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of the Wise
and Foolish
Virgins**

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by Thomas Manton

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY

To the Right Hon. WILLIAM, Earl of Bedford, Baron of Thornaugh, and Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter.*

MY LORD,—If the sovereign disposer of all things had continued the life of the author of the following sermons, he had expressed his thankfulness for your real and noble favours by the dedication of the best fruits of his studies to your Lordship; but since it hath pleased God to remove him from the church on earth to the church in heaven, I am desired by his most near surviving relation to comply with his intention, by inscribing your highly honourable name in the frontispiece of this work.

Your Lordship's esteem of the author, and most free kindness, placed him in an eminent station; and how faithfully he discharged his public ministry for those great and most worthy ends, the glory of God, and the salvation of souls, as there is a full testimony given by

many sincere and understanding persons of all ranks, that were the happy partakers of it, so it is evident to others by the several volumes of most useful sermons printed since his decease. These had been more exact, and worthy of your Lordship's perusal, if they had been published by himself; but such as they are, I doubt not but they will be very acceptable for the heavenly matter contained in them.

I shall not record here the many excellent virtues that are conspicuous in your Lordship, and truly adorn your honour; but I cannot forbear to mention the foundation of them, sincere and solid piety, so clearly discovered in a most Christian deportment under your heavy afflictions. Surely that reverence and meek submission to the high and holy providence of God, that humble trust in his mercy, which so admirably appeared in your deep distress, was from the divine Spirit, whose glorious attribute is the Comforter. I shall earnestly pray that God, who turneth the shadow of death into the morning, will be pleased always to support you with his reviving presence, that he will guide you by his counsel through this afflicting world, and bring you to his glory.—I am, my Lord, your Lordship's very humble and obedient servant,

WILLIAM BATES.

TO THE READER

CHRISTIAN READER,—Our blessed Lord, calling the multitude to some account of their so free and frequent motions in going to hear the first gospel preacher, John the Baptist, doth it in these terms,

Mat. 11:7, 8, 'What went you out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? They that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet;' ver. 11, 'Verily I say unto you, that amongst them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he;'—teaching us several things by that speech, relating to the religious action of hearing the word, and to a true gospel minister. With reference to the former—(1.) That he that goeth out to hear ought in the first place to propound to himself a due end. (2.) That men may propose to themselves in such motions very false and undue ends, such as going to see reeds shaken with the wind, men clothed with soft raiment, &c. (3.) That the true end men should propose to themselves should be, not to hear a philosopher or an orator, but a prophet; which term signifieth a person revealing the will of God; for the signification of that term is not to be restrained to one only from God revealing things to come, but publishing the divine will, whether relating to future things or things before revealed; which is evident not only from the application of it to the Baptist, but to any that will consider that predictions of future contingencies was the least part of any of the ancient prophets' work. This is that true and more special end which every good man ought to propound to himself when he goeth to hear as a religious action, whose object is not a mere sound, which is the object of hearing considered as a natural act, but of the 'joyful sound.' Nor can there lie any obligation upon any religiously to hear anything but the will of God, which a discourse doth not cease to be by the addition of man's words for the explanation or application of any part of the divine will, by such as God hath betruſted with that employment, more than an ambassador's message ceaseth to be his master's will because delivered in his own words, though to the sense of his instructions.

Which thing well digested would not only teach ministers what and how to preach, but the people also what and how to hear, according to the direction of their Lord. If our end in hearing were to tickle our ears with a sound, our reason would guide us to hear such whose language is 'as the voice of one that hath a lovely song, and can play well on an instrument.' If our end were to promote ourselves in critical learning, or improve our reason, the same reason would guide us to choose to hear the best philosophers or grammarians, such as best understood the niceties of words and varieties of syntax. But if our end be to hear a prophet, one that should reveal God's mind unto us, and to make it more intelligible, that by it we may be more improved in knowledge, faith, love, obedience, and other habits fitting us for the kingdom of God and eternal salvation, the same reason will teach us to hear the most substantial, scriptural, and practical sermons that we can, as being most accommodate to the true end of our action, to which every wise man proportioneth mediate actions. And indeed all other discourses are abusively called preaching, and Athens were a more proper place for them than a preacher's pulpit.

God hath seemed to have reserved it for a great blessing to the last age of the world that, for aught appears to us from any books, it hath been more fertile of such preaching than any since that of the apostles. The ancient church had persons that did famously in their generations; such were Chrysostom in the Greek, and Augustine in the Latin church; but besides that they were but very few, whose reads the one and the other must compliment antiquity at a great rate, if himself hath any judgment, and doth not say that multitudes in the last age have been as to preaching greater than they. In the former are to be found many judicious explications of scripture, many honest and spiritual discourses; in the latter, not these things only, but a pleasantness of wit and fancy. But for plenty of matter,

clearness of judgment, orderliness of method, and many other things, they have not been a little exceeded by men of this last age. Nor is it any disparagement to them, more than it was to John the Baptist, that 'the least in the kingdom of heaven' was to be 'greater than he;' or to Christ, that the apostles, John 14:12, were to do greater things than he had done. In the middle ages of the church, preaching generally was turned into trifling about scholastic niceties; and to the very dawning of the Reformation the priests' texts were out of Scotus or Aquinas; and we remember they were not ashamed when Luther, Melancthon, &c., restored in some degree the true kind of preaching, to petition magistrates for the suppression of it, and a liberty to trifle still in that great work of God with discourses upon Scotus and Aquinas. Though Luther, Zuinglius, and others in Germany, and Mr Calvin, Farellus, and Viret, and Beza, in France, about a hundred and fifty years since mended this matter in a great degree, yet we all know how ill their examples were followed; so as Mr Perkins, who began to flourish about the year 1580, is generally judged to have been the first who amongst us restored preaching to its true use, and taught us the true manner of it, whose piety was followed by many; but as their number hath vastly increased since that time, especially in the fifty or sixty years last past, so God hath seemed to pour out his Spirit upon ministers, as to spiritual gifts, in a more plentiful measure, yet in very different proportions, that he might have some to feed his lambs, as well as others to feed his sheep. The generality of good preachers have made it their business to preach Christ, and the exceeding riches of his grace, and to study matter rather than words, upon Mr Perkins' old principle verba sequentur res. But all have not had alike fertile invention, or solid judgment, or alike skill and learning in languages and arts, &c. Some particular persons have been blessed with them all, by which they have made stars of the first magnitude in the church of God. Such, reader, we take the reverend author of these sermons to have been,

in all whose writings thou shalt find a quick and fertile invention, governed with a grave and solid judgment, and the issue of both expressed in a grave and decent style, so as it is not easy to say what one would desire in a divine that was wanting in him. He had a heart full of love and zeal for God and his glory, and out of the abundance of his heart his mouth continually spake. So frequent, yet so learned and solid preaching by the same person, was little less than miraculous. But he was a scribe fully instructed in the things of the kingdom of God, and, like a good householder, was continually fetching out of the storehouse of his knowing and judicious soul things both old and new. He was no studier of words and phrases, he abhorred such a pedantry, and debasing the authority of gospel propositions; but a grave and serious soul, fitted with his skill in arts and languages; neither ever did nor could want expressions above the scorn of the most wanton word-dressers, though beneath the expectations of such as can be pleased with the tuneableness of paranomasias, or the rollings of six-footed words. He was a good and learned, a grave and judicious person, and his auditory never failed (though he laboured more than the most preachers, his constant course of preaching being for many years five times, and, till near his end, three times a week) to hear from him a pious, learned, and most judicious discourse. This those who never heard him may easily believe by his printed commentaries and sermons, in which we never met with any that complained for want of anything fit for a divine. So that he is one of those authors upon the credit of whose name not only the plainer and less intelligent sort of people, but even scholars, may adventure to buy any book that was his, and be assured they will see no cause to repent of the expense of their money. His late large folio upon the 119th Psalm is a plentiful evidence of this; and a great part of our English world hath given their suffrage to this, by making it so scarce in so short a time, as the price of it is enhanced above a fifth part.

We here offer a second volume, of a greater bulk (though no greater price), which contains his discourses upon the 25th of Matthew, the 17th chapter of John, the 6th and 8th chapters of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and the 5th chapter of his second Epistle to the Corinthians; five chapters, than which possibly in the whole New Testament there will not be found five others more full of gospel doctrine, in the knowledge of which God's people are more concerned.

In the first, under the parable of the ten virgins (five of which were wise, five foolish), our Lord represents to us the state of the members of the church waiting for Christ's second coming to judgment; amongst whom some are sincere, some are hypocrites, the different actions and issues of whom are excellently represented to us, and most worthy to be learned and considered. Secondly, Under the parable of the talents we are instructed in God's different dispensation of his gifts to men, their different use of them, and the account they are like to be called to about them. To which is subjoined a hypotuposis of the day of judgment, fit to be continually in our eyes and ears.

In the second, we have our Saviour's last prayer for his elect, as well those that to the end of the world should believe, as those who at that time did believe. It was our Lord's legacy; what good Christian desireth not a full understanding of it, that he may know what to hope, and pray in faith for, as being first secured to him by the prayer of him whom the Father heareth always?

In the 6th and 8th of the Romans are contained great treasuries of gospel truth. Upon both (the latter especially) many learned men have spent their labours to great advantage; but the scripture is such a book as we never know when we fully comprehend it, and (if he

may judge to whose share it fell to peruse some of those notes) the reader will find some things here discovered which he will hardly meet with elsewhere. His way of handling it is rather dogmatical and practical than polemical; yet he now and then judiciously resolveth a question. But all along in the handling of it he discovereth both an excellent notion, and a most profound and solid judgment.

The last discourses, on 2 Cor. 5, look like a cygnea cantio. Whether they were some of his last discourses we cannot tell, nor can we judge it from the subject, he being a person who was dying daily, and never so in love with his earthly tabernacle, nor possessed of so weak a faith as to the house in the heavens, as either to desire the former should stand longer than should be for the glory of God, or himself kept from the latter overlong. It pleased God not to surprise him with death, but to let him see it at some distance, making its approaches to him before it gave him the fatal word of arrest.

Thou wilt, reader, find some things once and again spoken to, as the text led him, but in such a variety of phrase that they have much new in them. Had this eminent person lived to have supervised his own notes, he might possibly have added or altered something. We have seen no reason to do it, but given thee his notes as they were under his hand, only when, not able to read some words in his notes, we were forced to add a word or two for clearing the sense.

Now, reader, what shall we say to thee, but only to quicken thee to bless God for this milk from the bottle, when thou canst not have it from the breasts, τοῦ μακαρίτου. Thus Dr Manton, though dead, yet speaketh. God give thee and us an hearing ear and an understanding heart! We have thus line upon line, and precept upon precept; let us not be barren and unfruitful. We commend these labours and thy soul to God's blessing, subscribing ourselves,

Thine affectionate servants in the work of the gospel,

WILLIAM BATES.

JOHN COLLINGES.

JOHN HOWE.

August 1, 1684.

SERMON I

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.—MAT. 25:1, 2

IT was Christ's manner to instruct by parables, partly for the greater evidence and force, while heavenly things are represented to us in such notions as we do best understand; and partly to teach us the art of holy chemistry, or extracting spiritual advantages out of obvious occurrences and occasions. Now parables are of two sorts—argumentative and representative.

First, The argumentative parables are such wherein some notable reason is couched, or ground is laid for some excellent encouragement in our converse with God, by showing what falleth out among men. In these argumentative parables, the parts of the parable are not to be strained, but the scope and parable itself is to be regarded. As in the parable, Luke 18, of the unjust judge, the

scope is to be regarded, but not the parts strained, as if God were to be compared to an unjust judge. And that famous parable, Luke 11:8, concerning success in prayer, where there is argumentum a minori ad majus, an argument from the less to the greater: 'Though he will not rise and give him as he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him.' And those passages of giving good things to our children: 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?'

Secondly, The other sort of parables, which I call representative, yields us a notable delineation of some heavenly matter, by laying the scene of it among earthly affairs; for God is fain to lisp to us in our own dialect, and speak as we can understand. This and the next parable are of this sort. The occasion of it was thus: Our Lord had been discoursing of the dangerous state of the latter times, and therefore presseth to watchfulness and timely preparation. This he doth by three parables: First, By the good man of the house watching against the coming of the thief, Mat. 24:42, 43; by the parable of the servant misbehaving himself in the absence of his Lord, Mat. 24:45, to the end; and now, the third time, by this parable of the virgins. Still, in the close of all, he repeateth his charge of watchfulness, not so much because of the difficulty of the matter, as because of our dulness. We cannot often enough be put in mind of vigilancy and diligence in preparing for the coming of the Lord; so great is our sloth and drowsiness, and non-attention to the great affairs of our souls. Now these three parables, though they come to one effect, yet have their special use. The first of these concerns all; the second, the officers of the church; the third, the members. First, The good man of the house watching against the coming of the thief speaketh thus much: If men watch to avoid a temporal inconvenience, much more should we watch to eschew eternal destruction. The diligence of the

men of the world in worldly things upbraideth and condemneth our negligence in heavenly things. The parable of the unfaithful servant, that put off the thoughts of his master's coming, and therefore eateth and drinketh with the drunken, and beats his fellow-servants, is a notable warning to the officers of the church, that they do not abuse the power of the keys, and inhaunt with the wicked, and discourage the godly, and blast them with censures, and stir up the displeasure of the magistrate against their faithful and painful brethren in the ministry. A drunkard shall find more favour with them than one that is mindful of his Lord's coming, and would keep punctual to the orders and institutions he hath left before he went. Now, lest the members of the church should want their admonition, besides a warning to the officers in the second parable, here is a warning to the members in this third parable, to watch and be ready, that they be not surprised. In the wise virgins is represented the comfortable fruit of watchfulness; in the foolish, the sad effects of security: 'Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened,' &c.

In the words we have—

First, The thing compared, the kingdom of heaven.

Secondly, The comparison itself, shall be likened to ten virgins. Who are—

1. Described by their quality or state, virgins.
2. By their number, ten.
3. By their rank or distribution, five wise, and five foolish.
4. By their work or employment, they went forth to meet the bridegroom.

5. Their preparation for that work, they took their hand-lamps.

Before I explain these circumstances, I must a little acquaint you with the custom of the Jews to which allusion is here made. The weddings of those times were kept by night, in which the bridegroom and his company were by certain virgins fetched in, and conducted to the bride, with lamps in their hands and songs in their mouths. As for this custom, I shall give you some passages in scripture. That the weddings were in the night-time, we read, Gen. 29:23, 'It came to pass in the evening that Laban took Leah his daughter, and brought her to Jacob.' That the bridegroom had his companions, we read, Judges 13:11, Sampson had thirty companions brought to him. That both had their companions, we read of 'the children of the bride-chamber,' Mat. 9:15, the special guests invited to the marriage-feast, who were by custom to fetch the bridegroom, and wait upon him: these are called φίλοι νυμφίου, 'the friends of the bridegroom,' John 3:29. That the bride had her companions, it is said in Ps. 45:14, the spouse 'shall be brought to the king in a raiment of needlework; the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.' And their fashion was to take hand-lamps, then in use, and fit to carry abroad, for night-lights. The scripture frequently alludes to that: Rev. 18:23, 'And the light of the candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride no more at all shall be heard in thee.' And thus the bridegroom was met by virgins with lamps; as he drew near the bride's house, he was met by servants with candles returning to the marriage. Therefore it is said, Luke 12:35, 36, 'Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding.' This was the custom, which I the rather observe, that you may see how fitly our Lord layeth down things. Now those that accompanied the bridegroom and the bride were children of the bride-chamber, and admitted into the marriage-

room and supper; and those that came after that, when once the door was shut, were surely kept out. Now here is a fit representation of the spiritual mystery laid down by Christ; and therefore let us—

1. See the thing compared, 'The kingdom of heaven;' that is, the state of the church wherein God reigneth in the person of the Messiah. Of the kingdom of glory it cannot be meant, for there are no foolish virgins, and in the internal kingdom of grace none; but in the external kingdom of Christ in this world. And this is not considered simply and restrainedly to that point of time when Christ is coming to judgment, but respects and should affect us all; for such as we depart out of the world now, such shall we be found to be at the day of judgment. It concerneth all ages, not only those that shall be found alive at that time, but every one in successive ages.

