmless life, and yet be destitute of grace and of the life of faith. There were moralities among the heathens far more exact than are to be found among many christians. As dogs excel man in acuteness of smell and sense, it is their perfection, so do many heathens excel abundance that go for christians, in temperance, justice, meekness, and a command of their passions; they that were never acquainted with Christ and the Spirit were civil and harmless; therefore to be a mere moral man certainly is not enough. Paul saith of himself, before he was acquainted with Christ, that he was 'as touching the righteousness which is of the law blameless,' Phil. 3:6; and the apostle hath taught us to live 'godly,' as well as 'soberly and righteously in this present world,' Titus 2:12. There is a living in communion with God, as well as being fair to men; and therefore a man may be civil and harmless, but such are not vicious, rather than virtuous and gracious; the mere rational life is one thing, and the spiritual life another thing. Then take the comparative part; they live better than others, so did the pharisee: Luke 18:11, 'God, I thank thee I am not as other men are;' yet Christ saith, Mat. 5:20, 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Among blind men the purblind is a kind of king, and guide of them all. A man may not be as bad as others, and yet not so good as God requires: Gal. 6:4, 'Let every man prove his own work, and then he shall have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.' It is a miserable thing when a man hath no other ground of confidence but the sins of others; he is good because others are worse; he hath no rejoicing in himself, but only from the sinfulness of others. Or suppose that a man be better than himself was heretofore, there is a moral change as well as a supernatural, a reformation as well as a regeneration. As a wanton young man that came in to Xenocrates' lecture half drunk, with his head crowned with rosebuds, and when

he heard a discourse of temperance, he was converted by his lecture, and betook himself to a sober course; so a man may cast off his youthful vanities, and may be changed from being riotous to be more sober, and yet be far from grace. A sow washed is a sow still. What is short of regeneration is short of salvation. Therefore do not think because of a civil orderly life you do enough; this is a sottish principle, and keeps us from the righteousness of God.

2. Here is another of their errors; they are born and bred up in the bosom of the church and true religion, and because they are baptized, and profess the faith of Christ, therefore they think they ever had faith and a good heart towards God, and do not see why or from what they should be converted. It was a wonderful thing to Nicodemus to hear that a man should be born again, as strange as if a man should 'enter again into his mother's womb,' John 3:4. They are wholly ignorant of any change of soul or state, and mind it not. So the Jews, when Christ told them of being made free from the bondage of sin, John 8:33, 'We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man, how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?' Alas! men neglect their inward spiritual estate, and are not sensible of setting their souls free from the fetters of lusts and carnal affections, that they may pursue their chiefest good. Nothing so hard and heavy as spiritual bondage, and yet is little known and little discerned in the world. They live in the bondage of sin with as much delight as fishes in their own element, and all this while they are puffed up with carnal dreams of their own privileges and worth. These are the men that are said 'to need no repentance,' Luke 15:7, that is, in their own conceit, those that do not see why, or from what they should be converted.

3. They own no difference between a state of nature and a state of grace; they know no such thing as passing from death to life, and therefore are never troubled about it: 'All the Lord's people are holy,' Num. 16:3, and it is factious to make such distinctions: 'They have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the clean and unclean,' Ezek. 22:26. As if



all were of one lump, and all should fare alike, and therefore think themselves as good as the best.

4. That those that are blameless before men and well spoken of in the world need not doubt of their acceptance with God. Oh no! God's trial is one thing, and men's another. Men see no further than the outside, but God regards the frame of the heart: 1 Sam. 16:7, 'Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.' Therefore though a man cannot be justly taxed before men, yet this is nothing before the all-seeing God: Ps. 143:2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' Non dicit, cum hostibus tuis, sed cum servo tuo. David doth not say, Lord, enter not into judgment with thine enemies, but with thy servant.

5. Another sottish maxim is, that petty sins are not to be stood upon. They shall do well enough if they never sin more nor worse; as the omission of good duties in their closets or families, lesser oaths, vain speeches, idle sport; whereas Christ saith, 'By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned,' Mat. 12:37. Light things may weigh heavy in God's balance. Well, then, until the soul be dispossessed of these sottish conceits, it cannot be but they must overween their own righteousness, and think too well of themselves and of their estate before God.

Thirdly, Self-love is the reason of it: Prov. 16:2, 'All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirits.' A man is very blind and partial in his own cause, and will not own any opinion and conceit against himself. There is an emphasis in that, 'his own eyes.' Surely man would favour himself, and be friendly to himself; we have a double instance of this in scripture. Judah was severe against Tamar, when he thought her to be with child by another man: Gen. 38:24, 'Bring her forth, and let her be burnt.' But when she showed him the tokens, the ring, the staff, and bracelets, and that he was the man, then he becomes gentle enough. So David, when his own story was represented to him in the case of a third

person, that took away the ewe lamb from the poor man, he says in a heat, 'As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die,' 2 Sam. 12:5; but when the prophet closeth with him, and told him, 'Thou art the man,' all this is spoken to thee, he was more calm. All this is spoken to show how favourable a judgment it must needs be that we pass upon ourselves: Ps. 36:2, 'He flatters himself in his own eyes until his iniquity be found to be hateful;' a man is well pleased with his own doings. That self-love is a cause, appears by this, a man will not see sin, no, not when any man that looks upon his way may see it, till it break forth in shame, and makes him to be hateful; the mistake vanisheth not till all the town crieth shame upon him. While a man crieth out against sensuality, drunkenness, gluttony, he is so full of self-love, that he is loath to pass a sentence against his own soul.

Fourthly, Negligence, and want of searching, and taking the course whereby we may be undeceived. He that thinks better of himself than there is ground and reason for, the only way to bring him to himself is to put him upon often trial. So saith the apostle, Gal. 6:3, 'If a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.' But alas! this is a common case, and what more ordinary than for a man to conceit too highly of himself, and flatter himself with those excellences he hath not, and cry Peace, peace, when the wrath of God and sudden destruction is upon him? But how shall a man do to come out of this fool's paradise, that he may undeceive himself; see the next verse, 'But let every man prove his own work;' try their work and carriage by the rule of God's word, what he doth, and upon what motives, and for what ends; let him prove so as to approve himself to God: 2 Cor. 13:5, 'Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove yourselves, know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' Oh! search and see what is the frame of your hearts, what true grounds of confidence you have towards God. Now, when men will not so much as put it to the question, whether it be well or ill, no wonder they slightly return an Omnia bene, 'All these have I kept from my youth.' A natural man is under this dilemma, If I

should not search, I should not know myself, if I should search I should not like myself; and therefore out of laziness and self-love he chooseth the latter. Plutarch saith, Evil men turn from their own lives as the worst spectacle that can be presented to them. We could not be so grossly deceived by Satan as we are, if we did not turn our eyes away from our own hearts and ways, but did oftener call ourselves to an account.

Fifthly, Security. As they will not search, so they will not know themselves when they are searched, and cannot endure thoroughly to be discovered to themselves. There is a voluntary examination of conscience, and an involuntary impression, by which conscience is awakened against our wills, either by the preaching of the word, or by afflictions sent from God. In both these cases men discover this self-conceit, in that they do defeat those methods which God useth when they are searched by God.

1. They cannot endure to be searched by the word: John 3:20, 'Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.' Men will stand out as long as they can, in defence of their own righteousness, and are loath to be convinced and discovered to themselves, and to be seen what indeed they are, and that is the reason they cannot endure a reprov'g light, a searching ministry. But the word doth seize upon them by chance, as sometimes it will. Thus Felix, when Paul rubs his privy sore, discoursing of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, it sets him all in an agony: 'Felix trembled,' Acts 24:25. What then? He puts it off to a more convenient season. When God ransacks the conscience by his word, they are not pleased with this, but seek diversions. Lusts quench and drown their convictions. The apostle James compares a careless hearer, chap. 1:23, 24, to 'a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of person he was.' Men content themselves with a slight transient glance, and are troubled for the present; they have but a weak impression wrought upon them, which is soon worn out. Or—

2. When God searcheth them by affliction; when they do not judge themselves, they are judged by the Lord. As Joseph's brethren, their consciences had slept many years securely in their sins, but God casts them down, and revives their thoughts; they have many tremblings and workings of soul: Gen. 42:21, 'They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us and we would not hear him, therefore is this evil come upon us.' Now how few are there that will hear the rod, or, if they be a little affected when the smart is upon them, they go away as heart-whole as ever, and when they are well, are as vain as ever, and do not profit by their troubles. Therefore, since there is so much ignorance of the legal and gospel covenant, so many sottish errors wherewith men are prepossessed, so much self-love, negligence, and loathness to search, so much security, and not improving conditions when God searcheth, no wonder a man is so conceited of himself.

Use. Let us take heed of self-conceit and self-righteousness. Especially this concerns you that have a civil and sober education, and are as to externals blameless. As you love your own souls, take heed of a self-righteousness. Though you do not run into the same excess of riot which others do, and are free from outward vice, yet God hath enough against you to condemn you for ever. Therefore study the covenants; lay aside gross conceits of God and holiness; take heed of being blinded with self-love; search often and see what claim you have to heaven; observe ordinances and providences, and improve your convictions, that you may turn to the Lord; else you may have a flattering hope, but can have no solid peace in your consciences, till with brokenness of heart you quit your own righteousness, and fly to Christ alone.

And that you may not be besotted with a dream of your own righteousness, consider—

1. How light every one of us shall be found when we are put in the balance of the sanctuary: 'All the ways of a man are clean in his own

eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirits,' Prov. 16:2. Mark what is weighed, not opus, the matter of the action, but our work, with the motives, the principles, the ends of it, and the state of your hearts; and it is weighed, it is put into the balance. God knows all things by number and weight.

2. Consider how different the judgment of God and men will be: Luke 16:15, 'Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knows the heart; for that which is highly esteemed amongst men is abomination in the sight of God.' Mark, God may loathe it in the same degree that men respect it; for these are the terms propounded, 'highly esteemed among men,' and 'abomination in the sight of God.' Our rose may prove a nettle with him, our gold mere brass, and our spices very dung when God looks upon us.

3. Consider that self is an incompetent judge in its own case; and therefore you, that are to endure God's judgment, should not stand merely to the judgment of self. If your own heart acquit you, you cannot rest upon that; you can find no evil in the action, but God can: 1 Cor. 4:4, 'For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.' Alas! though your heart cannot charge you with anything, yet God can; and if your hearts condemn you, God may much more, for he knows us better than ourselves: 1 John 3:20, 'For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.'

## **SERMON V**

Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shall have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me.—MARK 10:21.

IN this verse is contained the fourth and last part of the conference between our Saviour and this young man. Observe here—

1. The gesture and carriage of our Lord Christ towards him, 'Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him.'

2. The answer he gives him; in which there is—

[1.] An admonition of his defect, 'One thing thou lackest.'

[2.] A precept and injunction, which is twofold—particular and general.

(1.) Particular, for the trial of this young man, where is the duty, 'Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor.' And the motive or promise, 'And thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' The precept is particular, but backed with a general promise.

(2.) General, 'Come, take up the cross, and follow me.' These are the parts; let us insist upon them as they offer themselves.

Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him.—This clause hath troubled many interpreters, how Jesus could love this young man, who seemed to be so full of pride, and self-conceit, and whose heart was so addicted to worldly riches, that when he knew Christ's mind, he went away from him sad: but there need not so great ado about the matter. To open it, two things will be necessary to show you the cause of this love, and the kind of it, why, and how he loved him.

1. Why he loved him. Surely it was not for his outward feature, or external compliment. Christ's love was never set upon these things; but his goodness of disposition, moral integrity, and ingenuity, that was the reason why he loved him.

2. Now for the kind of this love. Christ, you know, had two natures in him, and accordingly we may distinguish of his love and affection; there is the divine love and the human love of Christ, as he was God, and as he was man.

[1.] If you interpret it of his divine love, the difficulty will not be great; for there is a general and common love, and a special love. With the first, God loves all his creatures, especially mankind, and amongst them those that have any strictures of his image in them more than others. But then there is a special love, and so all those are saved whom God thus loveth. So God loveth his own people, either with a love of good-will when they are uncalled: Jer. 31:3, 'Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love;' or else with a love of complacency, when called and converted: Zeph. 3:17, 'He will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love.' Now this will easily salve the matter; there was a general love, or a liking and approbation of those moral virtues and good things which he saw in him, but not that special love which brings grace and salvation along with it. But—

[2.] Let us consider Christ as man, and so speak of his human love. Jesus Christ, as he took our nature, so he had the same affections and aversations that we have; and therefore as man he loved his parents, his kindred, his nation, his friends and acquaintance in their several relations. Some there were with whom he contracted a more special friendship; as Lazarus: John 11:3, 'Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick.' He loved Lazarus in a special manner, as a singular good man. So also his two sisters: ver. 5, 'And Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.' And John is called the 'disciple whom Jesus loved,' chap. 13:23. Christ in his own practice would sanctify holy friendship, and therefore it pleased him as man to have a special human love to some above others. Once more, there were others whom he loved with a larger love, as they had more or less of good in them, as this young man for his good nature and blameless life: 'Jesus, beholding him, loved him;' that is, showed some signs of inclination towards him.

Now this was either a love of courtesy or a love of pity.

(1.) A love of courtesy and respect. Origen interprets it, he kissed him, or showed him some outward sign of favour. Indeed if the

word had been ἐφίλησεν, it might have been interpreted so; but the word is ἠγάπησεν. Others, more generally, he treated him kindly. So this word sometimes is taken for courteous speech, as Grotius and other great critics in the Greek tongue observe. He loved him, that is, spoke friendly and kindly to him. So in Homer, χαῖρε, ξένε, παρ' ἄμμιφιλήσ—Welcome guest, you shall be loved by us; that is, friendly entreated or received. And so again, he excuseth himself that he did not love him as soon as he saw him at first, that is, did not treat him so kindly; so Jesus loved him, that is, treated him with kindness.

(2.) A love of pity, pitying him who had done so much to so little purpose, who lost the benefit of all he did by a vain opinion of his own righteousness. As we pity moderate papists, sober Turks, or infidels, so Jesus Christ might love him with a love of pity. Well, then, it was a love of human affection, as one man loves another for his good qualities; not a love of familiarity and friendship, but either a love of courtesy or pity, seeing a man so young, so rich, so powerful, and in so great corruption of manners had kept himself so blameless; this was that for which Jesus loved him.

I observe two points of doctrine from hence—

Doct. 1. There may be some amiable and good qualities in unregenerate men.

Here was a young man without saving grace, yet of a moral conversation, and as touching the externals of the law blameless.

Now, that there may be such good qualities in them, appears thus—

1. All are created with some inclination to good, though not to good spiritual, yet to good natural and moral. In our decayed condition there are some remainders of right reason, some impressions of equity, some principles of common honesty still left and preserved in us, though as to spiritual endowments, 'We are altogether become filthy and abominable,' Ps. 14:2; yet some moral



inclinations are left, to show what human nature once was; as in a rifled palace, though the rich furniture be gone, the plate and the jewels, and though the fashion of it be much spoiled, yet some of the fabric is left still standing, to show what a magnificent structure it once was. Nature teacheth to deal justly with all, and startles and looks ghastly at some kind of abominations. The dictates of morality and common right are very legible in our conscience: 'The gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law,' Rom. 2:14. As Job's messengers said, every one of them, 'I alone am escaped to tell thee,' so there are some principles of conscience that are left, and escaped out of the ruins of the fall, to warn us of our duty, and to make us give back at monstrous and gross impieties, and to leave us without excuse. Though men be born in sin, and are dead to all spiritual good, yet some restraints are left still upon nature, lest man should not show himself to be man.

2. For the good of mankind. God is the patron of human society, and delights in the welfare and preservation of it. He created not man, as he did the angels, to live several and independent from one another. We are all multiplied and propagated from one original root, that we might live in mutual society, and converse with one another. It is observed that ravenous and noxious creatures live single and apart, but the useful in herds and flocks; so man was made by nature a sociable creature. Now, there would be no such thing as human society if there were not some sweetness of nature and moral dispositions yet left in us. The world would be but one great forest of wild beasts if God had not left some authority in conscience to keep men within the bounds of honesty. And therefore, to uphold order in the world, there must be some amiable qualities; even in the unregenerate or corrupt state, some are more innocent and unblamable than others. I will set it forth by this similitude: As Nebuchadnezzar, when he carried the princes and chief men into captivity out of the land of Judea, he left some of the people behind him to till the land, lest it became a wilderness, so, that the world might not become a forest of wild beasts, there are some that

observe the common dictates of nature, that men might be commodious and useful one to another; for did not these impressions bear sway, the world could not subsist, nor justice and honesty be maintained.

3. There are other things besides renewing grace that might cause these amiable qualities.

[1.] Bodily temper may incline men to some good. We see some are of a rougher temper, and others of a sweeter disposition. Some are soft, smooth, and docile, others stiff and stubborn. The scripture takes notice of the different dispositions of Esau and Jacob: Gen. 25:27, 'Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents.' Look, as blades, though all are made of the same metal, yet they differ much in goodness by reason of the temper, so there is a great deal of difference between men and men by reason of the temper of their bodies; some are ingenuous and shamefaced, and not so easily drawn to outrage and sin, but others are of a baser alloy. The complexion of the soul doth very much follow the constitution of the body, and therefore some are better natured and tempered than others, so that there may be amiable qualities in them, and yet without grace.