2. The comparison must be explained; the bridegroom is Christ, and the bride is the church; the whole church is the spouse of Christ, and each particular believer a virgin attending upon this spouse; the marriage is mutually promised; the espousals are in this life: Hosea 2:19, 20, 'I will betroth thee to me for ever;' and to be solemnised and completed at the coming of our Lord: Rev. 19:7, 'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.' Here is the betrothing in the covenant of grace. *A nobis accepit arrhabonem carnis, &c.*, saith Tertullian; he took the token of our flesh and carried it to heaven, to prepare heaven for us, and left with us the token of his Spirit, to prepare us for heaven: he is not gone from us in discontent, but will come again with all the angels of heaven with him, to receive the bride unto himself.

[1.] The companions of the bride are here represented under the name of 'virgins,' for so Christians are called for the purity of their

faith and worship, and also for their blameless conversations.

(1.) Virgins for the purity of their faith, that keep themselves free and untainted from the corrupt and rotten opinions of the world: 2 Cor. 11:2, 'I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as chaste virgins to Christ.' He meaneth it here in respect of the purity of their faith, that they might not be corrupted by false teachers.

(2.) Virgins for the purity of worship. Idolatry and corruption of worship is often expressed by harlotry; and therefore the prophet, to figure out Israel's apostasy and corruption in worship, is bidden to take a wife of whoredoms, Hosea 3. And those that followed the Lamb are said to be virgins not defiled, Rev. 14:4; not polluted with idolatry, which is spiritual fornication.

(3.) Virgins for purity and blamelessness of conversation. The apostle speaketh of some that 'had escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, who might be again entangled and overcome therein,' 2 Peter 2:20. Well, then, these were all virgins, even the foolish as well as the wise, not tainted with error, nor defiled with false worship, nor profane, corrupt or scandalous in their conversations; they were such as had escaped the corruptions of the world, and had as glorious a form of godliness as any others.

[2.] They are described by their number, 'ten.' This is mentioned either because ten is a number of perfection, or because usually the number of those companions of the bride never exceeded ten.

[3.] They are set forth by their distribution into two ranks—some wise, some foolish; five of the one sort, and five of the other. The number is not exactly to be stood upon, as if the number of the saved and damned were equal; as in the parable of the marriage-feast

one had not a wedding-garment; it is not to be understood as if only one were damned of all that are invited to the profession of the gospel; it only signifieth that all the virgins are not alike careful to prepare for the coming of the Lord. By the wise are meant provident and diligent Christians; by the foolish, the improvident and negligent. Among those that bear the name and keep up the reputation of Christians, some will be found not to fill up their profession with answerable duty, not to make serious provision for the coming of Christ.

[4.] They are set forth by their work and employment, 'They went forth to meet the bridegroom;' that is, they expected the coming of Christ, and happiness by him. The foolish and the wise did both agree in this; indeed, this is the whole business of a Christian.

[5.] They are set forth by their preparation for this work, 'They took their lamps;' that is, made open profession of their hope: Mat. 5:16, 'Let your light so shine among men;' for external shining profession they were both alike. All are called Christians, all are baptized, and all profess faith in Christ, and an expectation of his second coming, with eternal life to ensue upon it; all are virgins, all have lamps, all are devoted to the bridegroom, go forth to meet him, and yet some were wise, and some foolish; some made preparation that whenever the bridegroom should come they might be ready to go in with him, others contented themselves with an outward profession, or loose waiting for his coming, but did not with that serious diligence prepare themselves for it, and so came short of the blessedness expected by them; there wanted a deep radication, and a constant perseverance, without which the blaze of profession, which lasted for a while, will soon be extinguished.

Doct. That in the visible church, among those that give up their names to Christ, some will be found foolish when others are wise, and come short of the blessedness expected by them. Or, in the visible church all are not wise Christians, but some are wise, and really such as they profess themselves to be; others negligent, foolish, and improvident.

The state of the visible church is here represented; and observe—

1. This parable is not spoken of the corrupted members of degenerate churches, but speaketh what shall fall out in the churches not defiled with whoredoms of the world. There are some churches that have turned the government of Christ into a temporal domination, and their worship into a mass of paganish or heathenish rites and superstitions, and place all their glory, not in excellency of gifts and graces, but pomp of living and external splendour, and make Christianity look like a temporal worldly thing, calculated only for this life. Of those Christ speaketh not here; something may be intimated of them in the former parable, but here he speaks of a reformed church; not the church in her pollution and defection, but a church in her right constitution. Papists will be counted Christians, who may be rejected by Christ at his coming; they have so corrupted his worship, discipline, and doctrine. Nay, but Christ speaketh here of those that live under the dispensations of purer Christianity; some will be found true believers, others common professors; even among the members of a reformed church, that make profession of the purity of the gospel, all will not be found such as may abide the day of Christ's appearing in judgment. In Abraham's family there was an Ishmael as well as an Isaac; in Christ's, a Judas; and in the apostles' time, some were enemies to the cross of Christ that yet took the profession of Christ upon them, Phil. 3:18.

2. Mark again, it is not meant the scandalous and faulty members of a pure church. There are many Christians in name only, but indeed deny it, Titus 1:16. But it is not meant of the scandalous, that live as if their hopes were altogether in this world, that engulph themselves in all manner of sensuality, as if there were no heaven or hell, nor no future account to be given of our actions; but it is meant of such as profess themselves to be devoted unto Jesus Christ the bridegroom, such as are desirous to be admitted into the nuptial-feast, to have communion with him in heaven, and possibly may attain to a blameless conversation, and appear virgin-like, all waiting for the coming of the Lord, in their own and others' estimation. Some that prophesied in Christ's name, and ate and drank in his presence, are yet rejected by Christ as workers of iniquity.

3. It is not meant only of those that have a show or a false and counterfeit profession, that are taught to act over their part in religion as a play, as in the best and purest churches there will be hypocrites. No; these had some real work, though not a saving but a common work, as a man may have a light tincture of religion whose heart is not yet sound with God, Ps. 119:80, therefore David prayeth, 'Let my heart be sound in thy statutes.' There was not a universal renouncing of all corruptions, not that thorough care to please God, nor a rooted affection to Christ, though they have some good motions, hopeful inclinations that way, as these virgins seemed to be well affected to Christ; for the present they had their lamps, made some slender preparation, they went forth to meet the bridegroom as others did. Therefore it will be necessary to show that a common work may go far, and yet come short of blessedness: I shall prove it by three reasons.

[1.] Because a common work may go far.

[2.] Though a common work may go far, yet it is not likely to hold out.

[3.] If it should hold out a constant profession, yet it will not be enough to qualify us for the kingdom of glory, or heavenly bliss and happiness.

First Reason. A common work will go far. I take it for granted that there is a real common work of grace, as well as also a real special work. If you doubt it I will inform you from scripture: Heb. 6:4, compared with the 9th verse. We read there of some that were 'enlightened,' some that 'tasted of the good word, and of the heavenly gift;' and elsewhere of some 'that had escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Jesus Christ,' 2 Peter 2:20. All this is real, the tasting the good word real, the enlightening real, the partaking of the heavenly gift real, the escaping the pollutions of the world real; but the apostle saith in the 9th verse, 'We expect better things of you, and things that do accompany salvation;' or things that have necessarily salvation in them, things that whosoever hath them shall certainly be saved. The graces of temporaries are for substance true, but slightly rooted; there are the purlieus of grace, or the borders of the kingdom of heaven, some flashes of light or dawns of grace, but the daystar doth not arise in their hearts; many are enlightened, taste the good word, have some delight in the promises, taste of the heavenly gift, apprehend it sweet to have communion with God in Christ, and taste the powers of the world to come, feel some transports of soul when they hear of the hopes of eternal life, and may be brought to some partial reformation; but that which is wanting is a deep radication or a more firm inherency of these graces in the soul, and a habitual predominancy of these motions and affections over all other inclinations; for till it be so, we cannot do any great service for God, or endure any trial for his sake. Sometimes

true grace is described by its deep radication; James 1:21, it is called an 'ingrafted word;' it is not something tied on, but ingrafted; the root of the matter is within; and sometimes it is described by its efficacy: Rom. 6:17, 'Ye have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine delivered to you.'

But more especially I shall show you that a common work may go far with respect to the three theological graces, faith, hope, and charity, mentioned by the apostle 1 Cor. 13:13, 'Now abideth faith, hope, and love;' and again, 1 Thes. 5:8, 'But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation.' Now a common work may go very far in all these graces of faith, hope, and love, as here the virgins seemed to believe the coming of Christ, and went forth to meet him.

First, Therefore I shall show you what they may do as to faith. I shall show what the grace is, and how far they may go along with it. The scripture speaketh so much of faith, that we need to know what it is. Faith in its peculiar respect works towards Christ and heaven; but take it in its general latitude, it is a firm and cordial assent to all such things that are revealed by God, as revealed by him. Let us explain this. Here is the object, things revealed by God as revealed by him; then the act, it is an assent; the adjuncts, it is a firm and cordial assent. For the object in this description, I consider it materially and formally, all things revealed by God whatsoever. All things necessary to salvation, faith apprehends them distinctly, other things implicitly, that is, knows them in their general principle. Few Christians know all the doctrines contained in the Christian religion, but they believe them in the general. But now things necessary to salvation, I must distinctly know them, as those that are called articles of the Creed, the Lord's prayer, the ten commandments. Faith is an assent to, and built upon a divine testimony, without any

other reason, whether as to things past, present, or to come. Things past, as the creation of the world: Heb. 11:3, 'By faith we understand the worlds were created by the word of God.' If a man should hold the creation of the world upon some other reason that seemeth cogent unto him, and not upon the discovery of it in the word, certainly it is not faith, whatever it be, for faith assents to whatsoever is revealed by God. So for things present, that God sitteth in heaven, and Christ at his right hand. Stephen saw it by vision and ecstasy, but every believer seeth it by faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, as if with bodily eyes. So for things to come, as Christ's coming to judgment, John saw it in the light of prophecy: Rev. 20:12, 'I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God;' and they see it in the light of scripture and the promise. So that you see the objects of faith are things revealed by God, because revealed by him. If a man should believe the Christian religion upon tradition, or the current opinion where he liveth, it is not faith, but human credulity. Now the act of faith it is an assent, not knowledge but acknowledgment: the understanding hath a double act, apprehension or dijudication; it judgeth of the truth of things apprehended, or apprehendeth the tenor of things, and then judgeth of the truth of them. They are not enlightened in a way of faith that are only able to talk of heavenly things, but such as are persuaded of the truth of them. And then mark the adjuncts, it is a firm and cordial assent.

1. It is a firm assent, and that excludeth many things from faith, as light credulity: Prov. 14:15, 'The simple believeth every word.' He that believeth everything without search and serious advertency, believeth nothing. And it excludeth bare non-contradiction. Many are thought to believe the religion they live under, because they do not question it. These can no more be said to believe than children are said to believe the questions and answers of the Catechism they have learned by rote. True faith knoweth the certainty of those things

wherein they have been instructed, Luke 1:4. And then it excludeth conjecture to be faith, which is a lighter inclination of the mind to a thing as probable; it may be so, yet there is a suspicion to the contrary. Nay, it excludeth opinion, which goeth higher than conjecture, but cometh short of faith.

Well, now, thus far many go; there may be an owning of the true orthodox religion, only out of custom, chance of birth, education, tradition of ancestors; they may talk much, as parrots repeat men's words by rote only. There may be convictions and opinions about them, they may be persuaded those things are true that are in the word of God, and yet no firm assent.

2. But to come nearer yet, the next adjunct it is a cordial and hearty assent, such as engageth the heart to Christ. We read in scripture of 'believing with the heart,' Rom. 10:9, and 'believing with all the heart,' Acts 8:37. Truths are propounded to us in the scripture not only as true, but good things, of great weight and moment; as well as certain. Believing is a hearty business; now this cordial and hearty assent excludeth historical faith, and temporary faith.

[1.] Historical faith, which rests on a naked speculation, or a simple and naked assent to such things as are propounded in the word of God. This consisteth in a mere speculation of the mind, without any change of the bent of the will and affections. True faith ever overcomes all contrary inclinations and motions, so that God's interest may prevail above them: Heb. 11:13, 'Being persuaded of them, they embraced them.' Those who have a mere historical faith are not excited to holy living; are rendered more knowing, not better: this is a real faith in its kind. Simon Magus did really believe by the preaching of Philip, Acts 8:13. It was not counterfeit, for it is said he wondered. And those in John 2:24, that believed in the name of

Christ, but Christ 'would not commit himself to them, for he knew all men.' And no question the devils do really believe, James 2, not only natural truths, but gospel truths: 'I know thou art the holy one of God.' What a confession is this out of the devil's mouth! Therefore it is wrong to say that unregenerate men do not believe. Because this being the main business in hand, I will tell you why it is called historical faith. Not from the object of it, as if they only believed the histories of the scripture. No; they believe promises, threatenings, doctrines, precepts, mysteries. But it is called historical faith from the manner wherewith it is conversant about its object. As we read histories in which we are no way concerned, only for contemplation and knowledge' sake, not to make a party in their broils, or interpose in their quarrels; so they rest in idle speculations, which betters not the practice. Well, now, this speculative assent they may have; this faith doth not only believe those things that are true, but doth heartily and truly believe them.

[2.] There is besides this, temporary faith; that is, such an assent as is accompanied with a slight and insufficient touch upon the heart, called a taste, Heb. 6:4, so that they do not only believe the truths of the gospel, but are tickled with some some delight, and do in some measure find their hearts drawn off from worldly lusts and practices; but the impression is not deep enough, nor the joy rooted enough to counterbalance all temptations to the contrary. They seem to have their hearts loosened from the world, and to prefer Christ before the creature, as long as no temptations do assault, or sensual objects stand up in any considerable strength to entice them; but then they bewray their weakness. But that faith that is serious and hearty doth so believe the promises of the gospel as to seek happiness in them, to make it his business so to believe the mysteries of our redemption as to build all his comfort and peace upon them, so believe the

commands of God as to frame his heart to observe them; in short, to improve everything to the use of holy living.

Secondly, The next theological grace is hope. Here was an expectation of the bridegroom's coming, as well as a belief of it. All Christians profess that they expect Christ to come to judgment, and many desire and hope to be entertained at the nuptial feast as well as others, and hope to go in with him into celestial joys. Now there may be much of this in temporaries, not only a bare profession, but some real motions this way. Oh, how often are they pressed to keep on this joy and comfort! Heb. 3:6, 'Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm to the end;' and Heb. 3:14, 'For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end;' and to maintain it with all serious diligence, Heb. 6:11, that it may grow into more certainty. But to evidence this to you, let us see what Christian hope is. It seems to be described by the apostle, Rom. 2:7, those that 'seek for life and immortality by patient continuing in well-doing;' or a 'looking for the mercy of God unto eternal life,' Jude 21. Or more formally, a certain earnest or desirous expectation of blessedness promised, in that way wherein it is promised. We believe there is such a blessedness, therefore wait with earnestness and patience till it come to pass, and exercise ourselves with all diligence for the obtaining it. True hope ever quickeneth our diligence: Acts 24:10, 'And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men.' Most interpreters say, 'Hereupon do I exercise myself.' He had spoken of the hope of Israel, so that it was upon the account of his hope he did use that diligence. But more plainly, Acts 26:6, 7, 'Unto which hope our twelve tribes, serving God diligently, hope to come.' A man that hopeth for anything will earnestly pursue it in the way wherein it is to be obtained, and follow his work close day and night. There is a hope that is but a devout sloth, but the true

Christian is lively and active: 1 John 3:3, 'He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself as Christ is pure.' Ignorant people say they hope well, that he that made them shall save them, but live as if they fled from heaven and salvation; but the true hope encourageth us to hold on our course with diligence and cheerfulness, notwithstanding the troubles and difficulties and temptations we meet with in the way to it; they make it their constant work and business. Now they that are unrenewed may go far in hope, especially when they are under the initial work of the Spirit; they may have not only the careless man's hope, which is a slight and superficial hope, which groweth upon them they know not how, without any warrant or ground; nor a dead and cold hope, which is the fruit of opinion, a loose and fond conjecture rather than a certain expectation; but a hope that hath some life in it; nor the presumer's hope, which is a lazy loitering hope, that severeth the end from the means, but may have some lively tastes, which for a while sets them a-work in the spiritual life; but the fault is, it is not so fixed as it should be, neither doth it beget in us that constant assiduous labour, seriousness and self-denial, but enough to keep up a blazing profession, but doth not make them so earnest for the possession of what they hope for.