[2.] The increase of one sin may cause others to decrease, as a wen that grows big and monstrous defrauds other parts of their nourishment. Though all sin be kindly to a natural heart, yet some sins are more apt to take the throne, and other lusts are starved to feed that. As for instance, he that is covetous, by the force of his covetousness and parsimony is made an enemy to prodigality and a friend to frugality; as Judas, that loved the bag, was against profuseness and wastefulness, John 12:5, 6. A prodigal man is not covetous, and so more prone to be liberal and free-hearted. A profane man is an enemy of superstition, and loves to be moderate and indifferent in religion. A superstitious man hates profaneness, and lays out his zeal upon every little trifle that can lay claim to religion, and so he may seem to be a greater friend to zeal. A

voluptuary hates despair and morosity, and is more sociable and friendly in converse. Thus, as weeds destroy one another, so do many vices; so many vices occasion something that is amiable. Ambition makes men diligent, sober, and vigilant to improve their opportunities.

[3.] It may be occasioned partly by discipline and strict education, or else the miseries and calamities of the present life; for these things, though they do not mortify sin, yet they may much weaken and hinder the discovery of it. Solomon often tells us of the force of education, and that the rod of correction gets a great deal of folly out of the heart of children: Prov. 22:15, 'Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction driveth it far from him;' and as they grow up in years, God takes them into his own discipline. Pharaoh is devout under his plagues, and Ahab under a severe threatening walks softly. God's correction may work some commendable qualities in them.

[4.] By politic government, and laws which keep men within the bounds of their duty, so that they are orderly by constraint, and for fear of penalty, which, if they should follow their pleasure in sinning, they would be exposed to. Austin saith, *Leges humane munditoria instrumenta sunt*. He compares laws to brooms, which though they cannot make corn of weeds or of chaff, yet they serve to sweep in the corn, and keep it within the floor. Laws may make men good subjects, though not good men. As Seneca tells us, the heathens observed many things; they may do many things, *Non tanquam dijis grata sed tanquam legibus jussa, magis ad morem quam ad rem*; not as pleasing God, but as required by the law; not for the thing, but for the fashion; they may be very harmless, put on a face of goodness, but it is not out of conscience; the magistrate makes them so, who is 'the minister of God for good,' Rom. 13:4.

[5.] Unregenerate men may be translated from the grammar school of nature to the university of grace; and though they never commence there, and took the degree of true sanctification, yet they

may come very near it by common grace, and may not be far from the kingdom of God. This may be by the efficacy of the word, which is very persuasive and pressing. Take it as it works only in a moral way; as Herod heard John Baptist, 'and did many things, and heard him gladly,' Mark 6:20. Or else they may have this common grace by experience of the providence of God over the church or themselves; when they see God's interest stands out against all assaults: Ps. 129:1, 2, 'Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, now may Israel say: many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, yet have they not prevailed against me.' When they observe that all those that dash against the corner-stone are broken in pieces, that many good men, though molested and troubled, yet visibly have a blessing and a providence that attends them, and that the profane are overtaken in their sins by pursuing judgments, that it is never better with them than when they own that which is good, this cannot but move them to something that is amiable to some sense of religion, and siding with the better party. Or they may have the common gifts of the Spirit, Heb. 6:4, 5; they may be enlightened, may have gifts of prayer and preaching; some vanishing tastes of the goodness and sweetness of evangelical doctrine, some motions and impulsions, and excitations to good. These are the reasons.

Use 1. It shows us how inexcusable they are in the sight of God, and how just their condemnation will be, that have nothing lovely in them. Certainly they might have had something or other lovely in them, even while they were natural, if they would give their heart to it; either wisdom or valour, meekness or zeal, humility or charity. Every temper yieldeth some way and means of glorifying God; and it is their own fault if they have not some endowment or other. I speak this not as to spiritual grace only, which they do not only neglect, but reject the means whereby to get it; they put away the word of God from them, shut the door upon themselves: Acts 13:46, 'Ye put the word from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life;' and esteem spiritual grace nothing worth, yea, it is folly to them: 1 Cor. 2:14, '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 discerned.' Yea, they think it as dishonourable and prejudicial to them. But also in respect of moral endowments, I say certainly some crown or other they might have, if they did not uncrown themselves by sin. Natural men may have brave wits, but they besot themselves, and quench them in luxury and riot, and pervert those moral inclinations, those seeds of God that were in their nature, while they drink, whore, and play away their consciences. There are none but have a conscience till they get the victory of it, and smother it, and outgrow the feelings and checks of it, and lose all sense: Eph. 4:19, 'Who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.' They might have lived virtuously and morally, till they brought upon themselves the tyranny of evil custom, and then no wonder if they are wholly given up to sensual lusts, and to walk in a sinful way. They have lost all former advantages, they have spoiled their natural temper, they have lost the benefit of their education, despised instruction, and the discipline of parents, lived in defiance of laws, 'received the grace of God in vain,' 2 Cor. 6:1. In a word, they have slighted God's judgments, quenched their gifts, checked the motions of God's Spirit. Therefore certainly they are altogether without excuse that out-sin these helps. Natural conscience, temper, education, laws, ordinances, providences, and the Spirit's motions, they are all helps, and God forsakes men in none of these till they first forsake him, and by some notable sin provoke him to withdraw such helps; and therefore what will you say for yourselves that have not any of these amiable qualities and moral endowments? Will you say you would fain be better, but cannot? That cannot be, for many of these amiable qualities are found in natural men, and you have had many helps and advantages either to get or increase them in your souls. If many moral heathens go to hell that had not half those helps, and yet were exemplary in so many amiable qualities, what will become of you, if you refuse all the helps which God hath vouchsafed to you in his providence, and yet run into enormous evils?

Use 2. If there may be amiable qualities in unregenerate men, then do not rest in these things: Mat. 5:46, 'If you love them that love you, what reward have you? do not even the publicans the same?' and ver. 47, τί περισσὸν, 'What do you more than others?' What over and above? A natural man may have all these. You may live orderly, and yet if you have not faith you cannot please God: Heb. 11:6, 'For without faith it is impossible to please God.' You may be blameless, yet if you be not born again, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven: John 3:3, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Therefore do not rest in this, that you have some good qualities which are amiable and praiseworthy before God and men, but labour for the sanctifying virtue of God's Spirit, and the power of godliness, that you may be 'partakers of the divine nature,' 2 Peter 1:4; for if thy heart be not yet truly changed, thy person may be odious to God. It is not mine, but the advice of Jesus Christ, 'Make the tree good, and his fruit good,' Mat. 12:33. A man may carry the fruits of Canaan, as the spies did, upon a dry staff; but learn to bear them from a living root. To be harmless, meek, chaste, just, temperate, all this is good; but it is much better when they flow from a renewed heart; then they are gracious evidences to you. A good nature without grace makes a fair show with the world, but it is of little respect with God as to your salvation. All this may be from temper and awe of men. How may a man mistake a still nature for meekness, fervency and height of spirit for zeal, want of affection to holy things for discretion, stupidity for patience, obstinacy for constancy! But God knows how to distinguish. Will complexion and temper ever pass for grace in God's account? And usually if a natural man hath one good quality, he hath another bad one to match it. It is observed in history of Alexander, that he was an enemy to uncleanness, but extremely given to drunkenness. Julius Cæsar was not given to drunkenness, but exceedingly addicted to uncleanness. Natural men, if they have their amiable qualities, they have some domineering bad quality to match them. Nay, a good nature once corrupted doth prove the worst of all others, as the sweetest wine makes the tartest vinegar. Augustus at first was of a good merciful nature. Suetonius observes of him that

he was at first loath to consent to the persecution, but when he was once in, he was more inexorable and merciless than the rest of his companions. None have done more vile things against God and the interest of God than men accounted of a good nature, when once the temptation hath prevailed upon them. Herod Agrippa was a sweet-natured popular man, but he slew James, and would have slain Peter also, Acts 12:1, 2, and all out of easiness and facility, to please the people. Usually none fall sooner into the snare of persecution and hatred of the saints of God than they; and the reason is, counsel is of great advantage upon those that are of a pliant and pleasing disposition, and all their parts and excellences are but like a sword in a cutler's shop, as ready for the thief as the true man to purchase. He is easily made a prey to Satan and turned against God; therefore do not rest in these things.

Doct. 2. That in some respect Christ loves those that are orderly and civil, and do but outwardly carry themselves according to God's commands.

I shall give the reasons, and then apply it.

1. The thing is good in itself, though the resting in it makes it useless as to the salvation of the person that goes no further: Micah 6:8, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' These things are agreeable to the reasonable nature, and the perfection of it lies in them. Now all good is the object of love; therefore, if it be good Christ loves it.

2. Because our Lord Christ is willing and ready to own the least good in us, that he might draw us on to more. Here was a towardly young man, and Christ would not discourage him; though he was not gracious, it is said he looked upon him and loved him: Mat. 12:20, 'A bruised reed will he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench;' that is, not despise and reject weaklings. When a reed is broken we cast it away, it is good for nothing but to be trampled

under feet; and we are discouraged from blowing while we see no flame, but smoke. But Christ is of another disposition, he will not cast away the bruised reed nor despise the smoking flax; so far as there is anything of goodness in a creature, though it be but smoke, Christ will own it.

3. Because these things tend to the profit of mankind, and Jesus Christ's heart is much set upon the good of mankind. His rejoicing was in the habitable parts of the earth, before there was hill or mountain: Prov. 8:31, 'Rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.' And his apostle doth press this, 'that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works, these are good and profitable to men,' Titus 3:8. Christ is a great friend and patron of human society, therefore will show his liking of it, and how pleasing all things are to him that tend to maintain it, as justice, equity, temperance, prudence, moderation, fidelity. Christ would put some mark of his favour on those that excel in these things. When he instructeth the young man in the commandments of the second table, and he said, 'All these have I kept from my youth,' Jesus loved him.

Use. Now let us see what use we may make of this.

1. Negatively. To show what use is not to be made of this passage; for men may be apt to abuse and make an ill use of Jesus' love of these moral virtues.

[1.] We cannot make this use of it, as if Christ did love moral virtues as meritorious of grace; they are not such things upon which God hath bound himself necessarily to give the grace of conversion. The Pelagians had this axiom, *Facienti homini quod in se est, tenetur Deus dare ulteriorem gratiam*—That let a man do what in him lies, God is necessarily bound by that to give him further grace. And the papists build upon the same ground their doctrine of *meritum ex congruo*, merit of congruity. As they hold merit of condignity in the works of renewed men, so they hold merit of congruity in the works



of unrenewed men; as if God in right and equity were bound to recompense them with the reward of conversion. But the scripture puts conversion upon another bottom, and shows that it is not given according to the good works we have done, but merely of the Lord's grace and mercy: Titus 3:4, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' The apostle speaks there of converting grace, wherein we have a negative and an affirmative cause. He could have said simply 'Of his mercy he saved us,' and no more; but he would disprove works, therefore he doth express it negatively, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done;' or at least he might have said this, 'Not only by works of righteousness which we have done, but also of his mercy he hath saved us;' and so might have allowed it as a con-cause, as having some influence, something in it to bind God. Oh, no! he excludes works altogether, 'Not by works of righteousness.' Or at least, if the apostle would express it negatively and positively, he might have said thus, 'Not by works which we have done, but of his mercy he saved us.' No; but he says, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done.' He describes the works which he rejects as being a cause of saving grace. All our moral righteousness, the best of our works, they have no influence upon God to give us grace, but merely 'of his grace he hath saved us;' therefore do not think that God by a certain infallible law is bound to give grace.

[2.] We must not so take this as that he doth love good qualities so as to make them equal with christian virtues or the graces of the Spirit. Morality is good, but we must not lift it up beyond its place. There is something better, and that is grace, 'those things which do accompany salvation,' Heb. 6:9. I observe this, because there are many secret atheists, that will cry up moral righteousness beyond its worth, and the virtues and honesty of the heathens, to debase the esteem of christian religion, which the world now is grown weary of. They think there was more honesty by the natural institutions of the heathens than by the law of Christ, and cry up moral honesty to the great detriment and prejudice of the true religion. I do confess,

if we compare some honest heathens with many christians in name, that have defiled themselves with monstrous impieties, it is not hard to determine which are the better men. Loose professors dishonour their religion, but the sound grapes in the cluster must not be judged of by the rotten ones, nor is the beauty of a street to be measured by the filthiness of the sink and kennel. Those that are the sink and disgrace of Christianity are unfit to show forth the virtue of it. I confess we are fallen into days wherein moral men may justify themselves, *Non quod boni sunt, sed quod mediocriter mali*, as Augustine saith—Not that they are perfectly good men, but they are tolerably good in comparison of many sinful christians. Compare those that have felt the power of religion with heathens, and then you may see the power of christian graces is far greater than of moral virtues. Compare the continency of Alexander and Scipio with the continency of Joseph; they forbore to defile Darius' wife out of gallantry, but Joseph he forbears to commit such wickedness that he might not 'sin against God,' Gen. 39:9. They were not solicited by their captives, but he yielded not when solicited by his mistress, that was able to prefer him on the one side, or undo him on the other. What once was said of Alexander in a time of drought, when a soldier brought him a helmet full of water, he poured it out, saying, 'I will not drink; the hearts of these men would faint,' pointing to his companions, because they had not the like. Compare this with David's action: 2 Sam. 23:16, 17, 'He would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord, and said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this; is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it.' So that if you compare these things, their morality is but like a field flower to a garden flower, or wild fruits to orchard fruits; it is a wild thing in comparison of grace, and not any way comes up to the height of it.

[3.] We must not from hence make this use, that we should think ourselves to be in a good condition because of moral qualifications. Men may be viceless, but yet if they be Christless, and graceless, and never brought to brokenness of heart (for certainly that is necessary

to prepare men for faith, and for pardon of sin), they may perish for evermore. Without faith and gospel conditions and qualifications, you can never have any acceptance with God; though they may be profitable to others, yet they are not acceptable to God. Sine Christo omnis virtus in vitio est, saith Jerome; in point of salvation they fail and fall short, though in a civil and human respect they are useful and commendable; these moral virtues do not gave us a title to eternal life. Jesus loved the young man, as approving the matter of his obedience, but not his state and condition. He tells him, 'One thing thou lackest.' Oh! when you have all your moralities, something is lacking still. This moral righteousness proves a snare to you when it keeps you from evangelical righteousness and seeking reconciliation with God. If we rest in it, and are conceited of it, 'Publicans and harlots shall go into the kingdom of heaven before us,' Mat. 21:31, and so we might have been better if we had been worse.

2. Positively. What use may we make of this, that Jesus loved this young man?

[1.] If Christ did love civility, much more will he love true grace in any of his, though mingled with much weakness. Certainly he that delights in the obscure shadow of his image will much more delight in the lively picture and impression of it upon the souls of his people, though we have our weaknesses. John 11:5, it is said, 'Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.' Martha is mentioned, and in the gospel story we find her twice tripping. She was busy about the house, and neglected the one thing necessary, Luke 10:39, 40. At another time we find her questioning Christ's power: John 11:39, 'Lord, by this time he stinketh;' yet Jesus loved Martha. There is much difference of growth in God's children, and some have their blemishes more than others, yet Christ loves true grace how weak soever it is. It is notable to observe what a veil and cover the scripture puts upon the imperfections of the saints: Heb. 11:31, 'By faith the harlot Rahab perished not, when she had received the spies with peace.' Alas! there was dissembling in the case, and weakness,

but the faith is mentioned and the lie covered. So James 5:11, 'You have heard of the patience of Job;' Ay! and of his impatience too, and murmuring, when he cursed the day of his birth; but the Holy Ghost puts a finger upon the scar, and covers the failing. So 1 Peter 3:6, 'As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.' Mark, the scripture that is alluded to in that place is Gen. 18:12, 'Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?' The whole speech savoured of unbelief; there is but one good word in it, 'lord,' expressing her reverence to her husband, and the Holy Ghost takes notice of that, picks a jewel out of a dunghill. The Lord takes notice of the least act of sincere obedience to his commands, when it is mixed with many sinful failings.

[2.] We learn by Christ's example to honour others for their common gifts. Some respect is due to them that have any good in them. We are bidden, 1 Peter 2:17, 'To honour all men.' How so? All are partakers of some excellency from God. How vile soever they be in other respects, they have something of the image of God, James 3:9; some gift received from God, for which they deserve respect and honour; therefore we ought to give them some signs of respect, that we may be in a better capacity of doing good to their souls. The gifts of God we ought to esteem wherever we find them.

[3.] Thus we may learn, children, young men, and others, all may know how to get Christ's love if they be tractable. If you are free from all intemperance and disobedience, and of honest conversation, then you are such as this young man whom Christ loved; and though more be required of you, yet these things are pleasing to Christ, and want not their reward (what reward they have I will show by and by). Solomon tells us, Prov. 30:29, 'Many seek the favour of the ruler.' Jesus Christ is the King of kings, the great ruler of the world; is he only unworthy, that you should not seek his grace and favour? He loves moral qualifications, therefore abound in these. On the other side, he hates those that are dissolute, intemperate, gluttons, drunkards, liars, wantons, and all those that are profane and wicked from their youth. By the rule of

contraries, if he loves conformity to the law of God in externals, he hates those that walk contrary to his law; and he will show his hatred by public acts of vengeance, though it be upon children. If children do not reverence their superiors, he hath judgments for them; as the two she-bears out of the wood tore in pieces forty-two children, 2 Kings 2:24. And then for grown men, God will have judgments for them. It is a sad time, and it calls for much weeping, lamentation, and grief, that we live in an age wherein moral wickedness abounds, drinking, whoring, swearing, murdering, stealing, and such like abominations. Take this observation; God doth not usually punish in this world for unbelief and want of love to Christ; he leaves it to the world to come; but for breaches of the moral law he doth: Rom. 1:18, 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.' When the two tables are violated by ungodliness and unrighteousness, then the wrath of God breaks out by some notable judgment. So Heb. 2:2, 'Every transgression and disobedience' (of Moses) 'received a just recompense of reward;' and Hosea 4:1, 2, 'The Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land; by swearing and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.' There are sins against the moral law reckoned up, which provokes the Lord's anger. As in temporal favours God expresseth love to those that are morally righteous, so in temporal judgments he hath expressed his hatred against immoralities. I confess, some gospel provocations God doth punish in this world, as, for instance, when men persecute the profession of the gospel, or when they grow weary of the gospel after they have long had it, then it concerns God as governor of the world to punish such, the good of the world being very much concerned. But chiefly his judgments are for sins against the moral law of God; when these are broken in our streets, there ought to be much weeping and lamenting before the Lord in a sense of these things.