Thirdly, The third theological grace is love or charity; love to God, and love to our neighbour. There is somewhat of both here. They were well affected to the bridegroom; they went forth to meet and carry lamps before him, for his honour as well as light; and they went in consort and company with their fellow-virgins. So some are so well affected to the ways of God as to make profession of them to the people of God, so as to walk with them. But let me speak of love to God. Love to God is not a fellow-like familiarity, but ready subjection to his laws: 'If ye love me, keep my commandments,' John 14:15, and 1 John 5:3, 'For this is love, that we keep his commandments.' Now they may so far do this as to make profession of the ways of God, and

walk blameless in them as to men, yet strangers to heart-mortification and a true preference of God in the soul. The knowledge of Christ may make men cleanse their external conversations, but live in secret love with some lusts, which they serve in a more cleanly manner. They love happiness more than holiness; they love God, but do little for him. Labour and love are often spoken of; they have not that active and serious diligence that is commanded in doing the things that please God. Then, for love to the brethren, they may magnify the people of God, Acts 5:13, join with them, and do many offices of love for them; but the heart needs to be purified before there can be that 'unfeigned love to the brethren,' 1 Peter 1:22. And it is not easy to hold on in the ways of God in all conditions. There are many sins contrary to the grace of love; pride, envy, self-seeking, self-love, wrath. It must be such a love as floweth from holy principles, and breaketh out in real performances; and this, to be carried out in a Christian manner, will be found very hard to do.

Second Reason. Though a common work may go far, it is not likely to hold out. Their lamps went out, and they had no vessels to supply them. Notwithstanding the sudden pangs and fervours, and forward profession of temporaries, yet usually they fail in the issue. They believe for a while, Luke 8:13, and hope for a while: Col. 1:23, 'If ye continue steadfast, and be not moved from the hope of the gospel.' Love for a while: Mat. 24:12, 'The love of many shall wax cold;' and good reason; partly because they have not the grace to which the promise of perseverance is made. There is *donum perseverantiæ*, there is such a thing as the gift of perseverance, and it is assured by promise to special saving grace. Now they that have not this radicated state of grace, have not this promise; for Christ saith, John 4:14, 'The water that I shall give him, shall be a well of water springing up to eternal life.' A cruse may fail, a bucket emptied, a

pond dried up, but a fountain is ever flowing, and never dried up. Therefore David prayeth, 'Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.' When the heart is not sound before God, disorders break out before men, and many that make a fair show for a while, afterwards shipwreck themselves, and all their credit for godliness. And partly because where the heart is not thoroughly converted to God, evermore some temporal good thing lieth too close to the heart, and hath a deeper rooting there than grace can have. And these base and carnal delights will in time prevail over the interest God hath in the heart, Heb. 12:13. That which is lame is soon turned out of the way: 'Demas hath forsaken us, and embraced the present world.' Men of an unsound heart have some temptation or other that carrieth them quite off from God: as old Eli fell and broke his neck, so they break the neck of their profession.

Third Reason why many that are virgins come short of the nuptial feast. Because if they should hold out a constant profession, it will not be enough to qualify them for heaven and everlasting happiness. It is possible an unrenewed man may never fall from his profession, yet he can bring nothing to perfection. Luke 8:13, the stony ground fell from their profession, but the thorny ground brought nothing to perfection. All are not exposed to great trials. Oh! nothing but a real conversion will qualify us for the kingdom of heaven. The foolish virgins' case was as fair and as good as the other, till the bridegroom came: Mat. 18:3, 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.' The sentence is absolute and peremptory. So John 3:3, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nothing less than renewing grace will serve the turn. Be a man in appearance better or worse, a gross sinner, or a painted pharisee, a hopeful beginner, or one of long standing, 'Except ye be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of God.'

Use 1. To show how far from salvation some are, if those that have some kind of faith, and hope, and love, may come short; as for instance—(1.) All practical atheists and infidels, that scoff at Christ's coming: 2 Peter 3:3, 4, 'In the last days there shall come scoffers, walking after their own lusts, saying, Where is the promise of his coming?' Some, that they may sin the more securely, question the second coming of Christ, or banish out of their hearts the thoughts of the day of judgment. Many that went out to meet the bridegroom yet were foolish virgins, and were shut out. (2.) Flagitious persons, or scandalous sinners, that neither respect Christ nor his people, that make no show nor preparation, are neither virgins, nor do they take their lamps; if they have a historical certainty, not a temporary faith. How much then of the Christian world would be cut off before we come to an accurate and exquisite trial? 2 Peter 3:11, 'What manner of persons ought we to be?' and Gal. 5:24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof.' If this be a sure rule to try by, what a multitude of Christians are there that do not belong to Christ, that by a real profession have given up their names to him!

Use 2. Is caution to us all. Let us take heed we do not deceive ourselves, or rest satisfied with the picture of godliness. An army would be very cautious if they knew beforehand that one-half of them should be destroyed. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Among the virgin professors that hold out an honourable profession, many will be found foolish. Yea, when Christ had said, 'One of you shall betray me;' 'Lord, is it I, is it I?' said the disciples. Now you are here told, not one, but many. Now go home, and say, Lord, is it I? In the purest churches many may lie hid and not discerned. Oh! therefore take not up with weak and groundless hopes.

1. Do not please yourselves by being of such a sect or such a profession. Men think the safest place to lie asleep in is Christ's own lap. If they are of such a party, they think they are safe; but consider, lead may be cast into all forms, an angel or devil, but it is lead still. Consider God is an exact and impartial judge: 1 Peter 3:17, 'If you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth all men;' his people as well as others, if they build upon their profession. Do not content yourselves with a form of godliness, though never so strict; nor a name of godliness, though never so renowned. These were virgins, not defiled with error or idolatry, or the scandalous customs or fashions of the world; yet some of them were foolish virgins.

2. Do not content yourselves that you do not take up a profession and an intention of religion merely to serve the times and yourselves of it, not knowing yourselves intentionally and industriously to counterfeit; as Judas, that followed Christ for the bag, being in his heart a traitor and a thief from the beginning, John 13:6; or as Simon Magus at first hoped to make as good market of his new faith as his old sorcery, professed to believe in Christ out of design. Nay, a man that, for anything he knoweth or perceiveth, may think that he is in good earnest, yet he may be a temporary, though he is no temporiser. Christ knew them that knew not themselves, John 2:24. To speak in a word, though you may know nothing of guile, yet do not content yourselves with that merely.

3. Do not rest in this, that you find some real work, and go no further. A man's heart may be softened, but not opened to the purpose: he may have a love and liking of religion, and yet not come under the power of it; some flashes of comfort, yet seek his happiness in worldly things; some desires and good inclinations, and yet be slothful and negligent in the main, in mortifying lusts, or not perfecting holiness, and fain would have some part in Christ, but yet

make but slender preparation, get oil in his lamp, but not in his vessel; fain he would have the blessings of grace and glory, if bare wishes and desires would do it; fain would go to heaven, but would do nothing for it, unless it be in a lazy, cold, and dull preparation; doth not make it the chief business of his life to know the will of God and do it.

Use 3. Is to exhort us to be very serious in our preparation for the coming of the Lord; or, as the apostle cautions the Ephesians, Eph. 5:15, 16, 'See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.' To this end consider—

1. That our whole life is nothing else but a preparation for Christ's coming. The common duty of all Christians is to go forth and meet the bridegroom; or, to make sure of life eternal is the necessary business we have to do in the world. Our whole life was appointed for this end, and all the time we spend here is worse than lost, if it be not employed and used for this end. It is now preparation time; these are the months of our purification for our immortal souls; therefore our continual care should be to make ready.

2. We may defer this work too long, we cannot begin it too soon. The foolish virgins would get oil in their vessels, but it was too late. Never any complained of beginning with God too soon: many could have wished they had known the ways of righteousness sooner, Rom. 13:11; many have judged 'the time past more than enough,' 1 Peter 4:3.

3. It is not so slight and easy a thing to get to heaven as the world imagineth: Mat. 7:14, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many shall seek to enter and shall not be able.' Many deceive themselves; it is not so broad as the opinions of some, as the practices of more would make it, and the carnal hearts of all would have it. Broader or

narrower it cannot be than Christ hath left it. In the general, a man may come much too short, none go over. Oh! when you do but consider that many are afar off, Eph. 2:13, and some are near, as Christ told the young man, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven;' and others are scarcely saved, and some enter abundantly, it concerns us therefore to take heed to ourselves.

4. This is your wisdom. There is a great deal of do in the world about wisdom: Job 11:12, 'Vain man would be accounted wise.' A man cannot endure to be counted a fool, will sooner own a vice in morals than a weakness in intellectuals. Now wisdom lieth in providence, and folly in negligence, especially in weighty matters. These wise virgins provided oil in their vessels, and the wise builder built upon a rock. They are wise in God's account, whatever the world thinketh of them, that are wise for heavenly things, and govern their hearts and ways exactly, Eph. 5:14, 15; and they are fools that never mind the good of their souls.

What would you have us do? I will only press you to three things:—

[1.] Let your belief be sound and firm to the great articles of Christianity. It is faith enlivens all our notions of God: John 6:69, 'We believe and are sure that thou art Jesus the Son of God.'

[2.] Let your resolutions for God be unbounded, Ps. 119:112. You never knew a man fall off from God, but he loved some secret lust, some corruption was left unmortified, though for the present it did not appear to the party himself; this in time will break out, and cause some scandalous fall.

[3.] I would have you put it out of all question by the lively exercise of your grace, and by your diligence in the spiritual life, Phil. 2:12; and in time it will grow up into an evidence, 2 Peter 1:5; Luke 13:3.

Nothing will yield you comfort but the exercising and increasing grace.

SERMON II

They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.—
MAT. 25:3–4.

NOT only the openly wicked, those that eat and drink with the drunken, are rejected, but those that have some show of godliness; yea, hopeful beginnings, but not improved, is the drift of this parable. We have considered wherein the ten virgins agree; now, wherein they differ: they had so much wisdom to take their lamps with them, but so much folly as to take no oil in their vessels. These vessels were annexed to their lamps, or that part of the lamp which was kindled and lighted. By the lamps are meant outward profession, Mat. 5:16; by the oil, the Spirit, called 'the anointing which abideth in us,' 1 John 2:27. Now the foolish virgins are such inconsiderate Christians as content themselves with the name and blaze of outward profession, neglecting the great work within; namely, an inward principle of grace, which should maintain their profession before men, and their uprightness before God; they had only some transient motions of the Spirit, or inclinations to that which is good, enough to keep up their present profession, but not to hold out and suffice at Christ's coming. But the wise virgins, that had oil in their vessels, with their lamps, are sound and solid Christians, who, with the lamps of external profession, are careful to be furnished inwardly with the graces of the Holy Spirit.

Doct. 1. It is not enough to have oil in our lamps, but we must have oil in our vessels also.

Doct. 2. This will be found to be our true wisdom, and the other to be the greatest folly.

For the first point, that it is not enough to have oil in our lamps, but we must have oil in our vessels also, let me explain this point in these propositions:—

1. Profession must not be neglected: both the wise and the foolish took their lamps with them. Burning profession is twofold—vocal and real. Vocal: Rom. 10:9, 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth, and believe with thy heart.' Christ will be owned by those that are his. Christ's followers need not be ashamed of avowing their master. Faith should not, and love cannot be smothered and hidden; therefore profession is as necessary as believing in its kind. Again, there is a real profession, not so much by word of mouth as by constant practice and conversation; so Christians are bidden to 'shine as lights,' Phil. 2:15. This is for the glory of God, Mat. 5:16, and the honour of Christ that it should be so; therefore the apostle prayeth, 2 Thes. 1:11, 12, 'Wherefore we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you.' It is not meant of the illicit acts, but the fruit that it produceth; and it is for the honour of the truth. Suitable practice joined with profession puts a majesty and splendour on the truth, and recommendeth it to the consciences of beholders: Titus 2:10, 'Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.' It is not so much by good words and expressions that Christians do put a loveliness and beauty upon the ways of God, as by ordering their ways with all strictness and gravity; so that this fair profession is of great use, especially the real part; it is an evidence that all is right within, for the breaking out of sin and folly in the life clearly evidenceth the power and prevalency of unmortified lusts in

the heart; therefore we must keep our lamps burning; the foolish and the wise did both well in that.

2. A profession of godliness, though never so glorious, should not be rested in without a saving work of grace upon the heart to maintain it. There was the folly of one sort of virgins, that they were contented with having oil in their lamps for their present use, without looking further; and the wisdom of the other, that their vessels were furnished as well as their lamps. Grace must flow forth, but withal it must have a bottom within. As a fountain or spring sending forth streams to water the ground about it, or the heart sendeth forth life and spirits to every faculty and member, so the graces of the Spirit in believers flow forth in their carriage and behaviour, to make their tongue drop that which is savoury, their actions orderly and even, their carriage in all relations and affairs grave and serious. It is well when all this hath a bottom, that there is a principle of life within, to diffuse this virtue into every part of their conversations, and to keep them mindful and respective to all the commands of God. Now this is required—(1.) Partly because this glorious profession and practice will not serve the turn for the present; for God looks not to outward appearance, but regards the frame of the heart; it is internal holiness that is lovely in his eyes, Ps. 51:6, and without which the external is loathsome to him, Mat. 23:17. A Christian hath more in the vessel than in the lamp: Ps. 45:13, 'The king's daughter is all glorious within.' That which is outwardly professed is inwardly rooted and cherished by them who worship and serve God in spirit and truth. Knowledge, faith, love, hope, zeal, courage, patience, these adorn the heart, as well as the fruits of them appear in the life, and this maketh us beautiful in the eyes of him that seeth in secret. It would help us to discover our mistakes if we did make God our witness, approver, and judge; for the present studying to approve him in the frame of our hearts, which is hidden from all others. And (2.) Partly because the

lamp will not long hold burning unless there be a stock of oil to feed it; so that if it could suffice for the present, yet without grace in the heart, for the future, we shall miscarry when the slender provision and store is spent. A Christian is to provide for the time to come such grace as may endure and hold out in all trials, and bear weight in the day of judgment. We are often pressed to set ourselves in such a state, and put ourselves into such a frame, as will endure the glory of Christ's presence; and to think of that time, and what we shall do, or how we shall be found when he appeareth. He only believeth aright in Christ that will not be ashamed at his appearance: Luke 21:36, 'That ye may stand before the Son of man;' and 1 John 4:17, 'That we may have boldness at the day of judgment;' and 1 John 2:29, 'When he shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed of him at his coming.'