[4.] It condemns those that will pretend to the peculiar love of Christ, when they are not moral, but froward, unduitful in their relations, unconscionable in their dealing, and have not learned to be sober, to possess their vessels in sanctification and honour. What! do you talk of being christians when you are not so good as heathens? Never think of the higher mysteries of religion, of believing in Christ, and communion with God, when you live so contrary to the light of nature; as the apostle speaks of the 'natural branches,' and the 'branches contrary to nature,' Rom. 11:24. It is in vain to think of grafting things that are contrary to nature, if the natural branches be not grafted in. There are certain who are doubly dear, 'both in the flesh, and in the Lord;' not only 'in the Lord,' upon the account of religion, but 'in the flesh, upon the account of nature, as Onesimus was dear to Philemon when converted, Philem. 16. There were many moral heathens of a sweet nature, that had great command over their passion. Many civil carnal men will rise up in judgment against high-flown christians, that pretend to great heights of faith and love to Christ, but are defective in morals. As it was said of the men of Nineveh and the queen of Sheba, that 'they shall rise up in judgment against this generation, and condemn it,' Mat. 12:41, 42, so will these heathens, men morally just, exact, punctual in their dealings, rise up in judgment against many that pretend to believe in Christ. *Si non præslat fides, quid præstitit infidelitas?* How should this put you to shame, when those that are graceless cannot be taken tardy in those things wherewith you are charged? I say, if their moral principles and civil institutions bind them to the peace and good behaviour, and will not suffer them to do wrong, and all the laws of Christ will not confine you within your duty, how great will your condemnation be! See that you be not exceeded by them. I may represent it thus, when a schoolboy knows more and better of arts and sciences than a university man, is not this a great shame to him? I remember it is said of Sarah, Gen. 20:16, 'Abimelech said, Behold I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold he is to thee a covering of thine eyes unto all that are with thee, and to all other; thus was she reproved.' Here is no word of reproof; how was she reproved? Why here a pagan king

dismisseth her untouched, with gifts to her husband; he provides for her safety, and this was a reproof of Sarah's dissembling; his morality was a reproof to her that was acquainted with the true God, and a professor of the true faith, and yet was found tardy. You are shamed, and Christ is put to shame in you.

[5.] It invites us to go so far, for Jesus loved this young man; est aliquid prodire tenus. What was in this young man? Here is his care to seek after eternal life, his reverent esteem of Christ's person, his outward conformity to the laws of God, his abstaining from all gross sins from his youth. Oh! these are amiable properties and qualities, and those that are endowed with them, Christ loveth them.

Object. But here is an objection. How is this a motive? Christ was courteous and respectful to this young man; but now he is in heaven, what love doth Christ show now upon earth to those that are moral?

(1.) Moral virtues will at least procure a temporal reward. Christ loves virtue so that he rewardeth the show of it; it keeps off many temporal judgments, and procures many temporal benefits; as the Ninevites' repentance, though not real, kept off the judgment, Jonah 3:10, and Ahab's humiliation kept off the judgment in his days: 1 Kings 21:29, 'Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days, but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.' It encourageth us to seek him, since he rewardeth a temporal repentance with temporal favours. Oh! what will the hearty humiliation of a true penitent do, when a counterfeit one is thus far accepted with God? And so that kind of zeal that was in Jehu was not without its reward: 2 Kings 10:30, 'Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel,' though he did it with an imperfect heart. The Egyptian midwives, when they saved the children of the Israelites, though it were by a

lie, the Lord multiplied them and blessed them: Exod. 1:20, 'Therefore God dealt well with the midwives;' and ver. 21, 'It came to pass, that because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses.' So Austin observes that the Romans, as long as they did excel in justice and temperance, were rewarded by God with victory and prosperity; as long as that empire kept honest in civil virtues, it had eminent success, and their commonwealth prevailed and overtopped the nations; but when they degenerated into beasts for impiety, all went to ruin.

(2.) There will be some serenity of mind resulting from the rectitude of your actions. Look, as the heathens, when 'they did by nature the things contained in the law,' they had the approbation of their consciences, 'Thoughts excusing,' Rom. 2:15.

(3.) It is some advantage to grace; it is like the priming the post, that maketh it receptive of better colours. At least they do not aggravate their condemnation, nor increase their weakness, nor draw upon themselves penal blindness and hardness of heart and utter despair. However, it is like the embalming a carcase; though it do not restore life, yet it keeps the body from stinking. As long as they are at work, they are not given over to a reprobate sense: 'They are not far from the kingdom of God,' Mark 12:34. An humble man, that hath some thoughts of God and of eternal life, certainly is sooner converted than an outrageous wretch that doth swagger and out-brave the ordinances of God; whereas men that are strangers to all goodness, and of an inveterate wickedness and falsehood, 'that are estranged from the womb, and go astray so soon as they be born, speaking lies,' as the prophet expresseth it, Ps. 58:3, are more hardly cured.

(4.) As to their eternal state, it will be more tolerable for such than for others. Though they fall short of heaven, yet *mitius punientur*, at least they have a cooler hell; their account is more easy; as the scripture speaks of *περισσότερον κρίμα*, of 'a greater damnation;' Mat. 11:22, 'It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you.' Cato suffers less than Catiline, Socrates



than Nero; and certainly it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for those that despised the gospel; therefore a heathen could say, No such feast as to do our duty which God requires.

## SERMON VI

One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.—  
MARK 10:21.

Now we comes to Christ's answer, and there take notice—

First, Of the admonition of his defect, 'Jesus said unto him, One thing thou lackest.' By the evangelist Matthew it appears that this part of the answer was given to a question proposed: Mat. 19:20, 'All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?' He saith confidently, 'All these things have I kept;' and Christ saith, 'One thing thou lackest.' Indeed, take the commandments in their full latitude and breadth of interpretation, he wanted all things; how is it then that our Saviour saith only, 'One thing thou lackest?'

1. Because it would have been tedious to convince him of all his defects, and therefore Christ would take the more compendious way, and insist but upon one thing, which was enough to show that he was not perfect, as he vainly dreamed. If a man brag that he is able to pay a hundred pounds, you convince him of his penury when you press him to pay one penny, and he cannot.

2. This one thing was sure, and would strike home; for our Lord knew his heart, and therefore was resolved to touch his privy sore, and doth propose such a precept as would cross his darling sin; and therefore he would only come with one thing, which would try him to the purpose. Men that esteem too highly of themselves, and yet have a secret idol in their hearts, they shall be put upon some special trial that will discover their weakness to the full.

3. That one thing which he lacked was the main thing, the principal thing of the law, which was loving God above all things; the sum of the law is, to love God above all, and our neighbours as ourselves.

Now our Lord (who had power to try his love by any way he thought fit), by this particular injunction trieth him in his love to God and his neighbour. Chiefly he would convince him of want of love to God, or spiritual idolatry, making wealth his summum bonum, his chiefest good; this was the main thing in which he failed, and the cause of his other failings: and yet Christ doth it in such a way as to take in the other part of the precept, the love of our neighbour: 'Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor.'

4. Because the young man erred out of ignorance, Christ would not deal roughly with him, or by way of sharp reproof; he doth not rate him, and call him proud hypocrite, for saying, 'All these have I kept;' but he gently minds him of his defect, 'One thing thou lackest;' words of a mild condescension to one that was tractable. And while men are facile and teachable, we should not use roughness, but convince them of their errors by using all mildness and all condescension, as we ourselves would be dealt withal, if we lay under the power of prejudice and a dark understanding. Let this suffice from that clause; only learn from Christ's practice here, when we have to deal with such kind of men, two or three things—

[1.] That proud sinners must not be soothed up in their self-conceit, but convinced of their defects: 'One thing thou lackest.' To flatter men in their presumption is very dangerous: Luke 16:15, 'Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts, for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.'

[2.] That the way to convince them is by representing their principal and chief faults, some one sin; so Christ dealt with this young man, and so he deals with the woman of Samaria, convincing her of her sin, that though she had spent her time in marriage with five husbands, yet after all this commits adultery: John 4:18, 'Thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband.' We are not to shoot at rovers, but convince those we have to do with of those sins they are most guilty of.

[3.] The more our failings strike deep upon the main articles of our obedience to God, the greater our conviction, and the more sense we should have of our condition before God. To love God above all is a fundamental article of the covenant. Now, when we are convinced that we fail in this, and want love, trust, and faith in God, we are nothing; therefore such kind of defects should make us look after our estate better.

Secondly, We come to Christ's precept, command, and injunction; and there—

First, Something of particular concernment, 'Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' Where observe—(1.) The duty; (2.) The motive.

I. The duty, 'Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor.' The precept you see is very strict, and falls upon the heart of this young man, who was addicted to the world. 'Go,' without delay; 'sell,' not a part, but all, 'whatsoever thou hast;' and 'give,' not to thy friends that may relieve thee when thou art in straits, not to the rich that may recompense thee, but 'to the poor,' from whom thou canst look for nothing again: 'Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor.' This advice of Christ I will—(1.) Explicate; (2.) Vindicate; (3.) Improve to some practical use.

1. Explain how far this is a duty; for the misunderstanding of this sentence hath filled monasteries with monks, and deserts with anchorites. The great difficulty is, whether this be a precept or an evangelical counsel. The papists fancy some things to be evangelical counsels, that is, necessary to an higher and more perfect sort of living, which are not absolutely necessary in themselves, but counsels that he that can receive it, let him receive it, counsels of perfection, and not necessary precepts. I shall not deal with the thing in general, but only so far as it concerns this place, which, among others, is brought for this doctrine, but vainly; for the words here run in the manner of a flat and absolute precept, and not of

counsel and arbitrary advice. Christ enjoins him to 'go and sell whatsoever he had;' and they are spoken in answer to his question, 'What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' And in prosecution of the debate between Christ and him, when he asked, 'What shall I do?' Christ referred him to his own covenant, or the tenor of the law: q.d., thou expectest eternal life according to the covenant of works, which covenant requires thus and thus: 'Thou knowest the commandments.' To this the young man replies 'All these things have I kept, what lack I yet?' Then says Christ, 'Go sell whatsoever thou hast,' &c. Our Saviour would not contradict his own course of referring him to the covenant of works; nor would he else have spoken to the purpose, for the young man did not demand how he should attain an extraordinary state of perfection, but what he should do to be saved, or to obtain eternal life; therefore Christ would not only give him an evangelical counsel, or instruct him about an extraordinary state of perfection, but a necessary duty. Well, then, a precept, it is not a general precept, binding all christians, for then it could not be omitted or neglected by us without sin, or without a great contempt of Christ's authority. Yea, many would sin if they should sell all, neglect their families, and cast themselves upon snares and temptations. There is no command given by Christ to all to do so, and this command obligeth none but those to whom it was given. There are some things that are due to God, *ex officio generali*, by virtue of the general duty we owe to him; some things, *ex vocatione speciali*, by special call are to be done, such was this command of our Lord, and the lawgiver had power to try this young man in anything he saw fitting. It was a personal command for trial, such as that was to Abraham, who was no more to dispute against it, but to offer Isaac, Gen. 22:1, 2; so this was a special command given to this young man to discover his hypocrisy, and make him sensible of his disease. The law doth not bid us sell all, but the law commands us to be ready to do the whole will of God, whatever it cost us, and condemns those evil affections and inordinate respects to temporal things which would hinder us from so doing.

2. Let me vindicate it; for it may seem in the thoughts of some as if our Lord had dealt hardly with this young man, in putting him upon so severe a trial. A young rich man comes to him with such affection, and yet for Christ to bid him sell all! But consider—

[1.] Such words and thoughts must not be heard against our sovereign Lord and lawgiver; and Christ speaks here as a νομοθέτης, a lawgiver, which the Ebionites could not endure, for they owned him only as a naked interpreter of the law, and therefore foisted in some passages to corrupt this part of the gospel (see Grotius). Christ hath absolute power to command. If he bid Abraham to offer up Isaac, he must do it; and the Israelites to spoil the Egyptians, it was lawful. Certainly then he that was the Lord of all might with very good reason bid this young man sell all.

[2.] Christ, who is the Wisdom of the Father, knew the best way of discovering this young man to himself, and therefore toucheth his privy sore, that, being sensible of his defect, he might know that his conceit of being perfect was but a vain dream, and it was in mercy to him to put him out of his dream.

[3.] The precept was not so hard, considering three things—

(1.) What was required of all those that were in a special manner called to be Christ's disciples, or trained up for the ministry in Christ's company, and by special converse with him. When he called any to be of his family, and to be as it were, his menial servants and constant attendants, they left all and followed him: Mat. 4:19, 20, 'He saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men: and they straightway left their nets, and followed him;' their nets, that is, their whole estates; they had less to lose indeed than this rich man, but they could but lose their all. They that were to be trained up for the service of the gospel, were to walk up and down with Christ, and to live in an itinerary ambulatory manner, without any settled abode, and afterwards to go abroad and preach the gospel in all countries throughout the world. The possession and

administration of earthly things was not consistent with their office, therefore he would have them to leave all, and trust his providence, which, without their care and solicitude, would provide them necessaries for the present life. And if Christ would call this young ruler to the like employment, it was but convenient he should bid him sell all.

(2.) Consider, it bindeth all christians, quoad animi affectum, in vow, purpose, and preparation of the heart, though not actually, to leave all and follow Christ. These are not hard terms, if you consider what is required of every one that will be saved Christ doth not hide his terms from any; for what is here 'sell all, and give to the poor, and take up the cross and follow Christ,' is expressed by self-denial: Mat. 16:24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' Self-denial in effect implies as much. We should all in the preparation of our hearts follow Christ naked, destitute, and deprived of all things, and be contented so to do if he should see fit.

(3.) The precept will not seem so hard if you consider the state of that country, which was near destruction; and that was one reason why the believers in that age sold what they had, and cast all into a common bank: Acts 4:32, 'The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul, neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, for they had all things common;' and the reason of the command Christ gives, Luke 12:33, 'Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.' It was a prudent course, when there was such a general destruction to come upon them.

Doct. That we ought upon God's call to be ready to forsake all that we have in the world.

Here I shall—(1.) Consider when God calls us to forsake all; (2.) Why we ought to do so.

First, When God calls us to forsake all that we have; such a particular precept or command we cannot now expect. Now Christ is ascended into the heavens, and governs us not by oracle but by his word; not by his personal presence, but by his Spirit. But yet still in some cases we are to forsake all; they may be referred unto two heads—

1. When God by his providence reduceth us to a poor condition.
2. When we cannot obey any particular precept of God without danger of being undone by it.

[1.] When God by his providence reduceth us to a poor condition, either for our chastisement or our trial, then we are willingly and cheerfully to forsake all. This is no strange thing, to hear of those that have flowed in wealth, and yet by the mere providence of God (though not by their own misgovernment or default) have been reduced to great necessity. Our estates in the world are liable to many hazards, by which this may be brought about, as by fire, inundation, or hostile depredations; by state injury, false witness of others, or negligence of servants, or suretyship for friends, or oversight of reckoning, or trusting of customers, or unfaithfulness of factors, or piracy by sea; by these and many other such-like means may our estates be wasted and come to nothing, and we brought to great poverty. Job, the richest man in the East, was brought to sit upon the dunghill. Belisarius, that great captain that had twice relieved Rome and vanquished so many enemies, was brought to beg for a halfpenny to sustain his life, *Date obolum Belisario*. Now we ought to have a ready mind, prepared for all providences; and this is the true voluntary poverty of christians, not monkish vows, but this willingness to be at God's disposing. It ought not to be sought for, but we must not be over-sorrowful if it happens, but humbly acquiesce in the will of God, and bear poverty, if laid upon us, with a constant patient mind: Job 1:21, 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the



Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'

[2.] God still calls us to forsake all when we cannot obey any particular precept of God without danger of being undone by it. When God by his providence maketh it impossible for us to preserve our fidelity to him, or obedience to any known command of his, without sacrificing our interests, and parting with all that we have in the world, we must impartially perform it, and do our duty, though it be with the loss of estate and life itself: Rev. 12:11, 'They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of his testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death;' Rev. 2:10, 'Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be ye faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' And Moses, when all the pleasures and treasures he enjoyed in Pharaoh's court came once to be the pleasures of sin, and he could continue there no longer without sin, he left all: Heb. 11:24–26, 'By faith Moses, when he came to years refused to be call 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 of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.' In these two cases we are to sell all.

Secondly, For the reasons why we must do so.

1. God hath an absolute right to all that we have by his own eminency and prerogative. He is called 'the possessor of heaven and earth,' Gen. 14:19, not only the maker, but the possessor. We are not lords, but only stewards: Luke 16:2, 'Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.' A steward must be ready to give up the estate when the supreme Lord calls for it. We have not dominium, the dominion and sovereignty, only dispensationem, a dispensation and trust; and when the supreme Lord calls for all we have, we must willingly resign all into his

hands: 'I will take away my corn, my wine and my wool, and my flax, saith God,' Hosea 2:9. Every one is allowed to do with his own as it pleaseth him. God cannot injure his creature, for when he takes these things from us, he doth but dispose of his own. The Lord of his bounty communicates many good things to us, but still he retains the dominion of them in his own hands, that he may dispose of them according to his own pleasure. If God saith, Keep, you may keep it; but if he saith, Vade, vende omnia, Go, sell all, who art thou, O man! that repliest upon God? We are not absolute and perpetual owners, and must part with it when the Lord shall require it. We are not possessors, but stewards or tenants at will. God allows us to dispense and use these things for a time for his glory, and for the supply of ourselves and ours, and to do good to others; and then we are to resign and give up all again when he calls for it, or shall be pleased to take it from us by his own immediate hand, or by other means. He giveth us wealth with this condition.

2. Because it is impossible we should be christians, if we come not to Christ with this mind and resolution to forsake all for our duty to him; all hath been ratified by our own consent; see Luke 14:33, 'Whosoever he be that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.' How forsake all? Not actually, but so as to be ready to forsake all if Christ please. Christians, whoever comes to Christ, he lays himself and all he hath at Christ's feet, his life, goods, and lands, to be used and disposed of as Christ shall direct, and not to take them up again but as Christ will permit; and so he forsaketh all things, though not actually, till God calls him to it, yet preparatiōe animi, in a full resolution to run all hazards and extremities that his duty to Christ shall expose him to. *Esse christianum grande, non videri*; it is a costly thing to be a christian indeed, though it seem the cheapest matter in the world. But whoever is a christian indeed makes a full and absolute resignation of himself and all he hath: 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me,' Mark 10:37. He that loveth anything more than Christ can never hold out in heaven's way. When the profession of religion grows

cheap and is low, God sends some trouble or other to raise the price, that those that will go to the cost may be known what they are.

Use 1. For reproof unto two sorts—

1. Those that are so unwilling to part with a little portion of their goods, when the Lord hath need of some supply from them for his servants and their poor fellow-christians. They are so far from being content to part with all for the glory of God and good of their brethren, that they are backward, and will part with nothing for the maintenance of God's worship and relief of the poor; it must be drawn and wrung from them, as if all were lost. Men act as if their goods were at their own dispose. Oh! how dwelleth the love of God in them! 1 John 3:17: 'Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?'

2. It reproveth those that shift and wriggle, and dispute themselves out of their duty, and all to shake of the cross and avoid suffering; whereas they should with a ready mind take it up: Gal. 6:12, '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;' that is, they did Judaize to avoid trouble from the Jews. Though they were not guilty of a total apostasy, yet, to take off the edge of the Jews, they disputed themselves into such evil compliance. It is true to escape suffering by lawful means is commanded: Mat. 10:23, 'When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.' To remove ourselves when a storm comes, this is commanded: Prov. 22:3, 'A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself, but the simple pass on, and are punished.' But to do anything to prejudice the truth, to shift and turn, and all to shake off the cross, this is sinful and forbidden.

3. It reproveth those that do with such impatience suffer the loss of any outward thing, either by God's immediate providence, or by the violence of men for the profession of the truth. Oh! this should not

be, but you should cheerfully and willingly yield it up to God: Lev. 10:3, 'And Aaron held his peace;' Heb. 10:34, 'Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods;' 1 Cor. 7:30, 'We should mourn as if we mourned not.' In all worldly losses we are to show that we expect better things, and that our hearts are not here, and that we have such an esteem for Christ, that he is so worthy, and so necessary for us, that we should be glad to follow him naked.

Use 2. To press us to be of such a spirit to be willing to part with all, when Christ will have us, and when the sense of our duty and his honour requires it of us. This seems to be a hard lesson, but, to help us to learn it, something must be avoided and something considered.

1. Something must be avoided. As—

[1.] Love of the world and addictedness to the creature. We must hang loose to outward things, or we shall never be ready to forego them for Christ's sake. If there be any secret idol in your heart, God will bring it forth, and put it to the trial, whether you love him or your idol most. Now the world is a great idol to keep us from God: 1 John 5:3–5, 'This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous. For whosoever 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?' The connection between these verses is thus: Whoever will keep the commandment must overcome the world, which is a great let thereto; therefore we have need of a heart to look after better things, and loosen the heart from the world, which is that faith that overcometh the world. This precept is hard, but it is only to those that are wedded to present things, therefore contempt of the world and of the possessions and riches of it is necessary for all that will not make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, and render themselves incapable of the duties of their holy calling.

[2.] Distrust of God's all-sufficiency, and trust in the means, is that which makes this precept difficult. He that durst not trust in God will certainly be unfaithful to him. Here is our danger, resting in the means, as if there could be no supply but from creatures: 1 Tim. 6:17, 'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches.' There is the great bane of men, we cannot see how we can be well without friends, wealth, liberty, favour, preferment, and such and such revenues by the year. We would fain be on the surest side and on the gathering hand, and that is the reason it is so hard to forsake all, and trust ourselves alone with God's all-sufficiency; and therefore, if you would bring your heart hereunto, you must strengthen faith in the providence of God, and bring thy heart to lean upon that, and not inferior means, and trust him upon his word, then it will be easy. It is no unreasonable thing that I require of you, it is but that which is due to any honest man; especially if you have had trial of him, you will trust him upon his word, even without a pawn; so you should trust God, though you can see nothing but nakedness, and poverty, and all manner of inconvenience. In time past God hath not been wanting to you, he hath given you better things, and will he deny thee daily bread?

2. Some things are to be considered, if you would thus forsake all for the discharge of a good conscience. There is God's right and our own complete resignation, when we first took Christ (I suppose you have done so, or certainly you are not christians); our hopes in the world to come; heaven is worth something. But I shall pitch only upon two things—

[1.] Others have quitted wealth upon far meaner, lower, and more inconsiderable respects than you are called to do it, therefore certainly you should quit it for conscience of your duty to God. Anacreon restored five talents to Poly crates, because he was so troubled with cares about keeping of them, saying, οὐ τιμοῦθαι ἀντὰ τῆς ἐπὶ ἀντῆς φρόντιδος, those things were not worth the care laid out about keeping of them. Another cast his wealth into the sea,

saying, *Pereas ne me perdas*—Let it perish, that it might not hinder me from the study of philosophy. Nay, men will do more for their lust. How many do sell all, and for what? To serve their vanity and lust, to keep up gaming, to please the flesh, that they may supply their riotous excess, and living beyond their compass. And shall poor base lusts, which are unreasonable, and for which God will condemn them, do more with them than the love of God with us?

[2.] Consider what you were, and within a little while what you shall be. When you came into the world, you were contented with a cradle, and when you go out of the world, you must be contented with a grave: Job 1:21, 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither;' 1 Tim. 6:7, 'For we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.' What were we? We came into the world shiftless and helpless, but God made provision for us, and hath kept us hitherto. Though you have been born of noble and rich parents and to great estates, this provision was made ready for you by God without any care of yours, and therefore if God hath taken anything away from you, *Accipit sed dedit*—He gave it at first, and God is where he was at first. Well, and what shall we be? That hath a great influence. Surely we must be naked again; death will strip us of all our comforts, therefore we do but part with that which we cannot keep, and it were better to do so than to venture your souls that must live for ever. Therefore it is not unreasonable and hard, when Christ bids us to forsake all.

I come to the second part of Christ's advice, 'Go sell all;' but he doth not stay there, 'and give to the poor.' To throw away riches as Crates did, who threw his goods and money into the sea, is no virtue, but a vain ambition; better to distribute to others what is superfluous to ourselves. Our Lord, in this injunction to the young man, doth not only require selling, but distribution, or liberality to the poor. The note is—

Doct. One special end and use unto which rich men should employ their wealth should be the help and relief of the poor.

1. In general, it is not, Give to the rich, but to the poor. Christ speaks of feasting and entertaining one another, which may have its place and time: 'When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just,' Luke 14:12–14. And therefore one great thing in our feasting should be to consider the poor. The sweetest influences should fall upon the lower ground. There are many that even truck with their kindnesses, but it is not charity so much as merchandise when men show respect to those that can respect them again. Oh! but do it to the poor that can make you no recompense.

2. Of the poor there are three sorts. There are *pauperes diaboli*, the devil's poor, such as have riotously spent their patrimony, and have reduced themselves to rags and beggary by their own misgovernment. These are not wholly to be excluded from our charity, when their necessity is extreme; we ought to give something to the man, though not to the sin. It may work upon them, especially when we join spiritual alms with temporal, and mind them of their sin, by which they have reduced themselves to such necessity. Again, there are *pauperes mundi*, such as come of poor parents, and live in poor estate in the world; these are to be relieved, whether they be gracious or ungracious, good or bad; for we must have 'brotherly kindness,' that is, to our fellow-saints, and 'charity;' 2 Peter 1:7, 'Add to brotherly kindness, charity.' There is a common bond of nature between them and us, they are our own flesh: Isa. 58:7, 'That thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh.' Then there are *pauperes Christi*, such as have suffered loss of goods for Christ's sake, or, being otherwise poor, do profess the gospel: Rom. 12:13, 'Distributing to the necessity of saints;' and Gal. 6:10, 'As we have therefore opportunity let us do good to all, but especially to the household of faith.' There is an order which God hath instituted; first we are to take care of our own family, children,

parents, or kindred: 1 Tim. 5:8, 'If any provide not for his own, and especially for them of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' Then God hath made us stewards for strangers and foreigners. Now among strangers, those that profess the same faith with us are first to be regarded, and there especially those that best evidence the reality of their faith by a holy life; then after these we are to extend our charity to all men as occasion is offered.

Reasons of this—

[1.] Christ hath commended them to us as his proxies and deputies. He himself can receive nothing from us, being exalted into the heavens; but now, that we may not deceive ourselves with a cheap love to Christ, he hath devolved his right upon the poor as his deputies: Mat. 26:11, 'Ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always.' He hath left them always with us that we may exercise our bounty towards them. We pretend very much love to Christ; if Christ were sick in bed, you would visit him; if in prison or in want, you would relieve him; what is done to one of these is done to him: Mat. 25:40, 'Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

[2.] It is a great honour put upon us to be instruments of divine providence and preservation to others. God hath substituted the poor to receive, and you to give, so that you are in the place of God to relieve and comfort them. The Lord could supply them without you, but he would put the honour of the work upon you, it is the greatest resemblance of God. Our Lord hath told us, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' Acts 20:35. More blessed, that is, more like the blessed God. Oh! it is a very great mercy to be able and to be willing to give. *Nihil habet fortuna magna majus quam ut possit, et natura bona melius quam ut velit.* It is the greatest thing in a great estate, that you are able to distribute to the necessities of others; and it is the best thing in a good-natured man, that he is



willing to give. As the true advantage of wealth is in relieving others, so nothing showeth our conformity to God more: Luke 6:36, 'Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.' It is Chrysostom's observation, Christ doth not say, If you fast, or if you pray, or if you prophesy, or if you be learned, you shall be like your heavenly Father; but if you be loving, if you be merciful, and distribute to the necessities of others, then you are like him, you hold the place of God, and are as it were a God to him.

[3.] Consider the profit of it. It seems to be a loss, but it is the most gainful trade in the world. Alas! to distribute to the poor, to scatter our substance, it is like scattering our bread upon the waters: Eccles. 11:1, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days.' There is so much profit in it, that it is the best way to keep what we have, to increase what we have, and to make it comfortable.

(1.) To keep what you have. Your goods are best secured when deposited in God's hands; you provide bags that wax not old. Many an estate in the world is blasted for want of charity, and given to the fury, depredation, and spoil of men: James 5:2, 3, 'Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten; your silver and gold is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire.'

(2.) To increase it. It is compared to seed: 2 Cor. 9:6, 'He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.' The husbandman gets nothing by keeping his seed-corn by him. When thou givest to thy poor brother, it is said, 'The Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putteth thy hand to,' Deut. 15:10. All your works of liberality and mercy shall be abundantly repaid: Luke 6:38, 'Give and it shall be given to you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give unto you.' See how it is expressed in many words, the more to strike upon our senses, to awaken our stupid heart. But above all, Prov. 19:17, 'He

that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again.' Saith Austin, *Si vis esse mercator optimus, fenerator egregius, &c.*—Would you put out your money to the best advantage, and be true usurers indeed, lend it to the Lord; the interest shall be infinitely greater than the principal. Never was there such usury heard of; and what better security than God's? God is a sure paymaster, and will pay you to the full, a hundred for one, which is an usury not yet heard of in the world. You can expect nothing from the poor, for they have nothing to give you; but God is their surety, he who is the great possessor of heaven and earth, that never broke his word. You have his hand and seal to show for it, his bond in the scripture, and his seal in the sacraments. You will say these are but words, but venture a little and try: Mal. 3:10, 'Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.' The widow's oil, the more it ran the more it increased, and the loaves multiplied by distributing; whereas, on the contrary, if you forbear to give, God will forbear to bless.

(3.) You will enjoy the remainder more comfortably. Wells are the sweeter for draining, so the oftener you are distributing and dispersing to the necessities of others, the more sweetness and the more comfort you will have in your estates. There are terrible passages in scripture against rich men, how hard it is for a rich man to be saved. It is a difficult thing for a man of an estate to get to heaven, and there is no way to free ourselves from the snare but to give alms: Luke 11:41, 'Rather give alms of such things as you have, and behold all things are clean to you.' Then you may possess an estate with a good conscience, otherwise it will certainly prove a snare. Nay, this is the way to have the comfort of it for ever: 'Thou shalt have treasure in heaven;' whatever shift you make, be not backward in this, rather sell than not have to give. Your riches in the world leave you on this side the grave; however all your gold and silver, how much soever you have, the use of it will cease when you

are laid in the grave; but here is treasure that we may have in heaven. What is that? The comfort of those estates we have charitably spent in this world: Luke 16:9, 'Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations;' 1 Tim. 6:18, 19, 'That they do good, 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.'

[4.] The necessity of it in order to your account. It is not an arbitrary thing, whether you will do this or no. God will reckon with us; one day he will ask you, What have you done with your estates? whether you 'have sowed to the flesh or to the Spirit?' Gal. 6:8. All the world will be divided into these two ranks. Alas! what sorry accounts will they make, when so much is spent in pomp, so much in pleasure, in vain fashions, in bravery of apparel, so much in feasting, in riotous banquets and luxury, so much in plays, in cockpits, in sports, and other such kind of things, and so little or nothing on the poor! Many will spend liberally on their lusts, but hardly a penny for the relief of others; they will feed their dogs, and starve their children. Conscience will call you to an account now, much more when you shall appear before the great God at the last day. When a man is to be tried and examined for his life, it would be a great advantage to know the questions that shall be asked him beforehand. Christ hath told us beforehand the questions that shall be put to us: Mat. 25, Have you fed, have ye visited, have ye clothed? are there none in prison to be visited? none hungry to be fed? none naked to be clothed? It is not, Have you heard? have you prophesied? have you eaten and drunk in my presence? No; but works of mercy are produced, that your faith might be found to praise and honour.

[5.] The equity of it in regard of God's mercies to us.

(1.) We have all from God: 'He giveth us richly all things to enjoy,' 1 Tim. 6:17. Now God doth require his rent, and some

acknowledgment to himself as the great landlord of the whole earth, of whom we have received, and from whom we hold all we have. Now the rent that God requires is that something should be given and distributed to the uses of the poor. When the children of Israel brought their first-fruits, wherewith the poor and widows were relieved, they were to make their acknowledgment: Deut. 26:9, 10, 'The Lord hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey; and now behold I have brought the first-fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given.' So David, 1 Chron. 29:12–14, 'Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, O God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name: but who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee;' and ver. 16, 'O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thy holy name, cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own.' Sure we received not all for ourselves, as the stomach receiveth not meat for itself, and the liver re-ceiveith not blood for itself, but to disperse it to the rest of the body; so we are but stewards and dispensers of what we have, not proprietors.

(2.) God had pity on the lost world. Indigent creatures have not so much need of temporal relief as we had of God's sending his Son. Among all the treasures of heaven nothing is more excellent: 2 Cor. 8:9, 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.' They are a part of our thank-offering: Heb. 13:15, 16, 'By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name; but to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' When he had proved Christ to be a sin-offering, he tells us that there is a thank-offering required of us. What is that? Praise and thanksgiving is one, and alms is another; these are things pleasing in the sight of God.

All this is spoken because there are so few true christians in the world, whatever feigned respects they pretend to Christ. Alas I many that have great estates, hundreds by the year, yet have not a heart to be helpful to their poor brethren and neighbours, but are very backward, full of grudging and repining when they give anything. How many are there that are liberal to their lusts, that can spend whole farms and lordships upon gaming, drinking, riot, luxury, lawsuits, costly apparel, and bestow so little upon the poor members of Christ Jesus. Do these men believe there will be a day of judgment, and a heaven and a hell? Oh! rouse up yourselves; give, but give upon a right principle; it is not a sin-offering, but a thank-offering; and give not for self-esteem, and to be well spoken of by men: Mat. 6:1, 'Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them;' but give in obedience to God. And for the quantum, how much you should give, that is not defined, but do not sow sparingly; God trusts love in the time of the gospel, therefore give not grudgingly. Draw out thy soul to the hungry: 2 Cor. 9:7, 'Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, nor of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver.' Live honey is best, that which flows of its own accord; so myrrh that sweats out of the tree of its own accord, that is most precious. Oh! give readily to the poor, that you may have the Lord's blessing and treasure in heaven.

II. The motive, 'And thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' Thou shalt not part with thy goods, so much as change them for those that are incomparably better.

1. There is a reward for those that are faithful to the laws of Christ, and willing to lay out their estates for him; it is not cast away, but well bestowed; they sow their seed here, they shall have their harvest hereafter. The poor cannot recompense thee, and therefore God will: Luke 14:14, 'Thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.' A cup of cold water is a small thing, yet it shall not want its reward: Mat. 10:42, 'And whosoever shall give to drink to one of

these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.'

2. This reward is propounded to encourage us. Christ not only instructs us by commands, but allures us by promises. There is a dispute whether we may look to the reward. I say not only we may, but we must; the oftener we look to heaven, the better we shall forego present things.