3. A saving work of grace is an inward principle of life, and that in such a degree and measure, which the unsound, though the most glorious professors of the gospel, do not attain unto. Some slight and insufficient touches upon their hearts many professors may attain unto that yet never had this rooted principle of grace, which may properly be called oil in the vessel. It differeth in radication and efficacy, as I showed before. They are enlightened, but the day-star doth not arise in their hearts, 2 Peter 1:19, and Eph. 5:8. A flash of light they may have, but are not light in the Lord. Are affected with the truths of the gospel, but not changed or transformed by it, 2 Cor. 3:18. Sin may be restrained or benumbed, but it is not subdued and mortified, Gal. 5:24; we cannot say it is crucified. They are half loosed, but are still in bonds; make some show of escape from Satan, but are surprised by him again; worse hampered than before, Mat. 12:45; urged, excited to some good, but not enabled and inclined to love God with all the heart, and seriously and constantly to set about the things that please him, and to avoid the contrary. They have not

the grace the apostle prayeth for, Heb. 13:12, that grace 'that may make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ.' Have you this grace, to be always working that which is pleasing in his sight? Their fire is like a straw fire, soon in and soon out; so that there is a difference. The common grace that they have is real, but not of an abiding and everlasting nature, not secured by God's covenant and promise; there is not that solid, rooted piety. Therefore, it is not enough for Christians to see that the lamp burneth, but to look what there is in the vessel, to feed the flame. It is not sudden affections on our part, nor the transient motions of the Spirit on God's part, that will amount to a constant principle of life.

4. This constant, abiding state of grace or principle of life may be known partly by the terms by which it is set forth in scripture, and partly by the effects of it.

First, By the terms by which it is expressed in scripture.

1. It is expressed sometimes with respect to the original author, pattern, and fountain of it, which is God; and so it is called the divine nature, 2 Peter 1:4; whereby is not meant the infinite essence of God, which can neither be divided, or communicated to any creature, but of those holy and heavenly qualities and dispositions whereby we resemble God. The heart of this Christian is so stamped with God's own image and character, that he beginneth to look like God for wisdom, holiness, purity, pity. So sometimes it is called the life of God, Eph. 4:18: that spiritual life that is begun in regeneration is so called; not as God is the first original author of life natural, but the pattern of it. From both these places it appeareth we must first be partakers of such a nature as God hath, before we can live such a life as God doth.

2. It is sometimes expressed with respect to the meritorious and procuring cause, or the immediate head and fountain of it; and so Christ is said 'to live in us,' Gal. 2:20; 'to dwell in us,' Eph. 3:17; 'to remain in us as the hope of glory,' Col. 1:27. That Christians may live the life of grace, they must first be united to Christ; for he liveth in us as the head in the members, or the root in the branches: we must be united to Christ, and receive influence from him as branches from the root. Through faith Christ is perpetually present in virtue, grace, and spirit. We must first partake of Christ himself, being most strictly united to him, as members to the head, from whence they receive sense and motion: he taketh up a fixed and immovable habitation in our hearts, John 14:23, not for a visit and away; but keepeth a perpetual residence in the heart.

3. With respect to the immediate author and fountain, which is the Spirit given to us, to dwell in us, by some special way of operation, Rom. 5:5; and 1 Cor. 2:12, 'Now we have not received the spirit of world, but the Spirit of God, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God;' and Rom. 8:11, 'If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you.' A believer's body and soul is the Spirit's mansion-house; and those that have the Spirit to dwell in them, not to come upon them at times, are in an abiding state of grace. The Spirit came upon Balaam at times, Num. 24:2; but in his people he makes his abode. He doth act in others as a spirit assisting, but not as a spirit inhabiting: he dwelleth in his people. The Spirit is often promised to dwell in our hearts, not only for a season, but for ever: John 4:14, 'The water that I shall give him shall be a well of water springing up to everlasting life.' Mark, the Spirit doth not give a draught, but the spring; not a dash of rain that is soon dried up, but a well; not a pond, that may be dried up at length, but a fountain that ever keepeth flowing, so that we shall never thirst more. It shall quench his thirst after worldly vanities and delights: these things

grow tasteless the more of the Spirit we have. The Spirit of Christ, as the fountain, doth make this grace enduring in itself and in its effects, a well of inexhaustible fulness and refreshment. So John 7:38, 'He that believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' Not a petty refreshment for a season, but his Spirit to dwell in us as a full fountain, to flow forth for the refreshment of himself and others. Though the ocean be in God, yet there is a river in the saints. In Christ there is plenitudo fontis; in us, plenitudo vasis. If we find any remission of the comforts of this spring, it is through our own pride and unbelief and idleness: John 14:16, 17, 'I will give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.' The Spirit will not change his dwelling-place. This is such a degree of grace as the unregenerate world cannot receive.

4. This inward principle is expressed with respect to the instrument, which is the word of God; so it is called λόγον ἔμφυτον, James 1:21, 'The ingrafted word.' The root of the matter is within; it is not the word heard only, or the word obeyed only will save us, but it must be an ingrafted word. It is not bound on, but ingrafted; it is not enough to yield some present obedience to it, but it must be rooted in us. So in that notable promise, Heb. 8:10, 'I will put my laws in their minds, and write them upon their hearts.' The writing is the law of God, the tables are the minds and hearts of men; that is the understanding and will and rational appetite; and this is written by the finger of God; there where is the source and original of all moral operations, of all thoughts and affections, and inward motions, there is the law of God written; in those parts of the soul where the directive counsel and the imperial commanding power of all human actions resideth, there will God write his laws in lively and legible characters. And what is the effect? A man becometh a law to himself, he carrieth his rule about with him, and hath a ready and willing mind to obey it: Ps. 37:31, 'The law of God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.'

The truth is rooted in him, and his heart is suited and inclined to it; he unfeignedly loveth what is commanded of God, and hateth what is forbidden by him.

5. The work itself is sometimes generally expressed by these notions. It is called *καινή κτίσις*, 'The new creature,' 2 Cor. 5:17, when a man is thoroughly framed anew in all his faculties; and 1 John 3:9, it is called *σπέρμα*, 'The abiding seed;' not a vanishing affection, but a remaining seed; and it is called 'A good treasure,' Mat. 12:35. There is a stock that supplieth holy thoughts, words, and actions. As a man that hath a bad treasure of corruption, the more he spends, the more it is increased; so a man that hath a good stock, he bringeth forth holy thoughts, words, and actions. And it is called 'A new heart, and a right spirit,' Ps. 51:10; Ezek. 36:26, 27; and it is called 'A sound heart,' Ps. 119:80. There is a slight heart, and a sound heart, which is not only opposed to the shows of hypocrites, but to the sudden pangs and half-dispositions of temporaries, when grace beareth a universal sovereignty over us, inclining the heart to love, and please, and serve God.

6. Sometimes the work is particularly expressed by the several graces of the Spirit, all which are comprised in faith and repentance: Acts 20:21, 'Teaching them repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' Repentance towards God, because by it we return to the duty we owe to our creator; and faith, in the gospel notion, doth principally respect our Redeemer, and his mediation for us. By repentance we return to the duty enjoined by the law, from whence we are fallen; and by faith we apprehend the love of Christ, and what he hath done for us. By repentance we are set in joint again as to our obedience to the lawgiver; and by faith we close with, and are united to our Redeemer, without which we cannot be accepted with God.

Both are the principles of all sincere obedience and subjection to the gospel-law or covenant.

If you ask me, what is this oil in the vessel that we must have to qualify us to meet the bridegroom at his coming?

Ans. It is repentance, mortifying our inward lusts, and faith working by love.

(1.) Repentance, mortifying our inward lusts, that in newness of life we may glorify God; therefore called 'Repentance from dead works,' Heb. 6:1. By common grace men may cast off all outward evils, escape the pollutions of the world, but are never really and inwardly changed in their natures till the Spirit of Christ worketh this grace in the heart; they are but as a sow washed, 2 Peter 2:22; there is an inclination to wallow in the mire of carnal delights again. It is possible a man may see such an excellency in Christ, and be so affected at the hopes of his mercy, and melted at the thoughts of his love, as to cast off outward gross evils which the world liveth in; but this is but the sow washed; the heart is not changed. Lust for a while may be benumbed, seem quenched, but it is not deadened, it is not weakened: 'If ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body,' Rom. 8:13; as appeareth by its breaking out again with the more violence.

(2.) Faith working by love, that is the great principle of gospel-obedience. True grace doth not lie hid in the soul in lazy habits, but sets the soul a-work for God, upon the apprehension of his love in Christ; this constraineth us entirely to give up ourselves to God, 2 Cor. 5:14, minding his interest, studying his will, seeking to please him in all things. A man is not to be judged by present pangs, but by the constant bent and bias of his soul; it is set God-ward, to please him, and enjoy him, notwithstanding the back-bias of corruption.

Secondly, We now come to the effects. The effects are two:—

1. A constant fitness, readiness, and propension to do and suffer what God calleth us unto, or a habitual inclination of heart towards that which is good.

2. A habitual aversion to that which is evil.

1. A habitual inclination of heart towards that which is good; this is called in scripture, 'the having the heart at the right hand,' Eccles. 10:2. He speaketh not of the natural posture, but the leaning of the heart towards duty; he is ready fitted and prepared for duty. And sometimes this is called, 'having our loins girt,' 1 Peter 1:13, as ready to travel; or it noteth the ready disposition that should be in us for duties or conflicts. So 'we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,' Eph. 2:10; that is, put into a fitness and aptitude for them. As everything that is created hath a fitness and aptitude for that use for which it serveth, the water to flow, the air to be carried to and fro; so a Christian hath a fitness for his work. The opposite to this is that, Titus 1:16, 'To every good work reprobate;' unfit to be employed for this holy business. Briefly, as every habit serveth for this use, *Ut quis facile, jucunde et constanter agat*; to perfect the operation of that faculty in which it is seated, so that a man may act easily, pleasantly, constantly; so doth habitual grace serve for this use, to incline us, and fit us for the service of God. There are three things that are found in those that have this work wrought in them:—

[1.] There is an inclination and propensity to a godly life; for as God created all creatures with an inclination to their proper operations, so the new creature hath a tendency to those actions which are proper to its state; as the sparks fly upward and the stone falleth downward from an inclination of nature, so are their hearts bent to

please God and serve him, and what they do therein they do with a kind of naturalness, because of this bent and inclination: 'The law is in their hearts,' Ps. 40:8. There is a purpose there, Acts 11:23, an inclination there, Ps. 119:112. We read in Exod. 35:29, that they gave to the sanctuary 'every one whose heart made him willing.' I bring this expression to explain what I am speaking of; so their hearts being thus prepared and renewed by the Holy Ghost, make them willing; there is some weight and poise within their hearts to carry them unto God, and the duties that concern his glory and service. A man may act from a violent impression contrary to nature, as a stone moveth upward, or a bowl thrown with great strength where the bias is overruled; so a wicked man may do a good action or two, as Saul forced himself; but the bent and natural inclination is another thing. It is good to attend to the principle of our motions, whether it be natural or violent, whether our spirits make us willing, or some accidental reason constrain us; as when men are acted by something foreign, as the force of holy example, whereby many a man is drawn to do otherwise than he would, as Joash while Jehoiada lived, 2 Chron. 24. A man may be acted by his company, follow good examples, and may be provoked thereby: Heb. 10:24, 'Let us consider one another, to provoke to love and good works.' It were well if one Christian would more provoke another. Man is an imitating creature, loath to be outdone; but if this be all, we shall soon bewray our unsoundness. He may be forced by envy, vainglory, and by-ends (Phil. 1:5) to preach or pray, forced by natural conscience, Rom. 2:14, 15, or set a-work by a corrupt principle. The urgings of a natural conscience are quite another thing than the bent of a renewed heart; there is a principle of life which breedeth an inclination. He may be forced by a sense of his misery; self sets him a-work to seek after God, because he would use him for a turn, to help him out of his distress; as those in Ps. 78:34–37, 'When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired early

after God; and they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer: nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied to him with their tongues: for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.' Their affections were not sincerely set for God, or towards God, or bent against sin; the sense of a present wrath, or the terror of an angry God, did drive them into a fit of religiousness for the present, which can produce no steadfast purpose. They that make self their utmost end can never endeavour constantly to please and glorify God; but where true grace is, there is a propensity and disposition to every good work, which we should always cherish in ourselves; for as it abateth or increaseth, so we are diligent or sluggish in God's service.

[2.] There is not only an inclination, but a readiness or preparedness, which is a further effect of this solid and substantial grace, and often spoken of in scripture; as Titus 3:1, 'Ready to every good work;' 1 Tim. 6:18, 'Ready to distribute;' 'Ready to communicate,' Heb. 13:16. So Paul, Acts 21:13, ἐτοίμως ἔχω, 'I am ready not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem.' Or take a general place, 2 Tim. 2:4, 'Prepared to every good work;' and Luke 12:47, 'That servant that knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will;' so Eph. 2:10, and many other places. This goeth beyond inclination, as fire hath an inclination to ascend upward, but something may violently keep it down that it cannot ascend actually. A Christian may have a will to good, a strong and not a remiss will, yet there are some impediments: Rom. 7:18, 'For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.' Inclination implieth a remote power, but readiness the next or immediate power. God's people, that have the seed of grace in them, yet how unready are they to that which they desire to do! Therefore a Christian ought always to keep himself in all readiness and fitness of disposition for his duty, whether it concern God, or ourselves, or

others. This is opposite to dulness, sleepiness, listlessness, or wearisomeness in our service, opposite to ἀκηδία, which the schoolmen make to be one of the seven deadly sins, a remiss, cold will, hanging off from God.

[3.] An earnest impulsion, which quickeneth us to all holy endeavours of obedience; this is sometimes called the activity or working of grace: 'Faith worketh by love,' Gal. 5:6; sometimes zeal, or an earnest burning of affection towards God, or that holy ardour whereby we repress those affections, unruly motions, and desires which are contrary to his will, and do excite and stir up ourselves more and more to honour him and please him: Titus 2:14, 'Zealous of good works;' sometimes alacrity and cheerfulness, as we prevail in striving against sin, and our love to God increaseth, 1 John 5:3, 4. All these are so many degrees. First we can make conscience of doing our duty, but that is not enough: a convinced man may have his conscience stirring and pleading for God; but a converted man, or a renewed heart, hath an inclination, and not only an inclination but some fitness, and not only some fitness but there is an impulsion, which discovereth itself either by stirring or exciting to that which is good (though with difficulty), which is the lowest degree. All grace is stirring, and would fain break out into action; for it is not a dead and sleepy habit, but seeketh to break forth, and is called by the apostle, 'The lustings of the spirit,' Gal. 5:17. Another degree is zeal and love to the glory of God, whom they honour and desire to exalt continually, which maketh them complain of corruption, and to strive against it, and to shake off slothfulness, and the weights of sin that hang upon us, when the Spirit gets the upper hand, but the flesh is not easily subdued. Then we are more at liberty to serve God, and so alacrity followeth, when a man hath pleasure in good actions, and the flesh is so overcome and subdued that it can make little or no

opposition, and so we perform our duty with more ease and delight, which is the highest degree.

SERMON III

They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.—
MAT. 25:3, 4

I COME now to the second effect.

Secondly, A habitual aversion to that which is evil: Ps. 97:10, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.' It is as natural to grace to hate evil as to love good. As love was made for God, and the things which he hath commanded, and tends to the enjoyment of him, so hatred was made for sin, and what is contrary to God. Man hath an eschewing faculty as well as an embracing and choosing faculty, and grace falleth upon both, and sanctifieth the one as well as the other: Amos 5:15, 'Hate the evil, and love the good.' Love was given us for good, and hatred for evil; love was made for the chiefest good, and all things that tend to it; and hatred for that which is truly and properly evil. Now concerning this effect of grace, I shall observe these things.

1. Grace produceth a hatred of sin, not a bare abstinence from it. Sin may be restrained by foreign reasons not proper to grace, as a dog that hath a mind to the bait may abstain for fear of the cudgel. So men may abstain because of the penalty of laws, infamy, shame in the world, or other reasons; as Haman refrained himself, that he might the better take revenge upon the whole race of the Jews. Men may refrain from sin, when there is not a rooted enmity against it;

whereas in the saints there is a constant principle of resistance against it, 1 John 3:9, σπέρμα μένον, 'The seed of God abideth in him.' The grace of sanctification doth change the nature of a man, and his heart is set against that he loved before. Look, as the Lord will not respect men's external practice of good, when it may be their hearts abhor and loathe it, and are bent on other courses—he requireth chiefly that they be rooted in the love of good and delight in it—so he will not accept a simple not doing or forbearing evil, while it may be their hearts are going a-whoring after it, but will have them really hate and detest it, that there should be an abiding enmity in their hearts against it; and where it is so, that there is a habitual love of good and hatred of evil, Christ will pass by many failings in practice; as you may see, Rom. 7:22–25, that is the case there, 'The evil that I hate, that do I; and I delight in the law of God in the inward man.' Clear these two once, and the remainders of sin will not be your ruin.

2. Grace produceth a hatred of sin as sin, out of a principle of love to God, and as it is contrary to his law, and the new nature planted in us: 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil;' and 'he that is born of God, sinneth not;' that is the principle, 'because the seed of God abideth in you.' The schoolmen distinguish of two sorts and kinds of hatred—odium abominationis, and odium inimicitiae. The first is defined by Aquinas to be *dissonantia quaedam appetitus ad id quod apprehenditur ut repugnans et noxium*—an aversation of the appetite to what is apprehended repugnant and contrary to us. Such an hatred there is in the regenerate, for they apprehend sin as repugnant and contrary to their renewed will. To the unregenerate it is agreeable and suitable, as draff to the appetite of a swine, or grass and hay to a bullock and horse. The other is a hatred of enmity, so called both for the ground of it and the effect of it; the ground as an evil, that which is an enemy and hurtful to us, as sin is to our peace

and happiness temporal, spiritual, and eternal. But chiefly as to the effect of it, hatred is a willing of evil and mischief to the thing or person hated. Both these hatreds are in the children of God. They hate sin not only as it may bring loss and detriment, horror of conscience and damnation, but out of the pure love of God, as it is contrary to his image and will; and they hate it with a hostile hatred, so as to seek the destruction of it. Non cessat in læsione peccati, sed in exterminio. It doth not scratch at the face of sin, but is seeking to mortify and subdue it; and therefore are always mourning, praying, watching, striving, famishing it by cutting off its provisions and denying its satisfactions, and still following the work close, till we get the mastery of it.

3. I observe that renewing grace doth so far obtain and produce this effect in the hearts of those that are under it, that their hatred to sin is greater than their love to it, and sin is thereby more and more weakened and subdued in the soul. We flatter ourselves with notions of love and hatred, unless there be some answerable success and prevalency. It cannot be imagined that sin should live in its full strength where there is a fixed settled frame of heart against it; that there should be in the soul a working warring principle that shall rouse up a man daily to take heed of it as the greatest evil, and yet sin should be as powerful, and as frequently and freely break out as it doth in others. No; where there is such an enmity, hostility, and irreconcilableness, or, to say in a word, such a habitual aversation, it cannot be: 1 John 3:9, 'He that is born of God doth not commit sin; his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.' He that hath such a blessed change wrought in him by the operation of God's Spirit as to be transformed in the spirit of his mind, it cannot be supposed but that grace will have such energy and efficacy upon him as to prevent the life and growth of sin, and restrain the practice of it; that the habits of grace being cherished,

this must needs be famished and starved by degrees. A man that hath a fixed root of ungodliness in him, he is at sin's beck, the devil's slave; but a permanent habit of grace doth produce a constant carefulness, that God be not dishonoured or displeased. The apostle telleth us that 'Christ bore our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, may be alive unto righteousness,' 1 Peter 2:24. Now certainly this effect is obtained in those that have benefit by his death, or have assured it by faith. Before they were alive to sin, being active, and delighting in the commission of it, but dead to righteousness, impotent and indisposed for any spiritual act; but afterwards their love to sin is weakened, and their hearts quickened to spiritual life. Once more, that there is a decay of the evil principle appeareth by that of Gal. 5:16, 17, 'This I say then, walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; for the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.' This place showeth that the lusts of the flesh, though they be not wholly abandoned, yet they shall not be fulfilled. We take it otherwise; but the meaning is, the unrenewed part shall be kept under; we cannot fully effectuate the evil we would. The spirit always opposeth what we would do according to the direction of the flesh. There are two active principles never wholly dead. The flesh doth not advance with a full gale, but meeteth with a contrary tide of resistance from the spirit.

Use 1. Is to reprove those that can afford a little religion, but cannot afford enough. It may be good words without practice, or practice without principle. Good words without practice: many talk well, their notions are high and strict; but observe them narrowly, and you will find them cold and careless; like the carbuncle, at a distance it seemeth all on fire, but touch it and it is key-cold. 'Be warmed, be cloathed,' will not pass for charity, nor opinions for faith, nor notions

and elevated strains for godliness. You would laugh at him that would think to pay his debts with the noise of money, and instead of opening his purse, shake it. It is as ridiculous to think to satisfy God or discharge our duty by fine words or heavenly language, without a heavenly heart of life, or afford practice without a principle, or an inward disposition or inclination of heart to holy things. It is not enough to do good, but we must get the habit of doing good; to believe, but we must get the habit of faith; to do a virtuous action, but we must have the habit of virtue; to perform an act of obedience, but we must get the root of obedience. The soul must be divested of evil habits, and decked and adorned with habits of grace, and endowed with new and spiritual qualities, before it can have a principle of life in itself. But most men content themselves with a little good affection, that is soon spent: Hosea 6:4, Ephraim's goodness is like the morning dew, that wets the surface, but is soon dried up. Many have some good things in them, but they want a firm root, which is a habitual inclination towards God. Oh! the difference that is between a man that forceth himself to do good, and one whose heart is inclined to do good! He doth not go to it like a bear to the stake, but with a native willingness: he is inclined to think of good, inclined to talk of good and holy discourse; inclined to pray, to exercise himself to godliness: the Lord hath put a new nature in him, and he feeleth an internal mover, or an inward impression that moveth him: this is life, but it is little regarded. Many have a show, but life cannot be painted; otherwise a handsome picture of godliness men may keep up.

But what are the reasons of this?

1. Negligence. They are loath to be at the pains to get grace, to be at the expense of brokenness of heart, and that humble waiting and earnest praying that it will cost us. A form is easily gotten and

maintained: painted fire needs no fuel to keep it in; vanishing affections are soon stirred. A little remorse in a prayer or delight in a sermon they may have; but it will cost us labour and diligence to have the heart strongly bent towards God: Prov. 13:4, 'The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.' All excellent things have their incident difficulties, and nothing is gotten without diligence, labour, and serious mindfulness, That which is opposed to common grace is casting off slothfulness, and a diligence to keep some 'full assurance of hope to the end,' Heb. 6:11, 12.

2. Inconsideration. They do not consider how they shall appear before Christ at the day of judgment. Therefore are they called 'foolish virgins,' because they did not foresee all events to provide against them; as if the spouse should come later. They thought this oil they had might suffice, or they should have opportunity to get more. Christianity is a business of consideration. When Christ had laid down the terms, he biddeth them 'sit down and count the charges,' Luke 14:28. A builder doth but lay the foundation of his shame in his cost, if he be not able to carry on the building; a war were better never be begun, if we have not means to maintain it. If you mean to build for heaven, to bid defiance against the devil, world and flesh, you must not rashly engage, but deliberately resolve. We must consider the quality of Christ's laws, what visible oppositions there are, that we may knowingly, all difficulties considered, put ourselves into his hands. There is an anxious and serious deliberation necessary; otherwise, to leap into profession slightly maketh way for apostasy, or else for such a cheap religion which costs nothing, and therefore is worth nothing.

3. Some unmortified corruption or indulged lust, which hindereth both the radication and prevalency of grace; the heart divided,

touched partly with God and partly with the creature, neither loosed nor unloosed, but between both, can never be sound and upright: James 1:8, 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' A man must purge himself from lusts before he be a vessel fit for God's use, 2 Tim. 2:20. There is some delight in lawful or unlawful things, that lieth between us and Christ, and is so near and dear to us, as to draw away the heart, at least in part, that the heavenly plantation cannot thrive and prosper in our souls, Luke 8:14. There is some unmortified root of bitterness: Jer. 4:3, 4, 'Sow not among thorns; plough up the fallow ground.' Till God be our scope, religion can never be our work. If the pleasing, enjoying, or glorifying him were more sincerely intended, other things would come on with more ease and success; as the water floweth of its own accord if the pipe be not leaky. If the honour of Christ, his glory, will, and command, lie nearest and closest to the heart, then sin would be more loathed than any other thing, more feared, more avoided, and we would follow our work more heartily. We are enlivened in the means, by an unfeigned regarding of the end; our carelessness cometh from this, that God is only minded as a matter by the by. The end and means always go together. If anything be prized more than God, or equal with him, or apart from him, a little grace and godliness will serve the turn. If God were entirely our end, we would be mainly for him, and most industrious to approve ourselves to him; if it be not so, something there is that causeth that neglect, that must be found out; something that cloggeth thy heart, and detaineth thee from this effectual pursuit; some lust, the gratifying of which is the delight and pleasure which contents us, and therefore are we cold and slight in religion.

4. Unbelief; for faith doth enliven all our notions of God, and Christ, and heaven, and the day of judgment, and maketh them effectual and powerful. The apostle telleth us, Heb. 11:1, 'That faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' It

puts a presence into things, and so affects us as if the things believed were before our eyes; otherwise, a man cannot see things at a distance, 2 Peter 1:9. Christ and eternity are afar off, hence to an unbeliever they seem little, and therefore, it is not made a business of the greatest weight or importance to seek after them. At the day of judgment how will wicked men stamp and tear their hair, when matters of faith become matters of sense, that they minded them no more! Oh! if I had known this, I should never have dreamed out my time as I have done, saith the convinced wretch, but made a more serious business of my preparation. If the day of judgment be too far off, let us lay the scene a little nearer. Suppose one of the damned souls now in torments, that feeleth that which he would never believe, thus crying out, Oh! had I thought my lazy desires and good meanings would have done me no more good, that my slothfulness would have ended so sadly, I would rather have wept out my eyes, and have filled the world with sorrowful complaints; I would have bereaved myself of sleep by night, and refused my bread by day, rather than to have wanted time to have thought of God, and the great affairs of my soul. If our faith be so short-sighted that we cannot look as far as the region of darkness, time may come in this world that we shall wish we had done more for God and our precious and immortal souls. First or last we bear witness to this truth, when the neglected soul cometh to be separated from the pampered flesh or over-prized body. If we would learn to shut the eye of sense, and open the eye of faith, we might see it now.

Use 2. Is to press you to get oil in your vessels, to be rooted and grounded in faith, settled in love, hope, zeal, temperance, and perfect what is lacking to, every grace. That you may be sensible what I exhort you to, I shall give you the sum of it by degrees.

1. Do not merely affect the reputation of good people, and rest there. As the Lord saith of the church of Sardis, Rev. 3:1, 'Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.' Do not rest in this, that you have a name to live. God judgeth not as man judgeth. Man judgeth according to outward appearance, but God judgeth according to the reality of the thing. Many have the name without the thing: Isa. 48:2, 'For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel;' that is, they get themselves a name to be his people, but they have not the thing itself. On the other side, we read of some 'that are Israelites indeed,' John 1:47. Some are only so in the show and outside, and some are 'disciples indeed,' John 8:31; so in reality; others are so in pretence only. There is no true ground of solid comfort but in, this, in being real disciples. So John 8:37, we read of some that were 'free indeed.' The Jews had the name of freemen, but were not 'free indeed;' stood upon their liberty; they were in bondage to no man. Some are religious indeed, humble indeed, fear God indeed: when a man hath gotten the thing, he may refer himself to God for the name.

2. Do not rest in a common work of grace. Look, as in the beasts there is some little tincture of reason, so in temporaries there is something that looks like saving grace, but is not; something that resembles it, and looketh most like it; yet it is but the shadow of grace, not true grace itself. Historical faith is the shadow of true saving faith. There are some outward lineaments of repentance in Ahab's humiliation, and Judas his compunction; of spiritual affection in Herod's delight in John; and 'the stony ground received the word with joy;' and some show of reformation there was in those that escaped the pollutions of the world. Therefore if you rest here, without a powerful and inward affecting of the whole heart, you may come short of glory. The grace of temporaries is good in its kind, but must not be rested in. It is good in its kind, it is like priming the post,

to make it receptive of other colours; it is an inchoate, imperfect thing. They are affected almost with the same feeling the godly are, come very near. How nice a point is that wherein the temporary and the real Christian differ! Both pray with sorrow, hear with joy, perform duties with some enlargement and sweetness—*Simili fere sensu afficiuntur*—yet, as two hills may seem very near at the top, when their bottoms are far distant one from another, so these operation may seem near together, when in bottom and root they much differ. These motions argue God's Spirit working on them, not dwelling in them. Actuated they are with the Spirit of Christ assisting, but not reforming; as an angel sometimes appears in an assumed body. But it is dangerous to rest in this; it maketh our sin and judgment the greater if after a taste we rest in a common work. Historical faith, if not growing into a saving sound faith, it is a kind of mocking of God, and a hypocrite's portion. As for instance, we profess to believe him omniscient, yet fear not to sin in his presence; omnipotent, yet cannot depend upon his all-sufficiency; to believe a day of judgment, yet make no preparation for our account, Titus 1:16. Men's sins and judgments are aggravated according to the sense they have had of religion, and so 'their latter end may be worse than their beginning,' 2 Peter 2:20. And sad it will be for those that from hopeful beginnings fall off from God. I will tell you, a man may live and die with a temporary faith and affections to God and holiness, without making any visible apostasy, and yet have no sound faith of the right constitution. Yea, if you regard what little rooting grace hath in men's hearts, how weak their pulse beateth this way, how strong their affections are to the world and the things thereof, how little they can vanquish the cares and fears of this world, and the temptations that arise from voluptuous living, it is to be feared the far greatest part of Christians are but temporaries.

3. Oh! then, be sure to get this truth of grace into your hearts. Let your hearts be effectually subdued to God; let there be a principle of life set up in them. Religion respects our principles as well as our performances: 2 Tim 1:5, 'The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.' There must be a renewed heart as the fountain, a well-informed conscience as our guide, and faith unfeigned as our great encouragement. And so all acts of charity to God and men are accepted with God as a piece of obedience done to him. If we will not regard the manner, God will not regard the matter. Oh! then, get this renewed heart, and a lively faith, and an awakened conscience: this is to get oil into your vessels, and if once you get this, it will never fail, but increase exceedingly, like the Sareptan's oil.

But how shall we get it?

I answer—(1.) You have this oil from Christ. The unction is from the Holy One, 1 John 2:20. As the precious oil was first poured on Aaron's head, and then came down to the skirts of his garment, so Christ is first possessed of the Spirit, and then we have it by our union with him: John 1:16, 'Of his fulness we receive grace for grace.' We must go to the fountain every day to seek new supplies. Christ was 'anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.' Zech. 4, Christ is represented by the bowl and the two olive-trees that always poured forth golden oil. Christ as mediator is the storehouse of the church, who is instructed with all gifts and graces for our benefit. Oh! bring your empty vessels to this golden olive-tree. The widow only brought casks, the oil failed not till the vessels failed.