3. Our reward in heaven is called 'treasure,' something that is not only answerable to what we quit for Christ, but it far exceeds it. It is called, Eph. 1:18, 'The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' We shall have true riches instead of transitory, which we cannot long keep, and eternal riches that will ever last. Our treasure in heaven is more precious and more certain: Mat. 6:19, 20, 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.'

4. This reward is not only in this life, but in the life to come. The worldling is 'rich in this world,' 1 Tim. 6:17. The believer hath treasure in heaven. Let gentiles seek earthly things, that have not a right to heavenly. Bracelets of copper, glass beads, and little bells, and such like trifles are valued by rude barbarians, that are contemptible with us. The use and valuation of earthly things in the world to come ceaseth, it only holdeth on this side the grave; and therefore the great business of christians should be to make over their estates into heaven, that they might receive it by exchange there; for though the use of it ceaseth on the other side of the grave, yet we may have the comfort of it for everlasting.

## SERMON VII

And come, take up the cross, and follow me.—MARK 10:21.

SECONDLY, Having done with the particular precept, I come to the general precept given to this young man, 'Come, take up the cross, and follow me.' The duty that is enjoined is double—the one an help to the other, and the one necessarily follows the other, 'Take up the cross, and follow me.' Whoever follows Christ must prepare his shoulders for the cross, for without taking up the cross we shall never follow Christ to any purpose. 'Take up the cross;' it is an allusion to the punishments that were in use when Christ lived in the world; the malefactors bore their own cross to the place of execution, and then they were nailed to it alive; so let him reckon upon that, he must bear his cross. 'And follow me;' there is a twofold following of Christ—special and general.

1. Special, as those disciples that were his menial servants, of his own family, trained up for the ministry; these did follow Christ up and down, because they were chosen witnesses, and were to be conscious and privy unto all his actions, that they might better give an account of them to the world: Acts 1:21, 22, 'Wherefore, of those which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.' And so 'follow me' is, Come, take lot and share with me, abide with me, be my disciple.

2. The phrase bears a more general sense: John 12:26, 'If any man serve me, let him follow me;' and so to follow Christ is either to take his direction or imitate his example.

[1.] When we take his direction. We are said to follow Christ when we take him for our Lord and master, and live according to his holy doctrine. As they that have such a one for their master in any sect of philosophy are said to follow him, so they that take Christ for their

teacher, as the great prophet of the church, herein they follow him: Mat. 17:5, 'Hear ye him.'

[2.] We are said to follow Christ when we imitate his example; as 1 Cor. 11:1, 'Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.'

From the words thus explained, three points of doctrine may be gathered—

(1.) In order to eternal life, it is required that a man should not only sell all and give to the poor, but that he should follow Christ, or enter himself as one of his disciples.

(2.) Whosoever entereth himself as one of his disciples, and gives up his name to Christ, must follow him or imitate his example.

(3.) All those that would follow Christ must prepare their shoulders for the cross.

Doct. 1. In order to eternal life it is required, not only that a man should sell all and give to the poor, but that he should follow Christ, or enter himself as one of his disciples.

Here I shall inquire what it is, and why it is necessary.

First, What it is to enter ourselves as one of Christ's disciples? I shall lay no other duty upon you than what you are engaged unto by your baptism; therefore I shall only explain what your baptism binds you to, which is a bond upon you to enter yourselves as Christ's disciples. It is a renouncing all other lords and masters, a choosing Christ, and believing in him alone for salvation, and a resigning up ourselves to do his will.

1. A renouncing all other lords and masters which are opposite to Christ, viz., the devil, the world, and the flesh. The devil: Col. 1:13, 'Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.' Before there is any



entrance into the kingdom of Christ there is a translating from the power of darkness; that I take to be the power of the devil. The world: Gal. 6:14, 'The world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.' Then for the flesh: Rom. 8:12, 'We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.' In our natural state we are under the power of all these three, as it is set forth: Eph. 2:2, 3, '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 we had all our conversation in time past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind.' There are all the three enemies of our salvation that must be renounced mentioned. There is the custom and corrupt course of the world. Alas! the generality of the world live a sensual, flesh-pleasing life, that was their rule; and the prince of the power of the air, that was their guide; and the flesh, or the bent of corrupt nature, that was their principle. While we are in our corrupt state, the devil hath power to rule us, and the example and common customs of the world doth encourage us, and corrupt nature within doth strongly urge us to sin against God. And therefore, when we do indeed enter ourselves the disciples of Christ, these enemies of his and ours must be renounced, that we may have another rule, another lord, and another principle. Another rule, which is the law of God; another Lord, which is Jesus Christ; another principle, which is the Spirit of Christ dwelling and working in us. There must be first an emptying of heart before it can be filled with grace. There must be a dispossessing of those strong and cursed inmates that have such hand and power over us, that Christ alone may rule and govern us.

2. There must be a believing in Christ, or a resting upon him alone for salvation. When the eunuch offered himself to be baptized, Philip tells him, 'If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest; and he answered, and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,' Acts 8:37. Faith in the Son of God is the great qualification necessary to Christ's disciples, that as they forsake the devil, the pomps and vanities of the world, and the inclinations of the flesh, so

they may cleave to him alone as Lord and Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins to his people: Acts 5:31, 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.'

3. It is required that we resign up ourselves to do his will, and walk according to his directions, if we would be Christ's disciples; for otherwise we do but give him an empty title, and we may as much mock him as the Roman soldiers did, that put a robe upon him, and cried, 'Hail, king of the Jews.' When we cry him up as our Lord and Saviour, and do not resign up ourselves to his use and service, we mock him as they did. Take three scriptures to prove this: Luke 6:46, 'Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?' Cui res nomini subjecta negatur, is nomine illuditur—Tertullian. It is a mockage to give Christ a title, and deny him the duty which belongs to it. The greatest part of the christian world live in a bare outward profession of Christ's name, without any care and conscience to walk answerably; they seem to have renounced the devil, the world, and the flesh, but their hearts are in a secret league with them still; they call Christ Lord and Saviour, but do not rest upon him for salvation, nor obey him, therefore this will be of no use to them as to eternal life. So Mat. 7:21, 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father that is in heaven.' Though we profess Christianity, and seem to have a great respect to Christ's memory, yet without the practice of faith and obedience, we shall have no benefit by Christ, and shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven. Only those who, being condemned by the law, fly to Christ by faith, and study to bring forth the fruits of newness of life, shall be saved by him. Again, John 8:31, 'If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.' There are disciples in name, and there are Christ's disciples indeed, such as are so in truth, life, and practice. Whatever privileges men may have by their outward profession and show, yet they have no ground of solid comfort till they persevere to walk according to Christ's direction, and continue in his word. Thus when we renounce the devil, the world, and the

flesh, and cleave to Christ as prince and saviour, and resign up ourselves to his use, when this is done in reality, then do we enter ourselves indeed to be his disciples. This is implied in our baptism, as in the primitive times, when they did ἀναθεματίζειν ἑαυτοὺς τῷ Θεῷ (as Justin Martyr phraseth it), they did solemnly renounce Christ's enemies, and profess to choose him for their Lord and master, and yielded up themselves to be guided by him in his own way to heaven. And the apostle telleth us, 1 Peter 3:21, 'Baptism saveth us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God;' that is, an hearty acceptance of God's offers, and an engagement in his strength to do his commandments.

Secondly, Why this is necessary beyond alms and all other amiable qualities?

1. Because heathens and men of a false religion may excel in charity and other moralities, and yet without true grace they are nothing. The apostle tells us, 'The gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law,' Rom. 2:14; and that they excelled in charity as well as other things, appears by Titus 3:14, 'Let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses.' Who are they that he calls 'ours also?' Compare it with ver. 8, 'That they which have believed in God be careful to maintain good works;' that is, those of our religion, as well as the Jews and pagans. The gentiles were much given to charity. Paul saith, Acts 28:2, 'The barbarous people showed us no little kindness.' Mercy had an altar in every city of Greece. The Alkoran of the Turks says, that if men knew what a pleasant thing it was to give alms, rather than want somewhat to give, they would slice out their own flesh. So that the gentiles, and men not under the institution of Christ, those that are without the covenant and promise and grace, may be addicted to alms. But now all this is nothing without true grace: 1 Cor. 13:3, 'Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' A man would think there were a contradiction in the apostle's speech; for how can one bestow all his goods to feed the

poor, and yet want charity? If this be not charity, what is? I would not interpret it, If I bestow all my goods upon the poor hypocritically, for it is a hard thing to conceive hypocrisy should go to such a length; but there is the grace of charity, and the natural amiable quality of charity. If a man have not a renewed heart, if it be a mere natural motion, without spiritual grace (and that cannot be till they enter themselves disciples to Christ in the way spoken of), it is nothing. The apostle commends the Macedonians, that were a poor people, yet did exceedingly stretch themselves to contribute to the poor saints at Jerusalem: 2 Cor. 8:5, 'And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.' And here was the true method, before they gave their goods, they offered their hearts to God, they gave up themselves to the Lord Christ to be his disciples, they entered themselves into his service. This is the true fountain of charity, and then it comes to something.

2. There is need of faith in Christ in order to our acceptance with God, and reconciliation with him; and therefore all the good works we do will not profit us till we become disciples of Christ. Why? Till we believe, his atonement and reconciliation is not reckoned to us, for the gifts of enemies are giftless and unacceptable. Since the fall there is no way of acceptance with God till we change our copy and come to claim by a new covenant. Nothing will render us acceptable to God but complete innocence, or else repentance and faith in Christ. While we stand upon our own bottom, alas! the least failing is damnable, and spoils all the good we do; for 'without faith it is impossible to please God,' Heb. 11:6; Rom. 8:8, 'They that are in the flesh cannot please God.'

Use. To show the necessity of becoming the disciples of Christ, that you may not satisfy yourselves with anything you do without it or beneath it, till you have taken Christ for your Saviour.

But you will say, What need this ado? We are christians; are not we dedicated to his service, baptized in his name? I answer three things

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1. There is the more need of entering yourselves disciples of Christ because you are baptized, that you may fill up your baptism with answerable duty. The apostle Paul presseth to put on Christ: Rom. 13:14, 'But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ;' and that because they had put on Christ: Col. 3:10, 'Seeing ye have put on the new man.' We are more engaged by our profession and covenant sealed in baptism; if we have put on Christ sacramentally, we must put him on really: Rom. 6:11, 'Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' And indeed this is so far from being an objection, that it binds us the more strongly. However God may deal with infidels, to be sure it will not fare well with you if you mock God with an empty formality, and put him off with a baptismal regeneration, without a real regeneration, if ye put on Christ in profession, and do not really put him on, and know his grace in truth. All are engaged the more strongly that live in the church, not only by the common necessity that is upon all mankind of running to a redeemer, but because of their profession: Rom. 6:3–5, 'Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death: therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life; for if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.'

2. In baptism you were entered by others, therefore in grown years you must enter yourselves by your own consent disciples of Christ. There is a personal act required of all that come to age, that they may stand to the covenant, and own what their parents promised for them. As the parents of the blind man said, John 9:21, 'He is of age, ask him, he shall speak for himself.' You did by your parents, according to God's institution, covenant to renounce the pomps and vanities of the world, and accept of Christ, but now you are of age, you must speak for yourselves; then every one must come with his own hand, and enter themselves into God's muster-roll: Isa. 44:3–5,

'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring, &c. One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.' As they grow up they shall engage themselves unto the Lord. Therefore Christianity is called a confession, and Jesus Christ is called 'the apostle and high priest of our profession,' Heb. 3:1; and every christian is a confessor: Rom. 10:9, 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth,' &c.; one that must openly own Christ, and personally profess his subjection to the gospel of Christ: 2 Cor. 9:13, 'They glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ.' Our renunciation of Christ's enemies, and profession of our faith and resignation to God, should be made with our own mouths when we are able.

3. This personal consent must not only be outwardly professed, but the heart must be renewed, and the bent of it set towards God; for we have not only to do with men, but with God; therefore, Rom. 6:13, 'Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead.' All this is spoken to show the vanity of those that say that there is no conversion in the church, no regeneration but by baptism; these are pernicious errors, that strike at the root of holiness. As there is a conversion from paganism to profession, or confession of the name of Christ, so there is a conversion from confession to reality. We are all bound to enter ourselves as Christ's disciples.

Doct. 2. They that enter themselves disciples to Christ and give up themselves to him must follow him, that is to say, imitate his example.

Reasons.

1. In the general, because this is agreeable to the general sense of religion that is in the hearts of all men. *Ea demum vera est religio*

imitari quem colis—This is true religion to imitate what we worship; otherwise men are not true to the religion they do profess. The heathens were so bad, because they were taught *Jovem colere potius quam Catonem*, to worship Jupiter rather than Cato. So christians are to be much better, because it is Christ whom they worship; therefore they are to be pure as he is pure: 1 John 3:3, 'He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as he is pure.' A man is not true to his religion if he doth not prize that, and follow after that which he conceits to be most excellent in his god. To despise holiness in men, and pretend to love it in God, is gross hypocrisy. Reason will tell us that the first cause should be the highest rule, that the divine essence and being, as it is the beginning of all beings, so it should be the rule of all perfections.

2. There are many special reasons why Christ should be propounded to us as our pattern and example whom we should follow and imitate.

[1.] Because he is a pattern of holiness set up in our nature. It would discourage us to consider of the deep ocean of the deity; rather we are taught to coast it in our passage to heaven by the banks of Christ's example. He came down from God not only to restore us to God's favour, but to set us an example: 1 Peter 2:21, 'Leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.' The life of Christ is a living rule, religion exemplified, a visible commentary on God's law. The angels obey God, and we are referred to their example in the Lord's prayer, 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven;' but this could not be so encouraging as when it is done by one in our nature.

[2.] Because there are many advantages by this pattern in our nature; as—

(1.) Our pattern is more complete than if God had been our pattern. There are some graces wherein we cannot be said to resemble God, and therefore we must look for a pattern elsewhere, as humility,

faith, fear, hope, reverence, obedience; none of these things are in God, for he hath no superior, and these things imply inferiority and subjection. There are some parts of holiness which stand in a conformity to God, others which stand in a subjection to God, such as man oweth to God as his superior, which hath no resemblance to anything in God's nature, for God is not subject to any; but knowledge, wisdom, justice, mercy, love, purity, we have them in a lower degree, some shadow of them. Now in all these Christ is our pattern: Mat. 11:29, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart;' in all things that have respect to suffering and subjection, in patience and self-denial. Our rule was perfect at first, but not our pattern.

(2.) It is an engaging pattern. We are engaged by the rule of our obedience, but much more by Christ's example. The practice of Christ maketh every duty lovely to us, for the disciple is not above his Lord. Masters many times, to shame their servants, will take the work in hand which they grudge at: John 13:14, 'If I then, your Lord and master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet.' Shall we forbear to follow such a leader?

(3.) It is an encouraging pattern, partly as there is an efficacy in this pattern; as with the gospel or law of Christ there goeth along the ministration of the Spirit, so also with the consideration of his example. It is not a bare moral inducement, but it is accompanied with a real influence of the Spirit. Christ doth not only bless to us his doctrine, but his example; he hath purchased grace that we may do as he hath done before us; he hath divided his Spirit, and shed it abroad among his disciples. Every duty is sanctified by his subjection to it; all his paths drop fatness, and the way to heaven is made more easy because he hath walked in it before us. Partly as it assureth us of his sympathising with us in our hard service; he knoweth the weaknesses of human nature, and its reluctancies to the law of God. Christ 'learned obedience by the things that he suffered,' Heb. 5:8; and having experienced the hardships of suffering, his heart is entended towards those that are in the like



case: Heb. 2:18, 'For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.' Partly because of the perfection of his obedience to cover our infirmities. God hath had full obedience from Christ, and therefore where a poor soul doth its utmost, it can rely on God for acceptance, which is a great encouragement in our work: Rom. 5:19, 'By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.'

Use. To persuade us to follow Christ.

1. Our general profession of being christians doth oblige us to be like him; head and members should be all of a piece. If we take the name of Christ upon us, we had need express him to the life: 1 Peter 2:9, 'Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.' If a man should put your name to the picture of a swine, you would account it a disgrace. Oh! what an affront is it to Christ to put his name to the picture and image of the devil! We do but express him in scorn and contempt. When we are wrathful, unclean, covetous, unchaste, sensual, proud, unholy, and say we are christians, what a dishonour, scorn, and contempt do we put upon Christ! What did the heathens say heretofore? *Estimari a cultoribus potest ipse qui colitur*—You may know what one he is whom they worship by them that worship him. We profess to bear the image of Christ, yet are vain, turbulent, carnal, unthankful, unholy. Oh! what is this but to carry the name of Christ in disgrace up and down the world?

2. We shall never be like him in glory unless we be like him in grace also: Rom. 8:29, 'For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.' Here the foundation is laid. If you would appear before God with confidence, and not be ashamed at the great day, be like to him, then you shall have boldness: 1 John 4:17, 'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in the world.' Otherwise how can we look him in the face?

Therefore let us follow him, *assequi nunquam possumus, sequi tamen nunquam desinamus*. Though we cannot follow him as Asahel did Abner, close at the heels, yet let us follow him however, though it be but as Peter followed Christ, afar off, to the high priest's hall.