(2.) If you would have it from Christ, you must use the means of grace, the word, prayer, sacraments, meditation. We need continual supplies, must use continual prayers, seek the grace of the Spirit to

keep in our lamps, Luke 11:13. So the word; God droppeth in something to the soul that waiteth on him: Mark 4:24, 'Take heed how you hear; for with what measure ye mete it shall he measured to you again.' If we be earnest and diligent in waiting upon God, God will abound to us in blessing his word to us. So for meditation; Mat. 13:19, the highway ground did not bring the word to their minds again; doth not revolve it, mindeth it not, heedeth it not. So for the Lord's supper; it is a means to root us in the love of God when we so often renew our oath of allegiance to him, to excite our faith in Christ. All these are a price put into our hands to get oil in our lamps, and prepare for his coming.

(3.) Keep your vessels clean. The Spirit dwelleth not but in a clean heart: doves build not their habitations on dunghills. He cometh as an efficient cause, as a Spirit assisting, before he comes as a Spirit inhabiting, and purifieth our hearts by faith.

(4.) After you have gotten this oil, cherish it, that it may not decay. Of its own nature it would do so; witness that stock of original righteousness which Adam had. God's promise by which it is secured supposeth our endeavours to waste it: Luke 8:18, 'Whosoever hath, to him shall be given; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.'

(5.) Do not only cherish, and keep it from decay, but see that you increase it: 2 Peter 1:5, 'Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge;' 1 Thes. 3:10, 'Perfect what is lacking;' 1 Thes. 4:1, 'That as you have received of us how you ought to walk, and please God, so you should abound therein.' A little faith will be as no faith; not honourable to God, nor comfortable to you, nor useful to others. All our doubts, perplexities, uncertainties, come from the smallness of our graces. It will not make an evidence, therefore give diligence. No

endeavour, labour, pursuit after God, but hath its recompense; not an earnest thought, an earnest prayer, or time spent. What shall I say? They whose hearts are upon the ways thereof, go on 'from strength to strength.' You are almost at home; nearer than when you first believed; then you thought all your pains too much, now all too little.

Let me apply all to the sacrament.

1. There we come to meet the bridegroom in a way of grace. The marriage covenant between God incarnate and his espoused ones is here celebrated and solemnised. The sacrament is a transfiguration of the last marriage-supper, to ascertain us what entertainment we shall have at the day of judgment, when the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall be made ready, and clothed with fine linen, Rev. 19:23, and then be received into the nuptial feast: 'Blessed are they that are tailed to the marriage-supper of the Lamb.' All is now prepared in this duty.

2. In some respect there should be as serious preparation for the one as for the other, as we would prepare to die, or prepare to meet Christ the judge. Christ did not wash his disciples' feet when he took them with him to Tabor, to his transfiguration, but when he took them with him at his last supper, John 13:7. Surely, to rush upon the presence of the bridegroom with a perfunctory, careless, common frame of spirit, is a dangerous thing. When a people come hand-over-head, prepare themselves slightly, pray slightly before they come, and live carelessly and negligently, they slight the bridegroom, and wrong themselves, strengthen themselves in sin, rather than against it. Methinks it looks like going to the day of judgment. Here we receive the pledges of our salvation or damnation.

3. We should come with oil in our vessels as well as in our lamps.

[1.] Our lamps should be kept burning bright. If you are sluggish now, it is a sign you are slight in the whole. Surely, now the king sitteth at his table, Cant. 1:2, our spikenard should send forth the smell thereof; a lively exercise of grace. Now we come for meat which perisheth not; now is our familiar converse with Christ, and near communion with him; now we come to our legal investiture; Christ and all his benefits are delivered by these signs which he hath instituted. As if a man should say, Here is my house, when a deed is delivered, and you give up the key, or give possession of land by a turf: this is our solemn taking possession of him and all his benefits. We receive Christ in the promises of the covenant, but here is a particular close application. In the word Christ is offered, and exposed to all, as the brazen serpent, that whoever looked upon him might be healed; but this supper is like the blood sprinkled upon the door-posts. In the work, Christ and immortality are brought to light. Now Christ is slain before our eyes; the bread is put into our hands and mouths.

[2.] We should come with oil in our vessels. Would we have the Spirit blow upon a dead coal? He findeth nothing in us to work upon. We are bidden to examine; and what must we examine? 1 Cor. 11:28. The apostle will tell you: 'Whether you be in the faith or no,' 2 Cor. 13:5. But to speak to this case: I confess, that in foro ecclesiæ, in the court of the church, all are virgins that take their lamps, that do profess to believe; all these must be admitted; but in foro cœli, in the court of heaven, none but converted ones are admitted; but in foro conscientiæ, in the court of conscience, I dare not discourage those that have the grace of the second or third ground. It is a means to strengthen them in faith, hope, and love, and make them more firm in the covenant of God; and the difference is too nice between temporary grace and saving grace for any to exclude themselves. I am bound to come with grace, but I am not bound to come with

assurance. Besides, in the kingdom of grace Christ will not shut them out. They that have good affections should come, but with this caution: I would press them to mind the renouncing and engaging part of the covenant, and earnestly to break the league between themselves and their own ways, and engage themselves more firmly to God for time to come; that you may not think as you have done, or speak as you have done, nor behave yourselves in your relations as you have done; but throw sin out of doors. I would press you in the apostle's words, Heb. 10:22, 'Let us draw near with a true heart, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with clean water.' The one relateth to the duty part. 'Let us draw nigh with a true heart;' the other relateth to the promissory part. Though your grace be common grace, it is this way moulded into special.

Doct. 2. That this will be found to be true wisdom, and the other folly.

For wisdom, to begin with that. Wisdom is *index sui et obliqui*. Wisdom lieth—

1. In proposing a right end.
2. In the choice of fit means.
3. In an earnest prosecution of the end by these means. This is the property of wisdom in the general, and it holdeth true in godly wisdom. The wise virgins did so. Their end was right; to be admitted into the nuptial feast, or everlasting enjoyment of God. And then they use right means, such as will bring them to the end. We do not use to draw ships in the sea with horses, nor draw waggons with the wind. We must not use contrary means, nor insufficient means. We cannot go to the bottom of a well that is thirty foot deep with a line

that is but ten foot. We must use such as will certainly do. The wisdom of God hath fixed means for us, and we are doubly fools if we will not use them opportunely, carefully and constantly; else it is a 'price put into a fool's hand,' Prov. 16:17. The wise virgins did all this; sought oil in time both for their lamps and vessels, Luke 13:24. On the contrary, he that contents himself with a profession of Christ, without a work of grace upon his heart, is a fool; he is not a profane fool that doth the contrary, but a professing fool; that sort of profession is better than profaneness, so far it is a degree of wisdom; but rested in it is folly, it faileth in all the points of wisdom in the end. They do not esteem the Lord as the chief good, for they think a little ease of the flesh, or a little sensual liberty, or a satisfaction of a lust, to be better; or honour, or pleasure, or gain; this quiets them in the neglect or want of God. They see some good in Christ, offer fair for him, but take him not as the chiefest good; they are willing to part with something, but not with all for his sake.

SERMON IV

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.—
MAT. 25:5

WE have seen wherein they differed, now we shall see again wherein they agree. In the words observe—

1. What happened to the virgins, they all slumbered and slept.
2. The occasion of it (I do not say the cause), while the bridegroom tarried. The cause of sleeping was infirmitas humana; the occasion of it, mora sponsi. In the first of these—

[1.] Who? they all.

[2.] What? slumbered and slept.

First, Who? they all. It is no wonder to hear it of the foolish virgins, but that the wise should do it, there is the difficulty; therefore some of the ancients understand it of death, which is called sleep in scripture; but that is improbable, and suiteth not with the frame and drift of this parable. Some would understand it distributively, not conjunctively; that the wise slumbered, and the foolish slept; but it is not said slumbered or slept, but slumbered and slept. The meaning is, all of them were not so diligent in their duty as they should have been: even the good are in part negligent as well as the foolish, though they always keep a good conscience, and a heart in some measure always prepared to meet Christ.

Secondly, What? slumbered and slept; wherein the degree of their security is set forth. They did not only slumber, which is a less failing, but slept.

Thirdly, The order, first slumbered, and then slept.

Doct. That the foolish and wise both slumber and sleep.

I shall first inquire, What this slumbering and sleeping is.

Secondly, How far it may befall the children of God, or the wise virgins.

Thirdly, The causes and reasons of it.

First, What this slumbering and sleeping is. It is twofold—that of the body, and that of the mind. That of the body, when the senses cease for a time to do their office; that of the mind is a secure state of soul, and that is twofold—moral and spiritual.

1. Moral. When reason and natural knowledge is as it were asleep and useless to us, a man doth not act as a reasonable creature: Ps. 94:8, 'O ye brutish among the people, when will ye be wise?' and Ps. 22:27, 'All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord;' Ps. 119:59, 'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.' If men did improve common principles, show themselves men, they could not continue in that course of life wherein they allow themselves. In part this sleep of reason may befall the children of God: they do not consider nor turn their minds to their affairs, nor act as men whose eyes are open.

2. Spiritual sleeping. Here I shall show the nature and effects of it.

[1.] The nature of it; when graces are not lively and kept in exercise. I shall instance in those three theological graces, faith, hope, and love; a weak dead faith, a feeble sleepy love, a cold and careless hope.

(1.) A weak and dead faith, that consists more in a form of knowledge than a lively assent to the truths of godliness. A dead opinionative belief may stand with a carnal life: James 2:20, 'Faith without works is dead.' The word of God is come to them in word only, not in power; it puts no life into what we do believe, 1 Thes. 2:13; doth not work effectually. This will fit the slumbering and sleeping of the foolish virgins. But alas! the wise have their drowsy fits; the truths of the word concerning God, Christ, heaven, and hell, have not such a lively influence upon them, by the blandishments of worldly prosperity. Faith is fallen asleep, ready to give place to the flesh, and they are governed more by fancy and appetite than by the heavenly mind; there is no consideration of the vanity of earthly things; the heart is kept strange to God and heaven, and the soul is taken up with carnal projects more than it should be.

(2.) A feeble sleepy love, which doth not level and direct our actions to the great end of them, which is the pleasing and glorifying of God, so that they live too much to themselves. Love in vigour doth overrule us to live unto God: 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 'For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again.' And this keepeth us more sincere and uniform in our course, always tending to the great end.

(3.) A cold and careless hope, when there is not that earnest and desirous expectation of blessedness to come which doth fortify us against the allurements of sense: Mat. 6:19–21, 'Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal; for where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also.' They do not mind their true treasure.

[2.] The effects of this sleepiness are seen in these things:—

(1.) In some intermission of their care and caution. Watching is a diligent taking heed to ourselves and ways, so as we keep ourselves from sin. We are in constant danger of sins that come on us by insensible degrees: Ps. 39:1, 'I said I would take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.' The best are surprised, and corruption often breaketh out. We may say of them, as Christ of the damsel, They are not dead, but sleep. The children of God are sometimes overtaken by their inadvertency, Gal. 6:1, or overborne by the violence of temptations, James 1:14, inconsiderately and suddenly surprised with sin. So subtle and assiduous is Satan in tempting, and

so ready is corruption to close with the temptation as soon as it is represented, that if a child of God doth but abate anything of his circumspection and diligence, he will be surprised by some one sin or other, and thereby be brought to dishonour God, and so lay a stumbling-block before others. Besides those sins of daily incursion and sudden surreption, Satan lieth in wait to draw us to greater offences, that may dishonour God and wound our peace, and scandalise the world against our profession.

(2.) Some abatement of our zeal and fervency. We are not always fervent in spirit, and do not keep up our life and seriousness in the duties of holiness. Our graces are not actuated and kept in exercise, but suffer some decay, though they be not quite dead. Faith is weak, love is cold, Mat. 24:12. There is not that lively hope, 1 Peter 1:3. Christians should not only be living, but lively: 1 Peter 2:5, 'Ye as living stones.' Nay, there may be so great a damp and quenching upon us, that there is no outward visible difference between a dead man and a dying Christian: all things in us may be ready to die: Rev. 3:2, 'Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die.' Life is even quite gone in some cases, when sin hath made fearful havoc in the conscience.

(3.) In forgetfulness or non-attendancy to the Lord's coming. When we live merrily, quietly, in a careless and unprepared estate; this is necessarily to be taken in as the cause of the two former. In the slumbering and sleeping of the foolish virgins the case is clear; Christ's absence or tarrying long is the occasion the world takes to grow secure and wicked. The scoffers walked after their own lusts, because they said, 'Where is the promise of his coming?' 2 Peter 3:3, 4. And in the degenerate church, the reason why they were given to sensuality, carnal pomp, and persecution, is set down, Mat. 24:49, 'My Lord delayeth his coming.' Therefore the officers of the church

smite their fellow-servants, and eat and drink with the drunken, encourage the wicked, and smite the godly with censures; as it was with the Israelites, there was no speech of making a calf when Moses first went up to the mount, but when he tarried long, Exod. 32, 'And as for this Moses, we wot not what is become of him;' then nothing would content them but making a calf. The ordinances and institutions of Christ had never been so perverted in the Christian world, but that they forgot Christ's coming to see how they have been observed: 1 Tim. 6:14, 'That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.' But now for the wise virgins. Alas! there is not such a constant waiting for the coming of the Lord; for if we did not leave off to think of it, surely we would walk more cautiously, and serve God with greater ardency and alacrity of spirit; but when we forget it, we let loose the reins, and slacken our diligence, and yield to the importunity of the flesh, and suffer ourselves to be distracted with worldly cares, or benumbed with fleshly delights, that we do not mind our duty of preparing for the Lord's coming.

Secondly, How far may this seize upon Christians? The question may be stated negatively and affirmatively; how far it may, and how far it may not.

1. Affirmatively.

[1.] It may seize upon them not only when they are young, but when they are of long standing. When they are young: Many a man newly converted, having had as yet no thorough experience of the strength of sin, the danger of temptations, and his own weakness, may bear a little too high upon the confidence of his own resolutions, which, because they are sincere, he thinketh they will easily obtain their effect. In this rank I put Peter, whilst as yet the Spirit was not poured

out, and was only under his Master's wing: I count him but a novice then, in comparison of what he was afterwards. He was so confident of his affection to Christ and resolution, that he had not a due sense of his danger, Mat. 26:33. But alas! how soon were his unpractised wings clipped, and he taken in the snare of the fowler! Honest Peter would not believe such weakness in himself; and so inexperienced Christians can hardly believe themselves to be so weak as a temptation showeth them to be; the more sincere their purpose is, the more confident they are in their own strength, even when near a fearful fall. So a man of long standing, being assured of salvation, may grow negligent; and supposing he hath grace, and is possessed of the love of God, presumes that he needeth not such diligence as when he was doubtful of his state; and if he go round in a course of duty, and avoid grosser sins, he may think it is enough, as if he were now past all danger, and so insensibly falleth asleep or into decay: Rev. 3:18, 'Because thou sayest that I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and eye-salve that thou mayest see.' It is not spoken to the gross carnal, or to beginners, or persons unacquainted with Christ, but to lukewarm professors, after the first labours of regeneration, and the difficulties of reconciliation with God are passed over, and the terrors of the law well vanquished, and some peace and confidence gotten; then we are in danger of security, by which means all may run to waste in the soul, and sins break out and make our blindness and nakedness appear. The wise virgins slept not until their main work was in some measure over: and therefore a strange security and sleepiness is incident to us, and may befall not only the wicked, who scarce ever think of the world to come, being blinded with present things, but those that are good

have their drowsy fits, by which they remit of their zeal, and grow more dead, and are not so diligent in seeking occasions to do good.

[2.] When we are in greatest danger, and matters most concerning us are in hand, and God calleth most for our service, and so have most need to watch, then are we usually most secure; witness the disciples upon Mount Olivet, after many warnings given them by Christ, Mat. 26:41–45. Until Christ telleth them, 'Sleep on now;' that is, sleep if you can; it will not be long ere you are thoroughly awakened; so often are the saints slumbering and sleeping when most need to be awake, and misspend the time in sluggishness and carnal rest which is granted them to prepare themselves for trial. So Jonah 1:5, when a storm arises for his sake, though the winds blow, and the sea roar, and the mariners at their wits' end, yet Jonah was fast asleep. Those most guilty, and those whom the correction pointed at, are most secure under it. And Samson is asleep when the Philistines are ready to come upon him. Now, if ever, should men be awake. Now we are awakened by God's providence, and the estate of the Christian world round about us; now we should exercise all the grace and skill we can.