But wherein should we follow Christ? I answer—

[1.] In his self-denial. This is the first lesson in christianity, and one of the hardest. Christ came from heaven to teach us this lesson; and his birth, life, and death was a continual lecture of self-denial. His birth, it was a great step from God's bosom to the virgin's lap. None can deny themselves as Christ, who, when 'he was rich,' viz., in all the fulness and glory of the Godhead, 'yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich,' 2 Cor. 8:9. None was so rich as Christ, and therefore none can deny themselves as Christ did. We may talk of flocks and herds, and lands and lordships, and the ornaments of the present life, but he had the possession of a perfect and unbounded happiness and glory, and yet he was born of a woman, he had a poor mother, in a poor place, and was wrapt up in cheap swaddling clothes. He that was God's fellow, the heir of all things, the Lord of angels, was thrust among the beasts of the stable. Certainly Christ came into the world with such a slender provision that we might not stand upon greatness and bravery. His whole life after he was born was exercised with labours and sorrows: Rom. 15:3, 'Even as Christ pleased not himself;' that is, he did not study the interest of that life which he assumed. Certainly if any had cause to love life, Christ had; his soul dwelt with God in a personal union, in such a near fellowship as we are not capable of, and yet he pleased not himself, but gave up himself for our sins. It is ridiculous to profess him to be our master and not to follow his example. We have no reason to stand upon our points as we do, to be delicate and tender of our interests, when Jesus Christ pleased not himself. We murmur if we have but a little bad entertainment in the world for his sake, and yet we cannot be worse used than Christ was: Mat. 10:24, 25, 'The disciple is not above his

master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.' We have no cause to complain if we be reduced to coarse apparel, when we remember the swaddling clothes of Christ; or to complain of a hard bed and prison when Christ, was laid in a manger. Christ would teach us hereby that an innocent poverty is better than all the pomp of the world. And for his sufferings, from the cratch to the cross, still he was a pattern of self-denial; therefore they that indulge themselves in all the delights of the flesh seem not to believe in Christ, who was a man of sorrows. We are in a base condition, but two or three degrees distant from dust or nothing, yet how are we for pleasing and satisfying ourselves, even to the dishonour of God, and wrong of conscience!

[2.] In his humility. Christ did not this out of necessity, but choice: Mat. 20:28, 'The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' He came not in the pomp and equipage of princes, but in the form of a servant. How should this check aspiring after and affecting domination, especially in the church. They that love pre-eminence, and would be great and high, seem to affect another Jesus. They that rend and tear all to pieces, either to uphold their greatness or grow greater, have not the same mind that was in Jesus. You should be humble and lowly, and condescending to the meanest offices. It is worth your observation, that in the gospel we are so often told that, after the Lord Jesus had performed some eminent miracle, he withdrew himself, and retired from the multitude, that so he might not be mixed with their praises. Thus when he received that glorious testimony from heaven, declaring him to be the Son of God: Mat. 3:17, 'And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;' he retired into the wilderness. So when he had raised his fame by curing diseases, he ascended up into a mountain, or retired into a ship, and leaves the multitude; and when they would have crowned him king, he refused it: all these were arguments and instances of his humility. Hear and wonder at what you read: John. 13:3, 'Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his

hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God.' A magnificent preface! Now one would have thought that some rare act of empire, sovereignty, and dominion should have followed. No; ver. 4, 5, he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash his disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. The disciples did not wash the feet of their Lord, but the Lord washed the disciples' feet; and what was the meaning of this? See ver. 15, 'For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.'

[3.] In love to the saints: John 13:34, 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another;' and John 15:12, 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.' Oh! how express are these injunctions. There is nothing in which Christ was more eminent than in his love; no rancour of spirit, no boiling up of envy, but all love. The apostle propounds it to husbands: Eph. 5:25, 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church.' Now how did Christ love his church? With a great love, so as to die for his church. The love of Christ was sincere, not for by-ends; he loved saints as saints, because of his interest in them. So should we love those in whom we see most of the image of God. It was not a blaze, but a constant abiding love; whom he loves he loves unto the end; so must we love the saints. It is true Jesus loved some above others: 'John was the beloved disciple,' John 21:20. There was ἐκλεκτῶν ἐκλεκτότεροι, the flower of the disciples, whom he loved most, but he loved them all. We should love not in word, but in deed and in truth. Oh! be filled with love to God and love to the saints, who have his image stamped upon them. You that are believers have cause to love one another. Have we not all the same Father? Are we not children begotten of the same holy seed, the word? Do we not all suck at the same breasts of the promises? Do we not all sit at the same table, at the Lord's supper? Are we not all clothed with the same robe of Christ's righteousness? and do we not all expect the same glory?

[4.] In his usefulness and profitableness, and of this the whole gospel is a narrative and history. Therefore when the apostle would sum up the life of Christ, he tells us this, Acts 10:38, 'He went about doing good, giving eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, speech to the dumb, healing every sickness, and every disease among the people,' Mat. 9:35. Full of compassion to the souls of men, Jesus Christ was nothing else but charity covered over with flesh and blood; he was always either giving of blessings or forgiving of sins. All his miracles were not actions of pomp, but of relief and succour, unless it were blasting the fig-tree and sending the herd of swine into the sea, and the fig-tree was barren and the swine was of little use in the Jewish countries. All the miracles of Christ were salutary and healing. We never read he destroyed one man by his miracles, but saved many: Eph. 5:1, 2, 'Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.' Oh! that we could learn this! None is born for himself, but for the community, and it is better to give than to receive.

[5.] In his piety towards God. If you consider the history of Christ, you will find him much in acts of devotion; he was frequent, and fervent, and reverent in prayer. Frequent: Mark 1:35, 'And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed;' and Luke 6:12, 'He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.' Alas! we are weary in our ordinary stinted offices of the day. How soon do we grow weary of calling upon God! but Christ spends whole nights in prayer. He was fervent: Luke 22:44, 'And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly.' And he was reverent; when he was in the garden, 'he kneeled down and prayed,' Luke 22:41; 'And he fell on his face, and prayed,' Mat. 26:39. He was a most diligent observer of the sabbath: Luke 4:16, 'As his custom was, he went into the synogogue on the Sabbath-day;' he was diligent in frequenting the public assemblies. Oh! how doth this confute those that, out of height of spirit and a proud conceit of themselves, are above ordinances, and say they were appointed only for christians of the lower form. He praised God for mean and coarse fare, when he had

but five barley loaves and two fishes: 'He took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples,' John 6:11. Alas! when our tables are full furnished we have scarce any serious thoughts of God, that giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

[6.] In his spirituality and heavenly-mindedness. Christ came from heaven, and he lived in heaven all the while he was upon the earth. When he was at the well of Samaria, conferring with the woman there, he discourseth of the well that springs up to everlasting life: John 4:14, 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.' He drew her from a discourse of ordinary water to a discourse of the water of life. When he was at supper at the pharisee's house, he discourseth of eating bread in God's kingdom: Luke 14:15, 'Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.' When he had wrought the miracle of the loaves, he discourseth of the bread of life and the manna that came down from heaven: John 6:27, 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you.' When he was at the feast of tabernacles, where they were wont to pour out water, and so to make a pool near the temple, he discourseth of rivers of water and of the flowings of the Spirit: John 7:38, 39, 'He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.' A rare pattern for us to follow. We should labour as to see all things in God, so to see God in all things, and to be heavenly-minded in all our enjoyments.

[7.] In his obedience to his mean earthly parents. Do you think this is a slight matter? Christ was God blessed for evermore, yet he submitted to his poor parents. It is said, Luke 2:51, 'He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.' Though his parents were mean and despicable, yet he was subject to them, and (as it is most probable) he wrought in their mean trade; for the Jews said, Mark 6:3, 'Is not this the carpenter?' Not only the

carpenter's son, but the carpenter; and Justin Martyr says, he was employed in making of yokes and ploughs. The great God becoming man, was subject to his parents. What a lesson hath Christ set to children! Whatever you be, you can be no greater than Christ, and your parents can hardly be meaner than Joseph, and will you be stubborn and disobedient, and rather govern than be subject.

[8.] In the sweetness and beauty of his conversation, and yet in a strict and winning way. Many men's troubles come from themselves; they are rough and sour, and do not walk amiably. There is a great deal of wisdom required of christians, that they should walk so strictly, and yet so pleasingly, that they may both represent and endear their religion to others. As it is said of Athanasius, that he was *magnes et adamas*; he was a loadstone to draw the hearts of the people, and an adamant in the resistance of sin. But what do I speak of Athanasius, when a greater than Athanasius is here? Jesus Christ did so sweetly dispose himself in all kind of conversation, that he grew up into favour both with God and man: Luke 2:52, 'And Jesus increased in wisdom, and in stature, and in favour with God and man.' The meaning of which is this, the Lord Jesus was always perfect, and full of holiness, and not capable to receive more than he had; but he growing from a child to a man, he grew more in wisdom and favour with God and man. As for example, suppose the sun in the firmament were a vegetative and growing creature, it would be full of light the first moment of its creation, yet growing bigger, its light would increase, though it were always full; so Christ was always full of knowledge and full of grace, yet according to his receptivity and capacity, so was grace conveyed to him. How many are there that decline, and pass from zeal to lukewarmness, from exactness in the ways of God to liberty and licentiousness! This is to be a falling star, and to imitate the apostate angels, who fell from the state' of purity and blessedness in which they were to a state of sin and misery. But Christ increased in grace, and in favour with God and men; it was a high point of wisdom in Christ so to carry all things that he might gain upon all that he conversed with.

[9.] In the holiness and purity of his life. Though he lived in the midst of enemies that hated him, and were watchful and malicious to spy out all occasions against him, yet saith he, John 8:46, 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?' The devils themselves acknowledge his holiness: Mark 1:24, 'I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.' The apostle telleth us, Heb. 4:15, 'He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin;' and 1 John 3:5, 'In him is no sin;' and 1 Peter 2:22, 'Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.' He took upon him our natural, but not our sinful infirmities. Christ took the nature without the sin of the nature; the sun of righteousness was like the beams of the sun, that shines all over a sinful world without being tainted with its pollution: Heb. 7:26, 'Such an high priest became us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.' Christ suffered the torments of hell, at least equivalently, to free us from hell; yet he would not, nor could, commit the least sin, though it had been to free all men that ever had been in the world. Now, 'as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation,' 1 Peter 1:15. Imitate Christ in his holiness, which was a part of his glory, and will be of yours: Mat. 5:8, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Here we should be walking pictures of Christ, that others may see the face of Christ in us. Tread in his steps. Live so holily, that if the bible should be lost, it may be found again in our holy lives.

[10.] In his wonderful patience and meekness. Never any suffered so much, and never any suffered so patiently. How much wrong do others do, but will suffer none! and how much wrong did Christ suffer, but did none! 1 Peter 2:23, 'Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously;' Isa. 53:7, 'He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth;' and Isa. 50:6, 'I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.' Job, though a



pattern of patience, yet in the extremity of his afflictions fell into impatience, and cursed the day of his birth; but there was no iniquity in Christ, no guile found in his mouth, not one impatient word fell from him; he was made up all of patience. Now in this should the saints imitate Christ: Rom. 12:12, 'Be patient in tribulation.' The example of Christ's meekness should be the great allay to us when we are transported with the gusts of passion. What an unconformity is there between Christ and us, when there are such mists raised in the soul that the light of reason cannot be seen! Men drunk with passion, how unconformable are they to the meekness of our Saviour! Christ rendered sweet language for bitter, blessings for curses. Did Christ do so? so should christians.

[11.] In love to his enemies. Take that eminent example of Christ, who died for enemies: Rom. 5:10, 'When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.' As for those enemies which were the instruments of his death, which shed his blood, yet when he was upon the cross, he breathed forth his soul in prayer for them: Luke 23:34, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' He would give his enemies the morning-market of the gospel. He gave his disciples charge to go abroad into the world, 'that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem,' Luke 24:47; there where his blood was shed, there would he have the virtue and comfort of it preached. And the apostle presseth this same duty upon us from this example of Christ: Col. 3:13, 'Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.' We are of touchy, spiteful, revengeful spirits, and cannot pass by the least wrong, and think it a disgrace so to do; we think a man is a dolt, and hath no mettle in him, if he be not presently heated into a distemper; but Solomon says, Prov. 19:11, 'The discretion of a man defers his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.' This was the temper of Christ, to exercise love and tender affection to his enemies. Now, if we imitate Christ in these things, then are we christians and disciples indeed.

## SERMON VIII

And take up the cross.—MARK 10:21.

DOCT. 3. All those that follow Christ should prepare their shoulders for the cross.

Here I shall show—(1.) 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 18:28, '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-disciplines. 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. 19:12, '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 1:2, '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 afflictions 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 headlong into dangers, and without necessity; there is a medium 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. Therefore 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. 6:12, '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. 40:7, 8, 'Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O 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. 3:18, 19. *Multum interest inter theologum gloriæ et theologum 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. 30:15, '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. 62:1, 'Truly my soul waiteth upon God; from him cometh my salvation;' Ps. 39:9, 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it;' not uttering impatient words; God's will silenceth all.

[3.] Cheerful behaviour under the cross: Rom. 5:3, 'And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also;' James 1:2, '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. 7:4, 'I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation,' υπερπερι σσευομα τη

χαρῶ; I overflow with joy. A dejected spirit doth not behave itself answerably to its principles, privileges, and hopes. 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 he 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 15:11, '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. 10:34, 'Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance,' Rom. 8:18, '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 comfort 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 9:23, '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. 16:24, '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 passover 'with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand,' Exod. 12:11, as ready for a journey, so should a christian be ready to go forth at God's call: Acts 21:13, ἐτοιμῶς, ἔχω, '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 our way, and we cannot baulk it without sin: Gen. 47:9, '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-groaning.

(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. There 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 christianity; these occasion experience of God and trial of grace, and are a part of God's discipline for the mortifying of sin, and are happy opportunities 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 18:11, 'The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' and we must pledge, him. Jesus Christ was 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,' Isa. 53:3, and there would be a strange disproportion between head and members if we should altogether live in delicacy, ease, and pleasures. The bitter cup goeth by course and round, first to Christ, then to his apostles, and it goeth from hand to hand ever since. The apostle speaks of ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων χριστοῦ, Col. 1:24, '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 allotted share and portion. 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. 2:10, and fare as he fared: John 15:20, 'Remember 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 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. 3:10, 'That I may know

him, and the power of his resurrection, 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 15:19, '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 opposition. We are told, 2 Tim. 3:12, '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 3:12, '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. 4:29, '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 1:6, '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. *Tribulatio tam nobis necessaria est quam ipsa vita, immo magis necessaria, et multo utilior quam totius mundi opes et dignitates*—Affliction is as necessary to us as life itself, yea, more necessary and 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 out of the way,' Heb. 12:13. 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 preparation of the gospel of peace,' Eph. 6:15; or else in hard ways he will soon founder and halt. That ἔτοιμασία, 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. 12:11, '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 inconveniences that attend religion in peaceable times, but the profession will afterwards engage us in the greater troubles; and therefore men do but make way for the shame of a change, and other inconveniences to themselves, that hope for temporal commodity by the profession of the gospel. The great drift of the gospel is to draw us off from the comfort of this world 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 afflictions will come, and prepare accordingly. We entered upon the ways of godliness on these terms, to be willing to suffer afflictions 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 3:25, 'For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.' When we suffer our fears to prophesy, and do expect evils, they

smart less; præcogitati mali mollis ictus; but when they come unlooked-for, it is the more burdensome. 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 16:1, '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. 3:28; 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 their 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. Rebellion 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. 125:5, '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 God, nor adhere to the comfort of the promises; these are in the same rank with open enemies: Rev. 21:8, 'The fearful and unbelieving' are joined together.

4. Those that seek to make their worldly advantage and the profession 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. 7:14; 'Take my yoke upon you, &c., and ye shall find rest unto your souls,' Mat. 11:29.

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 Christ'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 4:15, 'But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody 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 2:23, 'Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain;' John 18:11, 'The cup which my Father hath given me,' &c., and so as to the christian's cross: 1 Thes. 3:3, '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 2:21, '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 4:7, '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? Christ himself was called a devil, accused of blasphemy and sedition, and you must

not think to be better used than he was. Quum Christus ipse crucem et supplicia passus sit tantum illis pretii accessit, ut nemo 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 is worthy to have this honour put upon him. We bear it together with Christ: Rom. 8:26, 'The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities,' συναντιλαμβάνεται; 1 Cor. 10:13, '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 16:33, '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. 1:5, '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: Rom. 5:5, '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. 1:29, 'For unto you it is given in behalf of Christ, 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 14:22, '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 2:10, '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 5:9, 'Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world;' Heb. 6:12, '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 they 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 2:10, '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 difficulties. Though we do not always lie under tribulations and persecutions, yet we should be always prepared, *proæparatione 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; we should not only have grace for present use, but against future temptations. Now have you 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 9:31, '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 5:5, '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 adversity; 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 enjoyments: Gal. 6:14, '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. 6:10, 'As we have therefore opportunity, 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 superfluities 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 conveniences, will not storm at the violence when all is taken away: James 5:1, '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 abroad upon is taken away in an instant.

[4.] He that cannot digest lighter afflictions, how will he bear greater? Jer. 12:5, '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 are put into the catalogue of things to be renounced by us when we take to Christ: Luke 14:26, '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 13:24, how will he endure torments, and expose the body to all kind of sufferings? *Necesse est, ut ei honestum vile sit, cui corpus carum 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 afflictions 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.

## SERMON IX

And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions.—MARK 10:22.

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 *στυγνάσας ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ*, '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. 16:3, *πυρράζει γὰρ στυγνάζων ὁ οὐρανός*. Then the sadness of his heart, *ἀπῆλθη λυπούμενος*, 'He went away grieved.' In Luke 18:23, it is *περίλυπος ἐγένετο*, 'He was very sorrowful.' Note, that he went away, and we hear no more of him; like those, John 6:66, '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 *ἦν γὰρ πλούσιος σφόδρα*, 'He was very rich;' he had both *κτῆματα* possessions, and *χρήματα*, 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 commands 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 6:70, '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 company, 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 6:20, 'Simon Magus, he believed, and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done,' Acts 8:13. Here was faith and solemn profession 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 by 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 6:26, 'Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled;' and 'ye rejoiced in his light for a season,' John 5:35. 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 religion, *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 lurking 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 affections 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 nothing 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 counterfeiting 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 counterfeited. 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 8:13, '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 profession 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 8:14, '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 only gone out for a while, and not cast out, Luke 11:24, to have anything 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 eyes. This point is but reductive to this place, therefore I shall not handle it at large.

Use. It doth 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. 119:133, '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. 14:4–6, '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, Repent 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: Rev. 2:4, 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 blunted 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. 3:6, '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 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. 22:1, 'And it 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. 11:35, 'And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them;' 1 Peter 1:7, '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 discover 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 6:60, '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. 32:31, '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 6:6, '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. 26:26, '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. 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. 139:2, '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 yourselves under them.

1. Expect trials. Mat. 7, we read of two builders, the one built upon the sand, the other on the rock; when they had built, the tightness 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 heaven 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 shepherd was to be smitten and the sheep scattered, then the disciples were asleep, Mat. 26:40; and they were dreaming of ease and of dividing kingdoms when the cross was at their heels: Acts 1:6, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' We promise ourselves perpetual exemption, if we have but a little breathing time: Ps. 30:6, '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: Rev. 3:10, '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. 6:21, 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. 3:7, 'Set your affections on 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 disposeth and inclineth the soul to all evil; it incapacitateth us for

the doing of any good; and it hinders 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. 6:10. Let it once reign in the heart, and then a man sticks at no sin, and he becomes a ready prey for Satan when his heart is intoxicated with the love of present things: Micah 2:2, '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 dabit?—What will you give me? Gehazai, let him but affect a reward, and he will dishonour 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 he 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 sorceries, 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.

(1st.) It destroys the principle of obedience, which is the love of God: 1 John 2:15, '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.

(2d.) It is contrary to the matter of our obedience. The commands of God and the commands of mammon are contrary: Mat. 6:24, '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 your most 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 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 necessary 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 slightes 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 despise their birthright, Heb. 12:16, and when they are invited to the wedding, Mat. 22, 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. 18:21, 'Such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness;' not only not covetous, but hating covetousness; 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. 3:3, 'Not to be greedy 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 5:2, '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 undertake, and their prime 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 2:15, 'Who loved the wages of unrighteousness,' and therefore would fain curse the people whom God blessed. This base, powerful, imperious lust will draw men to very base and unworthy actions. Saith God, Ezek. 13:19, '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! will 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. 15:27, '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 iniquity of traffic: Ezek. 28:5, '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 worldly lusts is prejudiced against whatever shall be spoken for God, and for the concernments of another world: Luke 16:14, '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. 13:22, 'He also that receiveth seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness 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 8:5. 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. 33:31, '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 Shechemites, for then, say they, 'their substance and their cattle will be ours.'

Use. To inform us 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. 10:3, 'They bless the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.' He that by hook and crook gets honour and riches is the only prudent

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 12:15, '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. 5:3, and covetousness is called idolatry, Col. 3:5; 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 matter of it? Will you dethrone that God which made you, and set up the world in his stead? It is called 'adultery,' James 4:4; 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 creature 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 repentance to salvation never to be repented of,' 2 Cor. 7:10; 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. 14:9, 'The king was sorry; nevertheless 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. 21, 22. 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 conflicts 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 a wound in the conscience, but it doth not prevail to cause them to look after heaven on Christ's own terms.

The last point 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



unconscionable 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 inordinately set upon wealth lawfully gotten; and therefore God gives us that caution: Ps. 62:10, 'If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.' Though they should increase by God's providence, yet consider, 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 superflua et terrena diliguntur, arctius adepta quam concupita comprimunt; nam unde juvenis, iste tristis discessit, nisi quia magnas habebat divitias? Aliud est enim nova incorporare, quia desunt; aliud jam incorporata divellere; illa enim velut cibi repudiantur, ista vero velut membra præciduntur*—I do not know how it comes to pass, but so it is, there is more danger in possessing 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. Covetousness is not to be determined by a greedy thirst only, but also by complacency, 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 careful 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.

2. That the gathering of a spiritual disease is very secret and insensible. 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. 30:9, '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 learning 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 the 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 especially 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 substance 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. 3:9, '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 11:41. 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 the 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,  
How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom  
of God!—MARK 10:23.

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

together, 'He went away sad, for he had great possessions.' The instance of this young man had raised them all into wonder, and therefore 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 refusal 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 instruction partly that they might be more diligent in warning rich men of their danger and duty: 1 Tim. 6:17, '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 worldlings were likely to despise the doctrine of a crucified Saviour and oppose his worshippers: James 2:6, 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 himself 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 disciples, 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,' περιβλεψάμενος, the gesture of one that is to speak or do some notable thing: Luke 6:10, '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 occurrence 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 moral, 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 kingdom of heaven. 'How hard?' It is—(1.) *Questio admirantis*. It is propounded in the form of an admiring question. (2.) It is *questio dolentis*, 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 here! 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 very 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 he 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. 30:8, 9. James 2:6, 'Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment-seats?' He doth not say, 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. 10:22, 'The blessing of the Lord maketh rich;' and are they not promised to his people? Ps. 112:3, 'Wealth and riches shall be in his house;' and accordingly are bestowed upon them. For we read of Abraham, Gen. 24:25, 'The

Lord hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become exceeding great;' saith Eliezer. So was Job, chap. 1:3, 'The greatest of all the men of the East.' So David, Solomon, and Lazarus of Bethany, Joseph of Arimathea, 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 1:4, 'The corruption that is in the world through lust.' It is your 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 maketh us ready to drown our mind, our time and affections, 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, magnificent 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 10:35. 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. 6:9, '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 absolute bona, so absolutely 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 abundance; 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 one way, some in another, shall find him a good 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. 8:9, 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 suffer 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 which is denied or hardly vouchsafed 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 incapable 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 8:14; that is, the heart wherein christianity cannot enter with any good effect 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. 11:5, among other miracles which Christ wrought, he tells us 'the poor have the gospel preached unto them;' it is πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται, they are all to be gospelled; and οὐ πολλοὶ, 'Not many wise men after the flesh, nor many mighty, nor many noble are called,' 1 Cor. 1:26; 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 2:5, '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 privilege; there the form, πῶς, 'How:' it is θαυμάσιον ἐπιρῆμα, 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 saved with difficulty: 'If the righteous scarcely are saved,' 1 Peter. 4:18. 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 by the proverb 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 extraordinary 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 saying 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, ἄγαθον εἶναι διαφερόντως, καὶ πλούσιον εἶναι διαφερόντως ἀδύνατον—It is impossible 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 circumstances of the text.

II. Let us see whence this difficulty doth arise? I answer—Because of the sins to which a wealthy estate doth expose us.

1. Riches are apt to breed atheism and contempt of God. They that are wholly drowned in pleasures of sense do not look into the invisible world, and see God which is the Father of spirits: Prov. 30:9, '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 speculative 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 forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation,' Deut. 32:15. Nay, in some sort they deny God; they live as if there were no God at all, none to call them to 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. 55:19, '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. 1:12, '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 course 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 fountain of good and evil. *Istœ vices magis in nobis excitant sensum divinœ bonitatis, quam continuus tenor fœlicitatis, 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. 5:12, '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 cottages than from divers great palaces, for they wallow in plenty, and never think of God.

2. Riches 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 entertainments 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 blessedness: Mat. 5:3, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' How few of them that are rich in estate are poor in spirit! The sense of their present ease and welfare makes them forget 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 15:17, 18. While men have anything 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. 2:31, '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 profession 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. 3:18, 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 upon 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 ashamed 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: *Rebus in angustis facile est contemnere vitam*—He that hath little can soon part with it, whereas riches expose to apostasy: 2 Tim. 4:10, '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. 17:14, '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 5:5, '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 6:24, 'Woe unto you that are rich, for you have received your consolation.' God requires of us contentation, and allows us a temperate use, and holy delight in the 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. 6:17, '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. 5:5, '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. 13:15, '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 4:11, '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 5:6, '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 sensuality 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 12:19, '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 5:5, 'Ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of 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 scripture and experience witnesseth. Sodom was a pleasant and fruitful place, and was as the garden of God. What were the sins of that place? 'Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness,' Ezek. 16:49; and that fulness did dispend 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. 3:19, and they are 'Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God,' 1 Tim. 3:4. 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. 49:18, '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 excuse. You would be angry 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 God. 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 indictment that is brought against him is this: Luke 16:25, 'Son, remember 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. 6:12, '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 *crescentem sequitur cura pecuniam*; usually the more we have, our desires are increased to get more: Eccles. 5:10, '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 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 granted, 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 outward 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. 5:8. 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 breve iter non instruitur*—'Time is short,' 1 Cor. 7:29. 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. 6:8, '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 necessaries. 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. 2:5. 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. 2:6; 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 impletione, sed purgatione, 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 substance, 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 possessed them not, and therefore when God taketh away our plenty, we should mourn as if we 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 1:21, '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 that 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 2:10, 'What! shall 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 5:15, 'In their affliction they will seek me early.' Make God your refuge and he will be your habitation: Ps. 91:9, '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 condition: '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. 4:6, 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. 6:8, 'He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.' It makes us worldly, as chains to detain us under the power of Satan, and enslave us to the world. It doth but betray

you into mischief. Do you desire your way to heaven should be made more hard, that is hard 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 12:21, 'So is he that layeth up treasures for himself, and is not rich towards God;' 1 Tim. 6:18, 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.

## SERMON XI

And the disciples were astonished at his words. 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!  
—MARK 10:24.

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 compellation, '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 disciples 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 marvelled 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 common 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, τέκνα, 'Children;' so he bespeaks them who were sincere for the main, though a little leavened with carnal conceits, and to sweeten the doctrine which seemed so contrary to their humour: 1 Thes. 2:11, '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 be used with all indulgence, for they had not received the Spirit in that plentiful measure 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 anything 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 disposition 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 forsake all upon the command of Christ; he made his riches to be the fountain of his hope and confidence; and therefore doth 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. 31:24, 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 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 ἀφοβίαν, 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. 18:10, 11, 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous 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. 10:19, 'Money answereth all things.' It can do much in this lower world, and saveth us out of many dangers: Prov. 13:8, '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. Rich 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. 62:9, '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 6:27, 'If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee?' And therefore 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 secretly enchanted by their estates when they are increased to them. Still the distemper grows with the increase of worldly accommodations: Ps. 62:10, 'Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon 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 offer 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 non exhibitione ceremoniarum, sed oblatione 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 confidence, 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. 49:11, 'Their inward thought 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 fail, 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. 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 riches, the heart is diverted and carried away from God: Jonah 2:8, '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 Dagon; the 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 the one we disclaim the other. Now consider what a dishonour is this to leave God for the creature! the fountain of living waters for broken cisterns: Jer. 2:13, '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. 3:5, and a covetous man an 'idolater,' Eph. 5:5. Mammon is the idol, and the worldling the priest. Our trust 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: we 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 parents greedily caught at the bait: 'Ye shall be as gods,' Gen. 3:5. How as gods? Not in a blessed conformity, but in a cursed self-sufficiency. Thus we all affect to be sufficient to ourselves, 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 without 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 giving 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 10:14, '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 he is content to enjoy wealth without God, and so dischargeth God from providing a reward for him: Luke 6:24, 'Woe unto yon that are rich, for ye have received your consolation;' you have the happiness 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 commandment, and that the commandments of God are not grievous to his people, presently he speaks of victory over the world: 1 John 5:3, 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. 119:36, 'Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to coveteousness;' 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 impossible a man should in good earnest seek things above whilst he trusts in the world, and promiseth himself a long and happy 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 condition: Luke 12:19, '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 with hopes of long and happy days, and causeth us to put off all thoughts, and all care about eternity and blessedness 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, and it is but a fancy: Luke 12:21, 'So is he 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 Reubenites 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. 15:32, '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. 112:7, '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 mischief 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 tidings, 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 1:21. 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. 49:23, '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. 30:6, 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 circumgyrations 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, and their honour be laid 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 by 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: Micah 2:1, '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 everything 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. 62:10, '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. 52:6, 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 that 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 wealth and wicked enterprises to establish and perpetuate 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. 18:23, 'The rich answereth roughly,' and are high-minded: 1 Tim. 6:17, '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. 23:4, '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 consider 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 12:21, 'So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is

not rich towards God.' 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 interest in 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. 20:21, 'An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning, but the end thereof shall not be blessed;' and chap. 28:20, '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 believeth 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. 25:9. 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. 62:8, '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, find 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 up themselves securely to enjoy the pleasures of this life: Luke 12:19, '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. 49:6. As if their felicity and chiefest stay lay in them, not only against the chances of this life, but against God's threats and vengeance and judgment; thence men fetch their support and comfort, and hope for them and theirs: Prov. 10:15, 'The rich man's wealth 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.

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 east 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. 7:31, 'They that mourn as if they mourned not;' and 2 Peter 1:5, '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 happiness 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, they bewail it as if their god were gone: Judges 18:24, '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 them: 1 Tim. 6:17, 'That they trust not in uncertain riches.' What 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. 23:5, '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. Riches 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. 11:28, 'He that trusteth in his riches shall fall.'

[3.] Consider, the more wealth, many times the more danger, therefore 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 when 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 12:15, '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. 4:4, 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 27:8, '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. 11:4; '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. 6:35, '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. 1:18, '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. 10:22. 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.

## 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 fastings, 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 12:33, '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. Your office 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. 6:17, '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 make 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. 14:24, 'The crown of the wise is their riches, but the foolishness of fools is folly.' Riches 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 useful, 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. 7:11, '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. 17:16, '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.

[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,' Rev. 12:1, 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. 39:5; 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. 3:17, 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 12:20, 'Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee.' Security is a coward; acquaint the soul with a supposition of loss and danger.

## SERMON 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 10:25.

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 sufficiently knew the worth and way of salvation, and the state and danger of souls. Now he interposeth his authority: Mat. 19:24, '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 difficulty 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 *κάμελος* signifies a cable, by which mariners do fasten the anchor, but that also is a mistake; for that word is otherwise spelt, *κάμιλος* and doth also rarely occur in that sense, and therefore rather the beast is intended than the cord or cable.

It was an ordinary 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 christian, 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. 7:14, 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 bunchback 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. 13:23, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?' so Mat. 23:24, '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—

Doct. 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, therefore 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 are set down Mat. 16:24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' Christ saith, 'If any man,' without exception; small and great, rich and poor, they must all submit 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 according 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 contentments of the flesh should be like 'cutting off the right hand, and plucking out the right eye,' Mat. 5:29, 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 sovereignty over himself, to be sui juris, at his own dispose, as those rebels against God said, Ps. 12:4, '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 government 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. 2:10, '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. 5:5, '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. 2:31, 'Wherefore do my people say, We are lords, we will come no more unto thee?' Men think themselves to be lords of their own fortune, and therefore slight God, break through the restraint of his laws, cannot deny themselves 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. 22:21, '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. 5:2, '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. 12:11, '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 preservation, but when it goes to excess, it argues a tenderness of the flesh, and that we have consulted with Satan: Mat. 16:22, 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 apostate and traitor to Christ, John 12:6; 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.

[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. 1:10, 'He hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.' And the gospel reveals the way that leads to it; it makes a free offer of it upon the condition of faith in Christ: John 3:16, 17, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him 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. 12:14, '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. 3:1, 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. 4:17. Well, then, seeing this is the great design of the doctrine of Christ, that here we should ply our work, that hereafter we may receive our wages; that here we should study holiness, that hereafter we may be blessed with him. Now what doctrine can be more contrary than this to those 'that have their portion here,' Ps. 17:14, 'That have received their consolation here,' Luke 16:22, 'That have received their good things in their lifetime,' Luke 16:25? 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.

(1st.) In humility: Mat. 11:29, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.' This is the great thing the Son of God would recommend 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. 2:5. 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: 'He thought it no robbery to be equal with God,' ver. 6; and yet 'he made himself of no reputation, took 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 13:3, '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 condescend 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 condescensions of God to man. As soon as a man hath any estate in the world, he is altered presently: 1 Tim. 6:17, '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 disdainful; many that were forward and zealous, grow cold and slothful in spiritual things; many that, while they were kept dependent upon God, 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 2:6, and 1 John 3:3, 'Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure;' and 1 John 4:17, 'As he is, so are we in the world.' Now prosperity and true holiness seldom go together; they are afflictions that promote holiness: 'They verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers 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. 12:10, 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 12:48, '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 spiritual improvement, they have larger abilities and advantages of honouring 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. 32:25, 'Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him.' The 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. 28:47. 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. 12:7–9, '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?' 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 meditating the statutes of God, as David profeseth he did all the day long. And look, as the apostle speaks of married and single persons, 1 Cor. 7:32, 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 condition, 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 tradesman 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 one 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!

[3.] They have greater advantages of furthering the duties of piety and mercy, and of honouring God with their substance, Prov. 3:9, and of relieving others, of 'making themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness,' Luke 16:9. I say they have greater opportunities of being 'rich in good works,' 1 Tim. 6:18. 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, and 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 honouring of God and the relief of others.