[3.] They may show their sleepiness in their public relations; as while the envious man sowed tares, the husbandmen were asleep, Mat. 13:25. Many times magistrates are asleep when abuses creep in and eat out the bowels of the commonwealth; and ministers are asleep while the kingdom of Christ is undermined; masters of families asleep while disorders creep into their houses. Magistrates are watchers as well as private Christians, Rom. 13:6, who sleep, and neglect the care of souls. But especially ministers are to watch over their people's souls, and should put forth their utmost care and diligence, Heb. 13:17.

[4.] It may befall them after some solemn service, 2 Chron. 35:20. After this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, then he falleth into that rash engagement against Pharaoh Necho, which cost him his life. Hezekiah after his reformation fell into pride and provocation of God, 2 Chron. 32. Many times when we have performed some good service to God, we take occasion to be more careless and secure. We think we are privileged by our former diligence: 'If the righteous trust in his righteousness, and commit iniquity,' Ezek. 33:13; that is, upon the presumption that he laid in a fore-merit. Our hearts will be seeking some unlawful liberty, and we intermit our watch upon such occasions.

2. Negatively. We must make the exceptions that are necessary.

[1.] Though the wise virgins may slumber and sleep, and there be an intermission of the acts of grace, yet no intercision of the habits of grace, or radical inclination to God. *Gradus remittitur, actus intermittitur, habitus non amittitur.* Some degrees may be remitted, acts intermitted, but the habit not extinguished; still the seed of God remaineth in them; love is the predominant habit. Sin doth not possess the heart instead of God, 1 John 2:15. The habitual bent of the soul is more for God than for the flesh or the world. However he fail in some individual actions, the scope and tenor of his life is for God and sincere obedience. There is life and sap at the root, though in the winter the trees be without leaves and blossoms: Cant. 5:2, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh.' There is faith, and hope, and love in their hearts all this while; the Spirit of God abideth in them, and keepeth alive his work: 2 Tim. 1:14, 'That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.' The Spirit remaineth in the saints, to maintain the habits of grace. Their choice of God for their portion remaineth unshaken. They have

chosen the better part, adhere to it, and have a general purpose to please God in all things.

[2.] A universal slumber is not usually incident to the saints. It is not the sleep of the whole man as to all goodness; it is not in all parts of the soul. If there be a remiss will, and dead affections, yet not a sleepy conscience; something that taketh God's part, as appeareth, because they are unsatisfied with this dull and drowsy estate.

[3.] They are more easily alarmed and roused up out of it than others that sleep the sleep of death. Their faith and love is soon awake again, and easily set a-work for God; there is somewhat to work upon. A true Christian riseth by unfeigned repentance, when his conscience hath but leisure, and helps to deliberate, and bethinks what he hath done; and so much the better resolveth and bethinketh himself against his sin for the time to come.

[4.] When they arise again, and repent, and do their first works, they are more earnest and fervent than they were before: as it were to make amends for their former languishing, and to redeem the time they have lost, they double their diligence.

Thirdly, I come to the reasons of this sleepiness.

1. There are two principles in the children of God—the flesh inclining to sleep, and the spirit to wake: Mat 26:41, 'The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak;' and therefore the degree of grace which the best attain unto in this life is mixed with imperfection. The guiding and commanding faculties do but imperfectly direct, and the inferior faculties imperfectly obey. It is the office of the understanding and the will to command, of the inferior faculties to obey. There is weakness in all of them; therefore it is said, James 3:2, 'In many things we offend all.' The understanding in many things is

but a blind guide; the will is but in part rectified, and so cannot exercise such a powerful command over our thoughts, passions, and senses.

2. Variety of outward occurrences, working upon the diversity of principles in us; as sometimes we are in a prosperous estate, sometimes in deep troubles; both may cause this deadness and drowsiness in us. Sometimes deep troubles make us 'weary of well-doing,' 2 Thes. 3:13. So Heb. 12:3, 'Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners, lest you be weary, and faint in your minds.' Now, as this weariness and heaviness causeth sleep in the body, so it doth in the soul. We are tired in God's service, and then our wheels are clogged. A man may be secure in trouble, but usually he is so in time of peace. Peace, wealth, and honour are often abused to spiritual drowsiness, and secure neglect of God: 'Ease slayeth the fool,' Prov. 1:32. We had need watch when Delilah spreads her lap for us, and the delights of the world open their bosom to us. Surfeiting with the abundance of worldly prosperity, we neglect the power of religion, and please ourselves with the form. David, enjoying peace and plenty, slew Uriah his friend, who in his adversity spared Saul his enemy; yea, his heart smote him but for the cutting off the lap of his garment. In the abundance of outward comforts we sit loose from God; therefore we have those cautions, Deut. 8 from ver. 7 to ver. 14.

3. Conversing with spiritual sluggards, that count it a high piece of wisdom not to be too forward. Irreligious company and example is a great matter, and hath a mighty force upon us; and though it doth not begin sin in the soul, it doth increase it, Isa. 6:6. Sin is by propagation, not by imitation; but yet the contagion of example is a great advantage to corruption. To be among warm, heavenly, mortified, self-denying Christians, is a great advantage in the spiritual life. There is a notable provocation and excitement in their

example. Saul among the prophets had his raptures, 1 Sam. 10:10; Heb. 10:24, 'Let us provoke one another to love and good works.' This begets a holy emulation who shall excel; but carnal company is a deadening thing. We are more susceptible of evil than good; we catch a disease from one another, but we do not get health one from another. By touching the unclean they became unclean, but he that was unclean was not purified by touching the clean. The conversations of the wicked have more power to corrupt than the good to provoke and excite to virtue. A man that would keep himself awake unto God, and mind the saving of his soul, must shake off evil company: Ps. 119:115. 'Depart from me, ye evil-doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God.' And by evil company I mean not only the profane, who bespeak their own hatred and detestation by their apparent odiousness, but the loose and careless. As we are to take heed that we be not allured to that which is evil, so that we be not deadened to that which is good. Neglect of God will keep us out of heaven as well as profaneness. We easily leaven one another with deadness and formality; frequent society with dead-hearted persons breedeth it, such whose conference is empty and unsavoury, and altogether of worldly things. Certainly our dulness and backwardness is such that we need the most powerful helps.

4. Another cause is a dead worship: *missa non mordet*. Christ compareth spiritual duties to new wine, Mat. 9, but the pharisaical feasts to taplash, or old unsavoury stuff that hath no spirits. Old bottles will endure that well enough. Nothing lulleth the soul asleep so much as a perfunctory worship, or sleepy devotions. Christ's ordinances are simple, but full of virtue; his institutions conscientiously observed will keep us awake: Ps. 119:93, 'I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me.' Use them much in faith and obedience, and graces will be preserved in us in a lively manner, and constant exercise: 1 Thes. 5:19, 20, 'Quench not

the Spirit; despise not prophesying.' If you would not quench the Spirit, you must not carelessly use the means of grace: 'The words of the wise are as goads to prick us forward' (Eccles. 12:10) in heaven's way. To stir us up to our duty, the Spirit of God sharpeneth and pointeth the word, that it may be as goads in our sides. When we are negligent, here is quickening. A dull ministry as well as a dull minister maketh us fall asleep.

5. Slumber is the cause of sleeping. Mark the order in the text: they first slumbered, and afterwards slept. One degree of carelessness makes way for another; and usually there is a lesser degree at first. Take heed of the beginnings of declinations. If we would avoid sleep, we must avoid slumber. No man becometh stark naught at the first step. One careless prayer maketh way for another. Give way to it now, and it will settle into an utter deadness at last. Men fear not the danger of little sins, and so are hardened under them, till they fall into greater. Small sins harden as well as great sins; it is hard to say which more. Indeed at first little sins seem to awaken compunction. The prick of a pin maketh a man start, but a heavy blow stunneth him. David, when he cut off the lap of Saul's garment, his heart smote him; but when he fell into adultery and blood, he was like one in a swoon. This is true; but then, on the other side, great sins are more apparent and liable to the notice of conscience; but we neglect small sins, and so inveterate custom groweth upon us, and we are insensibly hardened by a carelessness and constant neglect of those kind of sins; yea, sometimes more than by gross falls. A surfeit or violent distemper maketh us run to a physician; but when a disease groweth upon us by degrees, we have death in our bowels ere we know it. We take care to mend a great breach, but a leak unespied drowneth the ship. We have need always to stand upon our watch. Many great mischiefs would not ensue, if we took notice of the beginnings of those distempers which afterwards settle upon us.

6. The omission of holy duties, and the want of a constant serious exercise, induces a secure careless temper of spirit. Solomon telleth us, Prov. 19:15, 'Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep, and the idle soul shall suffer hunger.' Labour dispelleth the vapours, and scattereth them, but sloth and idleness maketh way for sleep. It is true in the soul. The renewed part hath need of a great deal of spiritual exercise to keep it awake; much prayer, much hearing, much fasting. The apostle saith, Rom. 12:11, 'Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' The way to be fervent in duties is to be frequent in them. Be much in action, and in the exercise of grace, that you may be kept fresh and lively. Wells are the sweeter for draining; so is the soul the more fresh and ready for every good work. In gifts, we see, if they be not traded with, they rust and decay, and fail; so in graces: 'To him that hath shall be given.' He that uses his gifts well shall find them increased. The right arm is bigger and stronger and fuller of spirits than the left, because more in use.

7. Grieving the Spirit causeth him to suspend his quickening influence, and then the soul is in a dead and drowsy estate. Though the children of God dare not quench the Spirit, yet they may grieve the Spirit, Eph. 4:30. The conscience of a renewed man, after it is wounded by gross sins, may be a dead and stupified conscience for a long time: witness David and Jonah.

8. Immoderate liberty in worldly things, as worldly cares and fleshly delights. Sobriety is necessary, or a sparing meddling with those worldly comforts that do mightily indispose us for the Christian warfare, 1 Peter 2:7; Luke 21:34, 'Take heed your hearts be not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness.' Look, as the multitude of gross vapours cast us into a sleep, so do these delights and cares stupify the soul: Ps. 119:37, 'Turn away mine eyes from

beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.' You will need quickening if you give way to vanity.

Use. Oh! take heed of this evil: Mark 13:26, 'Watch, lest the Lord cometh suddenly, and he find you sleeping.' Would you have Christ come and find you in this case?

1. Some are wholly in a state of spiritual sleep. To them the Lord speaketh, Eph. 5:14, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' And of such the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 15:3, 4. 'Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.' It is all reason, and more than time, that you should thoroughly rouse up yourselves from the condition of sin wherein you have gone. It is a shame such should be among Christians, such as snort still upon the bed of security, when the light of the gospel shineth round about them. Oh! when God calleth, 'Awake, and rise from the dead;' if not, God may punish you by your own sin. One of his heaviest judgments is a 'spirit of slumber, and deep sleep,' Rom. 11:8. And then what will the end of it be? You may sleep, but 'your damnation sleepeth not,' 2 Peter 2:3. Certainly we should commiserate the case of such, especially if they be related to us; and seek to awaken them from the sleep of sin, that they may be brought home to Christ. Oh! poor careless creatures! they fear not God, nor think of his wrath, nor make preparation to stand before the Son of man at his coming.

2. There are others apt to slumber now and then, though for the main they have 'chosen the better part.' To these the apostle speaks, 1 Thes. 5:6, 'Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.' There is great need. Our adversary watcheth; the devil is observing all our motions and postures; if we fall asleep, we are exposed as a prey to him. There are many that mind our spiritual

harm. If we had no enemy without, there is *hostis domesticus*, a bosom enemy; and we are prone as others to be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Therefore you may not sleep as do others. You have another spirit in you, and if you are God's children you have other obligations: Rom. 13:11, 'It is high time to awake out of sleep; for your salvation is nearer than when you first believed. When you first gave your names to Christ, you thought no labour too much, no pains too great. How vigilant and diligent then! and will you sleep now? Your course beginneth to draw to an end, and you are almost ready to set sail for the other world, that you may meet with Christ. Oh! now you have shaken off the sleep of sin, shake off the sleep of sloth too. Shall we be drowsy and cold at last?

First, I shall give you the signs of this sin.

Secondly, Motives against it.

Thirdly, Directions to avoid it.

First, The signs.

1. Senselessness, in not discerning and weighing the things that befall us, good or evil. An instance of the one we have, Hosea 7:8, 'For she did not know that I gave her corn and wine and oil.' The Lord is very liberal to us, yet little notice is taken of it. An instance of the other we have, Isa. 42:25, 'Yet he laid it not to heart.' In mercies we neither consider their author, nor their end, nor their cause. Their author: We are like swine, that eat the acorns, but never look up to the oak from whence they fall. It is said of the church, 'She hath dove's eyes;' they peck and look upward. We should see God in every mercy. A drowsy inattentive soul heedeth it not, but is swallowed up in present delights and enjoyments, and looketh no further. It is our privilege above the beasts to know the first cause. Other creatures

live upon God, but are not capable of knowing God. Idolatry and profaneness had never crept into the world if men had kept up the sense of God's bounty. Some never regard the end of mercies, which is to draw in our hearts to God; therefore called the 'cords of a man,' Hosea 6:4, being so many bonds and ties upon us: What honour hath been done to God for this and that mercy? I allude to that in Esther 6:3. See how David reasoneth, 2 Sam. 7:2, 'I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God within curtains.' When the heart is urging to duty upon this score: God hath been good to me, given me food and raiment, and plentiful provision for the comfort of this life; what have I done for God? Not only the impenitent abuse mercy, Rom. 2:4, but David lost his awe of God, because he had not a thankful sense of the mercies of God, 2 Sam. 12:7, 8. So for corrective providences. The body is a tender part with most men; though they are sensible of the smart of the lash, yet they do not consider the hand that striketh, nor the deserving procuring cause; they do not look upward nor inward; they do not see the hand of God in it: Isa. 26:11, 'When his hand is lifted up they will not see;' look upon it as a chance, 1 Sam. 6:4. Job had explicit thoughts of God: Job 1:21, 'The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken.' Nor the cause, Lam. 3:39, 'Wherefore doth a living man complain? a man for the punishment of his sins?' If sickness cometh, if a relation be taken away, if an estate blasted, a waking conscience looketh to the cause: 'For this cause many are sick, and many are fallen asleep,' 1 Cor. 11. We should see the mind of God in his rod. When the Israelites fled before the men of Ai, Joshua looketh out for the troubler. So the children of God search for the sin that is the cause of their trouble.

2. Stupid dulness and cold indifferency in heavenly things: their want of zeal and cheerfulness in holy duties; they go about them heavily: dull of hearing, Mat. 13:5; cold in prayer, when they should be fervent and effectual, James 5:6. In all things we show forth a

heartless formality. Grace is asleep in the soul, and thence cometh a sleepy profession, a sleepy hearing, a sleepy praying, a sleepy receiving. The word, that was wont to be as burning coals, leaveth no impression, Luke 24:32. Your whole converse with the living God is cold and dead-hearted. In such a condition a man heareth as if he heard not, and prayeth as if he prayed not, and receiveth as if he received not, and mourns for sin as if he mourned not, and rejoiceth in God as if he rejoiced not, looks after heaven and heavenly things as if he sought them not; and so brings little honour to God, and little profit and comfort to his own soul.