[4.] More is required of them because of the influence of their example. They are as the first-sheets, others are printed off by them. The more any are exalted and lifted up above others, the more conspicuous 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 2:7. 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. 10:4. The awful remembrance of God is a strange uncouth thing to those that are full, and live plentifully in the world. This appears by the whole current of scripture; God forewarns his people of it: Deut. 11:12, '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 13:6, '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. 6:17, '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 forgetfulness 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. 30:8, 9, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me 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. 4:12, '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 accommodations which 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 effect, that riches make the business of salvation more difficult. Good David observed that his heart was corrupted by his condition: Ps. 10:6, '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. 119:36, '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 increase. 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 them in the world. Now 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. 69:22, when their comforts are cursed to them, and when 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 notwithstanding our opulency and plentiful condition in the world. Jehoshaphat is an instance to encourage you to pray for this: 2 Chron. 17:5, 6, it is said of him, 'He had riches and honour in abundance, and his heart 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 apprehension 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 should be contented with what you 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 abating 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, that riches and honours do easily prove a snare, 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 upon the sensualist, the voluptuous gallant upon the cormorants of the city, and they upon the epicures; but Christ saith indefinitely, '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 implieth 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 can be saved?' or with scorn: Luke 16:14, 'The pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and derided him.' For the reverence you 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 mischief?

[1.] Remember your condition in the world. You are not a freeholder, but a tenant-at-will: Luke 12:20, '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 16:2, 'Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.' You are not citizens but strangers: 1 Peter 2:11, '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 12:21, 'So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.' Riches 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. 6:8, '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 were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?—MARK 10:26.

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, περισσῶς ἐξεπλήσσοντο, they were struck at heart, 'astonished out of measure.' We meet with it before at the first proposal of this difficulty, 'They were astonished at his words;' but now, when Christ had rendered the reason, and reassumed 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 wonder. 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 work out our own salvation, but to effect the salvation of others. We have a saying, *Omne bonum est sui diffusivum*—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 32d psalm, which is 'Maschil, a psalm of instruction,' and so is willing to teach others the way. So Andrew calls Peter when he had found Christ, John 1:41, 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 1:3, '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 written,' saith Moses, Exod. 32:32; and Paul, 'I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,' Rom. 9:3. So much of personal happiness as resulted to him 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. 13:5. 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 disciples 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 entering 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 shall 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 22:24. 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 1:6. 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 kingdom 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 the 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 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 disappointed 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 with carnal hopes and dreams of a commodious and comfortable condition 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 conceived. 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 disciples 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

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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.

[2.] There might be something of weakness, mixtures of infirmity. I cannot say there was nothing of murmuring and dislike; the muttering 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 offence, and depart from Christ, as we find others did upon the like occasion, when Christ had preached something strict and contrary to their humour: John 6:60, 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

the doctrine 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 the difficulties of salvation are sufficiently understood and laid forth, 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. 7:14, '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 somewhat like that which is described, 1 Sam. 14:4, '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 suffer God's will. So Mat. 11:12, 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth 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 4:18, a righteous man is 'scarcely saved,' μόλις σωθήσεται; with much ado he gets to shore, he makes a hard shift to get to heaven. This is enough to intimate the general truth, that there is difficulty to get to heaven.

II. Where in lies the difficulty of salvation? The reason of doubting is this, because God's terms upon which heaven is offered are gentle and sweet: Mat. 11:30, '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. 7:17, '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 how is it so difficult, especially since there is so much strength given. Habitual strength: Eph. 2:10, '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. 4:13. 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 work and from the wages. From the work itself: 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,' Prov. 3:7. 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. 84:6; 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. 11:6. 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

course 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 present 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 partaking 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 body should be looked after in an inferior and subordinate manner. The good of the 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 soul, 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 forsaken the fountain of living waters,

and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water,' Jer. 2:13. 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 conduceth 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 consider 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 things 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, Rom. 8:5, '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 Spirit.' 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 mindlessness 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 dulness 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 1:9. 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 averseness of will to what is truly good, that he cannot endure to hear of it: Rom. 8:7, '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 comes his 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 God,' 2 Tim. 3:4, and forsake God for the present world: 1 Tim. 4:10, 'Demas hath forsaken us, having loved the present world.' Well, then, by a natural constitution we are utterly at a loss, the soul being destitute 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. 13:23, '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 addictedness 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 2:3, 'Not given to much wine.' The word in the original is δεδουλώμενος, ensnared by wine; or a man that is given to women: 2 Peter 2:14, '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, covetousness 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 covetous practices,' 2 Peter. 2:14. 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 difficulty 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.

3. Let us now consider the great efficacy and power which this inclination 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. 4:4; 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. 2:6, '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 1:9, '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 affections, they are nothing, they have no force nor power to move us. Saith Austin, Men do not look after heavenly things; Quia in terrena priori 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. 2:3, 'Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us;' and Jer. 5:5, 'They have altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds;' and Rom. 8:7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' Nitimur 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 irksome 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. 2:12, 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 13:24; 'To walk worthy of God, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory,' 1 Thes. 2:12. Now they that are addicted to ease, pleasure, and sensual 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, 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 defiance of God and christianity, or else they delay to a more convenient season, they have no mind to the work: Acts 24:25, 'Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season, I will send for thee.' Lust must have present satisfaction, 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 quinquagessima in otium 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. 3:19. 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 14:22, '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 days 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 1:7, and therefore all the pains, and shame, and loss, and trouble, is but necessary. This is an ill use and end to murmur against God and repine against his sovereignty and dominion over the creature; and yet this is the use that many make of it: John 6:60, 'Many of his disciples when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying, who can hear it?' What! nothing but 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. 18:12, '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. 2:25, 'There is no hope; no, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.' Well, I see my condition is helpless 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 despondency, they shall never bring their hearts to this work. But we should not despair; and think it altogether impossible προαίρησις οὐκ ἔστιν ἀδύνατων; 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 slighthness of spirit. There is not a greater bane to religion, 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 difficulty 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. Christians, 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. 27:4, '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 we are for the enjoyment of the blessed God: Phil. 3:12, διώκω, 'I follow after it, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ;' Acts 26:7, 'Unto which hope the twelve tribes served God instantly,' some render it; but it is ἐν ἔκτενείᾳ, with all their strength, 'day and night, hope to come.' Now it is necessary 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. 12:10, '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 ourselves: 'The way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps,' Jer. 10:23; 'We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God,' 2 Cor. 3:5.

[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 way in Christ's strength notwithstanding all difficulty, our Lord would have us to sit down and count the charges, Luke 14:28, 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 bonum, futurum, 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 was taken away, Acts 27:20. But now presumption leaves out the difficulty, and reflects only upon the 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, therefore 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. O 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 5:3, 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, why 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. 15:19. We are but probationers for heaven: 'Our conversation should be in heaven,' Phil. 3:20.

3. To fortify us against the difficulties in the way of salvation. You must be at some pains and labour: John 6:27, '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 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. 3:14, '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 kingdom 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 self-denial. You must deny yourselves either for God or the devil. You must deny your comforts, and your estate. 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 greatness 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. 15:58, '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. 3:17, 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness, 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, looking upon them, saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.—MARK 10:27.

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 giveth 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 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 innocent, there is a sentence in force against us. That scripture expresses the tenor of the law: Gal. 3:10, '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. 2:3, '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 paradise. 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: Rom. 5:6, '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 impossible in regard of his legal exclusion; for suppose we could obey perfectly 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 weakness of our flesh: Rom. 8:3, 'For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.'

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 5:31, '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; 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 contrarietas*, a corrupt nature; there are *externa impedimenta*, many outward snares; and there is *inimica oppositio*, a great deal of enmity and opposition; therefore with man it is impossible.

[1.] There is *vitiosa contrarietas*, a corrupt nature, inclined to evil and averse to good: Gen. 6:5, '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.' Man 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 impotency with respect to duties; he cannot know, believe, nor obey. He cannot know: 1 Cor. 2:14, '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 discerned.' And he cannot believe: John 6:44, '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. 8:7, '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. 3:5, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves.' He cannot speak a good word: Mat. 12:34, 'How can ye, being evil, speak good things?' He cannot do any good thing: John 15:5, '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 of 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 2:16, '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 flesh,' there are pleasures and carnal delights to beset our souls, to inveigle and entice us from the strictness and severity of the christian profession. 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 naturally 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 institution or God's intention, but they prove so through our corrupt affection. God ordained them as *miserimœ 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 1:4, 'The corruptions that are in the world through lust.' It is from unmortified 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 impossible, 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. 6:9. 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 5:44, '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. 3:4. But mostly doth our Lord here put the difficulty upon riches. Why? Because that is a complicate temptation, 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 are enemies to oppose. The devil: 1 Peter 5:8, 'Your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.' And wicked men: John 15:19, '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. 3:12. But because the great opposition is from Satan, therefore I shall insist upon Eph. 6:12, '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 discouragements 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 damned 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 creature 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 5:8, '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. 6:10–12, 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. 1:6, '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 removes the flaming sword that is against us, that takes away the curse of God, but in the whole business of salvation all is to be ascribed to grace: 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,' Rom. 9:16. The words willeth and runneth are considerable. The Lord, that brings us into this state, keeps 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. 2:31, '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 15:14. Thus should we do with God. Prayer and all trading with heaven would cease if we were sufficient of ourselves as to do anything; and therefore with man it is impossible.

Use 1. Take heed that you do not make a wrong use of this impossibility, 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. Evangelical 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 ourselves to God, and therefore we are apt to be cast down when we look 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 3:4, '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 6:44; 'Draw me, and we will run after thee,' Cant. 1:4. 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. 7:29–31, '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 our 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 sake. God taught Paul this holy weanedness: Phil. 4:12, '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.' And he can teach it you if you will wait upon him. Our own natural spirits indeed carrieth us quite another way: James 4:5, 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 11:21, 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 captive by him at his will,' 2 Tim. 2:26. 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 4:4. 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. 36:26, '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 impotency. 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. 12:10, 'When I am weak, then am I strong.' When creatures are helpless and shiftless, God takes pity upon them; therefore 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. 20:12, 'Lord, we have no might, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are unto thee;' or rather as Ephraim, Jer. 31:18, '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 thinking of his duty made him feel his impotency, and feeling his impotency 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 18:11. As, for instance, if a man should say, It is all from God indeed, but only in a Pelagian sense, as he is author naturæ, 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 heathens would acknowledge grace, as sacrilegious as they were in robbing God of his due. Quod vivamus, that we live, and that we had reasonable natures, that was the gift of the gods; but quod 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 sunlight, but eyes: Eph. 1:18, '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 absolutely 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 beginning 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 of grace: Eph. 1:19, '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 1:3, 'According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain 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 Rom. 11:23, '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 1:3, presently he saith, ver. 5, 'Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' 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. 2:13, inspiring and breathing holy motions into us: 'Awake, O north wind; come, O south wind; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow forth,' Cant. 4:16. And then strengthening those graces, and defending them in all assaults and temptations, and causing us to grow: Col. 1:11, 'According to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness;' and Eph. 3:16, '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 impotency 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 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? I 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. 1:12, '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 persuaded 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. 8:2, '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: Rom. 14:4, 'He shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand;' and Rom. 11:23, '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 32:26, so in the inward case, 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength,' Isa. 40:29.

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. 8:6, 'If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in my eyes, 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 winter, 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 of the house can with a word. The shepherd can call off the dog from the flock; so the Lord can easily rebuke Satan, when he finds him most violent, and he can subdue and quell the strongest lust.

2. When 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, when 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 15:28, 'O woman! great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt;' John 11:40, '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 ourselves, 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. 4:13. And are you 'strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might?' Eph. 6:10. 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 10:27.

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 scriptures that concern this point may be ranked thus: You will find the question propounded, Gen. 18:14, 'Is anything too hard for the Lord?' and this answered, Jer. 32:17, 'There is nothing too hard for God.' The affirmative is in the text; and Mat. 19:26, 'With God all things are possible;' and the negative, which binds it the more strongly, is in Luke 1:37, 'With God nothing shall be impossible.' The general is in the text, 'All things are possible with God;' and the particular is in Job 42:2, 'I know that thou canst do everything.' So that 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. 1:20, '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 godhead, 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 belonging 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. 40:22, 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 38:8, 9, 'He that hangs the earth upon nothing,' Job 26:7, '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. 11:10, 'Whose builder and maker is God;' he commanded, and they were created,' Ps. 48:5. 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 disputing 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 plummet 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-sufficiency; and therefore in difficult and hazardous cases the scripture refers us to God as a creator: 1 Peter 4:19, '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.' Why as unto a creator? At that time they carried their lives in their hands; they had nothing to subsist upon, no visible interests to defend them. Well, go on cheerfully in well-doing, and commit yourselves to him that can work all things out of nothing; your souls, that 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 something of power implied; they had but only from day to day, and then he bids them trust in God as a creator. So Ps. 124:8, '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 by 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. 33:9, 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. 1:28, 'God hath chosen τὰ μὴ ὄντα, 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. 4:17, 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 darkness; 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. 4:6, '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 place, and for their proper use: Heb. 1:3, '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 manutency: '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. 145:15, 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. 5:22, 'Which have placed the sand for the bounds of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot 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 mighty and strong? And therefore, 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. 21:1, '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. 16:7, 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even 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 hearts 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. 33:4, '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. 8:31; 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 irresistible providence of God that they can do nothing but 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 those spirits that are most opposite to him; so that his power over the affections and hearts of men shows he is a great and mighty God.

[3.] That God is almighty appears by the strength that is in creatures, 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 41:8, 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. 103:20, so that one of them slew a hundred fourscore and five thousand in one night in Sennacherib's host. And if there be such strength in creatures, what is there in God from whom they have it? for nothing is in the effect but what was first in the cause.

Secondly, Let me come to explain this power of God by three distinctions—

1. God's power is twofold—either absolute or actual. (1.) His absolute power is that by which he can do that which he never will do. This is spoken of Mat. 26:53, 'Thinkest thou not that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?' Mat. 3:9, '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 what he himself conceiveth can be done. (2.) His actual power is that by which he doth whatever he will: Ps. 115:3, 'Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he pleaseth;' and Ps. 135:6, '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. 119:91, 'They continue this day according to thine ordinance, for all are thy servants.' All the creatures, 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. 10:12, 13, or when the sun went back ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz, 2 Kings 20:11; his interdicting the Red Sea that it should not flow, Exod. 14:21, 22; his causing iron, which is a heavy body, to swim upon the top of the water at the prayer of Elisha, 2 Kings 6:6; his suspending the burning of the fire when the three children were in the furnace, Dan. 3:27; his shutting the mouths of the hungry lions when Daniel was in the den with them,

Dan. 6:22; his making the ravens, which are by nature birds of prey, to be caterers to Elijah, 1 Kings 17:6.

3. Distinction. There are *impossibilia naturæ*, and *impossibilia 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 1:2, 'Which God, that cannot lie, hath promised;' Heb. 6:18, '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. 2:13, 'If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot 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 be 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 object, 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 controversies 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 to 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 and underground in us, and weakens our confidence in God, and hinders 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. 18:13, 14, 'And the Lord said unto 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 God's power; Num. 11:21, 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 when the prophet foretold there should be such plenty in Samaria. where there was great scarcity, saith the nobleman, 2 Kings 7:2, '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 message of the great mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, that he should be born of her, Luke 1:34, 'Then said Mary unto the angel, How can this be, seeing I know not a man?' At this rate still doth unbelief speak in the wilderness; as the children of Israel: Ps. 78:19, 20, 'Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? 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 language of our hearts better than we ourselves. Now unbelief is still 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 easy? But these doubts surprise us only when the things we expect from God according to his promises 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 converse with limited beings, and therefore confine God to a circle of our own making: Ps. 78:41, '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 difficulty, 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. 3:20. 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. 6:13, '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,' Rom. 4:21. 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 1:5, 'Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' The power of God is engaged for our defence. So for temporal 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, O king,' Dan. 3:17. 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. 3:21, '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 scripture 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 supported by great and strongly combined interests, how can that ever be hoped for? Rev. 18:8, '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 condition, 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 5:6, '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. 10:22, '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. 10:17, 'For the Lord our 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. 17:1, '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. 20:11. Moses was backward to do the Lord's message, Exod. 4:13, as if God could not bear him out before Pharaoh, and before the Egyptians. There was a promise Jacob should have the blessing, but Rebecca 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 comfortable, 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 do all things in a moment; he 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. 59:1. 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 where 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 hath power to do greater: Mal. 2:15, '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. Rubs are plain ground to him: Isa. 27:4, '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 devouring flame? they are fit fuel to increase the fire, but cannot hinder the burning, God works through all opposition: Isa. 43:13, '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 almightiness is yours, to be set a-work for you. And, as Aristotle said, τῶν φίλων παντα κοῖνα, all things are common between friends and confederates: 1 Kings 22:4, '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. 6:10, '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 comfort cast ourselves upon it: Isa. 8:12, 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 dismayed, Isa. 1:10. It is not meant spiritually only, 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 6:5, 'He could there do no mighty work.' It is not said, he would not, but he could not do any mighty works there, because of their unbelief. Unbelief doth put a bar and rub in the way of God's omnipotency; and John 11:40, 'If thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God.' God doth not put forth himself 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 children and people; with Moses and Aaron: Mat. 20:12, '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 1:20, '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 nobleman live to see himself confuted, and then he was crushed to

death: 2 Kings 7:2, 'Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see 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. 8:2, '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 insinuates: Num. 14:15, 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 wilderness;' 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 belief 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, offered 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. 11:19. 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, O king,' Dan. 3:17. 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? Paul believed, therefore in the face of opposition he goes on in his work unweariedly: 1 Tim. 4:10, '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. 84:11, '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. 34:9, '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. 40:29, 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.' so Deut. 32:36,

'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 canting entreaties of a sturdy one. When 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 perplexities 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. 26:3, 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 the 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. and he may do well enough; so if a man hath nothing in the creature, yet if he hath the power of God, that answereth all things; he can rejoice in God when creatures fail, Heb. 3:17, 18: 'As having nothing, yet possessing all things,' 2 Cor. 6:10. 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 which 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.

## MONERGISM BOOKS

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