3. Tedious irksomeness in God's service. They grow weary of the ways of God: Mal. 1:13, 'Behold, what a weariness is it!' Amos 8:5, 'When will the new moons be over, and the sabbath past?' Shall God do so great things for us in Christ, and shall anything which God hath commanded be grievous to us? How unkind is this! Neither have we a hard master, nor hath he enjoined us tedious work, but all our duties have a sweetness in them: Micah 6:3, 'Do not my words do good?' You carry it so as if God did not deal well with his people, or were not easy to be served. His commands are not grievous, and his yoke is easy; trials sent by him not above measure, his corrections not above our deserving; therefore why should we snuff at his service? Weariness and repining at God's service is an ill sign. God loveth and requireth a willing people. This weariness, though it doth not make us wholly abandon God's service, yet it makes us slight it, and mind it no more than how to get it over any way. Oh! take heed, then, of growing weary of religion, and attending on the duties thereof; to look upon these as distractions, or matters by the by, or interruptions of the work we would be upon. They are led much by sense and carnality that esteem nothing but what yieldeth pleasure to the sense, or gratifieth the outward man.

4. Forgetfulness of changes, and vain dreams of worldly happiness. When we have a carnal pillow to rest upon, we fall asleep, Ps. 30:6, 7. A Christian should sit loose from all earthly things. There was leaven in the thank-offering. We should be content to dwell in booths as the Israelites: Ps. 39:5, 'Surely every man in his best estate is vanity.'

5. Carnal complacency. The peace and pleasure which you live upon is fetched more from the world than from God and heaven; and you live in quietness of mind, not so much from the belief of the love of God in Christ, and the hope of heaven, as because you feel yourselves well in your bodily estate, and live at ease and in prosperity in the world, and have something grateful to the flesh, Luke 12:19–21. Oh! that soul is in a dangerous condition, when the world is so pleasing and lovely to it, that it can take contentment and delight in it without God, or apart from God. To many worldly prosperity is so sweet, that it can keep them quiet under the guilt of wilful sins. When you have your heart's desire for a while, you can forget eternity, or bear those thoughts with security which otherwise would amaze your souls.

Secondly, Motives.

1. Your enemy watcheth; the devil is never asleep, 1 Peter 5:8; he observeth you in all postures, and watcheth all possible advantages against the children of God; and will not you stand upon your guard and look about you?

2. If you sleep you hazard yourselves to the whip, or God's severe correction, Hosea 5:15. God findeth out many times a very smart rod to whip lazy drowsy saints to their duty. He will not suffer grace to rust in his children. Your awakening will be sad. God sent a tempest after Jonah. Some sharp cross or other will fall upon us.

3. The eyes of many are upon us, and shall we be slumbering and sleeping? 1 Cor. 4:9, 'We are made a spectacle to the world, angels, and men.' Miscarriages will tend to God's dishonour.

4. When grace is asleep, sin breaketh loose. There is no sin but a man is exposed to in a secure estate: therefore the devil laboureth as much as he can to cast us into this temper. When David walked at ease on the top of his house, little did he know the evil of his own heart, and the danger of the temptation.

5. Every lesser indisposition, that hindereth any degree of communion with God, should be grievous to the children of God. If we do not take heed to the beginnings of sins, further mischief will ensue, when temptations are near, importunate, and constant. Little sticks set green ones on fire; when the thatch once taketh fire, it is hard to quench it; therefore we should not rest in such a temper.

6. Consider, God's eye is ever upon us, and beholdeth all our ways: Job 31:4, 'Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?' Shall we sleep when the great God looketh on us? How dreadful is his displeasure! There is no dallying with him.

Thirdly, Means.

1. Pray to God for his quickening Spirit, that he would stir us up to watchfulness. David is ever and anon crying out for quickening grace.

2. We should stir up ourselves. Much of this temper cometh upon us because of our own laziness, and ordinary indisposition: 2 Tim. 1:6, 'Stir up the gift of God that is in thee;' Isa. 64:6, 'There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.'

3. We should maintain a lively sense of Christ's appearing, Luke 12:35. This looking, and longing, and waiting keepeth the soul alive and awake: Heb. 9:28, 'To them that look for him;' Phil. 3:20, 'Whence we look for a Saviour.' Many may talk of that day, but do not look for it.

4. Keep these four fundamental radical graces lively and active in the soul—faith, fear, hope, and love. Faith presents things to us as they are, and puts them in being. Love constraineth us, 2 Cor. 5:14. Fear maketh God everywhere present; and hope worketh in us a desirous expectation of blessedness to come, and this keeps the soul awake.

5. Keep a sense of the love of God upon your hearts. When your drowsy fits are coming on you, say as they in Jer. 35:6, I dare not; my Father hath commanded me the contrary. Hath not God forbidden this? how can I rest in such a temper of soul?

6. Improve the death of Christ for the destroying this sleepy temper. The great design of Satan is to lull us asleep; now Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, 1 John 3:8. Now, shall we tie those knots the faster that Christ came to unloose, and tear open those wounds that Christ came to bind up and heal? Therefore let this evil frame of soul be far from you.

SERMON V

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.—MAT. 25:5, 6.

THERE is one clause in the former verse that remaineth undiscussed, 'The bridegroom tarried,' which I shall speak to in this

verse.

Where observe—

1. The time, at midnight.
2. The means of awakening the sleepy virgins, there was a cry made.
3. The matter of the cry, the unexpected coming of the bridegroom, behold, the bridegroom cometh.
4. An excitement to their duty, go ye out to meet him. Still the allusion is carried on to the matter from whence this parable is taken. There were virgins with the bridegroom, and virgins with the bride; and that the bridegroom might be received with esteem, and attended with all respect, some of them were to go before and raise the cry in season, to bring the virgins forth to meet him. So here, Christ sends a cry before him to admonish and exhort the church to prepare and meet him.

[1.] With respect to every particular soul, this cry is to be referred to the voice and importunity of them that are the children of the bride-chamber, or friends of the bridegroom, John 3:29; who all tell us that the Lord is at hand, 1 Peter 4:7; that he will shortly come, Heb. 10:37. And still the faithful ministers of the church do cry aloud, and call upon us to meet the bridegroom.

[2.] With respect to the general meeting of the church in one great rendezvous or congregation, it is meant of the trump of the archangel, spoken of in many places, which I shall quote by and by, calling us to come to judgment.

Doct. The bridegroom will certainly come, but at his own time; and then all shall be called upon to go forth to meet him.

I shall handle this point with respect to the circumstances of this parable.

1. I shall prove the certainty of his coming.
2. Speak of the tarrying of the bridegroom, or the delay of his coming.
3. His coming at midnight, or the uncertainty of the time when he will come.
4. The cry that is raised before his coming. Then I shall give every circumstance mentioned its due weight.

First, Of the certainty of his coming: it is needful to premise that, because the efficacy of the whole discourse dependeth upon it. Reason saith he may come, but faith saith he will come.

First, Reason saith he may come: It argueth—

1. From the nature of God. There is a God, and this God is just: it is agreeable to his general justice that it should be well with them that do well, and ill with them that do evil; these principles are out of dispute, and supposed as the foundations of all religion. Now, supposing these principles, there must be a day of reckoning, for in the world the best go to the wall many times, and are exercised with poverty, disgrace, and scorn, when the wicked are full of plenty, and live at ease, Luke 16:25; 1 Cor. 15:19. Sure it is that there is a God, and sure it is that he taketh care of human affairs, and will judge accordingly; what is the reason then of this disproportion? The wicked are reserved to future punishment, and the godly to future reward. Now the distinction that is put between men at death doth not suffice, for that is private, and doth not vindicate the justice of

God in the eyes of the world, and that is but upon a part. We read of the spirits of just men made perfect, and the spirits that are now in prison; but nothing of a reward for the body, or punishment for the body. The bodies of men, being servants of righteousness, or instruments of sin, surely ought to partake of weal or woe, of the curse or blessing that is due to the person; for the body is, as Tertullian saith, the soul's sister and co-heir, and is to share with it in its estate. But at death the body is senseless, and mouldereth into dust, and till it be raised up again and joined to the soul, it can neither partake of weal or woe; therefore there is a day when God will deal with the whole man; otherwise, how shall the goodness of God, who is a liberal rewarder of virtue, appear, unless he render to the body a full recompense of the service it hath done the soul, in yielding up all its natural appetites, pleasures, interests, and satisfactions to the conduct of reason and grace, for the practice of that which is good; or the justice of God, which is the avenger of sin, which would be too narrow and defective, unless it punish the body with the soul? Usually the affections of the body debauch the soul, and the pleasures of the senses blind and misguide our reason. Certainly, the love of sin being rooted in bodily pleasures, it is fit it should be punished with pain, and such pain as is proportionable to the dignity of him against whom the offence is committed. Now God being of an infinite and unlimited dignity and authority, how could the punishment of the body by death be proportionable to the offence committed against an infinite God? An outrage done to the supreme majesty of princes is punished more than an offence against an inferior person; therefore there must be a time when the body shall be raised, to be capable of such a punishment. Besides, how could the soul be completely happy, since it was made for a body, if it should always remain a widow, and never meet with its old mate again?

2. It argueth from the providence of God. There are many judgments that are pledges that God will at length judge the world for sin; as the drowning of the old world, the burning of Sodom, the destruction of Jerusalem; these are a document and proof what God will do to the rest of ungodly ones, for they are set forth as an ensample, Jude 7. The force of the argument lieth in this, that God is the same, still in one mind, who can turn him?. He hateth the sin of one as well as the other. In all his dispensations he is always consonant and like himself, Gal. 3:20. If he would not put up with the sins of the old world, he will not put off the iniquities of the new; if he punished Sodom, he will punish others that sin in like manner; for he is not grown more indulgent to sin than he was before. Therefore, if it be not now, there will be a time when he will call them to an account and reckoning. When man first sinned, God did not immediately execute the sentence against him, but gave him time of repentance till he died; and since he giveth every man time and space, he would not have all the world be born at once, and die at once, but to live in several successions of ages, from father to son in divers generations, till he cometh to the period which providence hath fixed. Now, as he reckoneth with every man particularly at death, so with all the world at the end of time. Particular judgments show that God is not asleep, nor unmindful of human affairs, but the general judgment is deferred till then.

3. From the feelings of conscience. After sin committed men tremble, though there be none to call them to an account, as when the sin is secret, and the person powerful. Conscience is under a dread of divine justice, and the solemn process and triumph which one day it must have; hence conscience is sensible: Rom. 2:8, Felix trembled when Paul reasoned of judgment to come, Acts 24:25. There are hidden fears in the conscience, which is soon revived and awakened by the thought of this day. Every guilty person is a prisoner to divine

justice, and being held in the invisible chains of conscience, standeth in dread of a great and general assize.

4. The conveniency of such a day.

[1.] To vindicate truth and honesty from the false judgment of the world. The best cause is often oppressed; there needeth a review of things by a higher court, that that which is good may be restored to its public honour, and evil may receive its proper shame. Christ will convince the world of his love to the saints, when he cometh 'to be admired in them,' 2 Thes. 1:10, and when their faith is 'found to praise and glory,' 1 Peter 1:7. Thus shall it be done to the men whom Christ will honour, proclaim their pardon, adorn them with grace, introduce them into their everlasting habitations, and this in the eyes of the scorning wicked; as that nobleman, 'Thine eyes shall see it, but not taste of it.' Then for their everlasting confusion, their crimes shall be repeated in the ears of all the world, and their false appearances shall be refuted.

[2.] That the counsels and courses of God's manifold wisdom and justice may be solemnly applauded. We now view providence by pieces; but then the whole context and coherence of it shall be set together, and the full history of all the world produced before the saints.

[3.] Such a coming is necessary, that God may fit us with all kind of arguments against sin, and so a restraint will be put upon the heart against it. Many times sin and wickedness is acted in secret: Eccles. 12:14, 'God will bring every work into the judgment, with every secret thought, whether it be good or evil;' and 1 Cor. 4:5, 'Christ will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart.' Many make no conscience of secret sins, and if they make conscience of acts, yet not of thoughts; yet according to

Christ's theology, malice is heart-murder, lustful inclinations heart-adultery, mind-imaginings are heart-idolatry. There may be a great deal of evil in a discontented thought against providence, Ps. 73:22. He that sinneth secretly is conscious to himself that he doth evil, and therefore seeketh a veil and covering. Men are unjust in secret, unclean in secret, envious in secret, declaim against God's children in secret, neglect duty in secret, sensual in secret, afraid that men should know it, yet not afraid of the great God. Man cannot damn us, man cannot fill our consciences with everlasting burnings. Now that we may be ashamed to commit those sins before God, the day of judgment is appointed to set these sins in order before us: Ps. 50:22, 'I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thee.'

Secondly, If it be doubtful to reason, it is sure to faith. Faith showeth he will come. The light of faith is more certain and more distinct. More certain, because it buildeth upon a divine testimony, which is more infallible than the guesses of reason, and yields us a more compendious way to confute atheism than our arguings, by which we are often entangled. It is so, for God hath said it. And it is more distinct. Nature could never find out the circumstances of that day; it only apprehendeth the coming of a judge; but by whom this judgment shall be managed, in what quality he shall come, as a bridegroom, and lord, and husband of the church, it knoweth nothing. In what manner he shall proceed, and with what company and attendance, all this we have from special revelation. Faith argueth—

1. From Christ's merit and purchase. Would he buy us at so dear a rate, and cast us off so lightly, as to come no more at us? Surely he that came to redeem us will come to save us; if he came to suffer, he will come to triumph. Faith seeing Christ upon the cross, determineth, I shall see him in the clouds. Would he be at all this

cost and preparation for nothing, and purchase what he never meant to possess? It cannot be. If he came from heaven upon the one errand, will he not come upon the other? Surely Christ will not lose all this pains he hath taken to purchase to himself a people.

2. Faith argueth from Christ's affection to us, which is very great. Christ is not gone in anger, but about business, to set all things at rights for the great espousals. He that wooeth a virgin, if he went away from her in anger, she might well suspect he would never see her again. As bridegrooms use to fetch their brides, so will Christ; we should never come at him otherwise: his love will not let him rest satisfied till we and he meet again to enjoy one another's company. Certainly he who delighted among the sons of men before the world was, Prov. 8:31, who delighted to converse with his people in human shape before his incarnation, who took pleasure to spend his time busily amongst them, and to 'dwell with them in the days of his flesh,' John 9:45; in short, he that had a mind of returning before he went way, certainly he will once more leave heaven for their sakes. When he hath done his work there, he will return, and bring his people along with him to glory, and the full fruition of the promises. He will stay no longer than our affairs do require, John 14:3.

3. The affections of his saints to him, which Christ will satisfy. There are many that never saw him, and yet believed in him, and loved him heartily: 1 Peter 1:8, 'In whom believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;' and John 20:29, 'Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen me, and yet have believed.' Their faith is not misplaced, they shall find him such a one as was to be believed, loved, and obeyed. Now, to gratify their desires, Christ will appear and show himself: 'With these eyes shall I see my redeemer.' The children of God cannot look to heaven, but they remember they have a Saviour to come from

thence: Phil. 3:20, 'For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' Paul speaketh in his own name, and in the name of all those like himself. And Rev. 22:17, 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come.' The Holy Ghost breedeth the desire, and the church answereth the motion. Nature saith not, Come, but, Stay still. If it might go by voices, whether Christ should come or no, would carnal men give their votes this way? The voice of corrupt nature is, Depart, Job 22:14. Carnal men are of the mind of the devil: 'Art thou come to torment us before our time?' Mat. 8. But the Spirit in the bride raiseth these desires. Now, would Christ disappoint these desires which he hath raised in the hearts of his children, and set them a-longing, and a-looking, and a-groaning for that which shall never be? It cannot be imagined.

4. From the constitution of the church. He hath dispensed gifts and graces there, and left ordinances there; and he will come, and require an account of things during his absence, how we have improved our talents, Mat. 25:31, how things have been managed in his house: 1 Tim. 6:14, 'Keep my commandments without rebuke, till the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ.' Christ is now removed from us, retired within the curtains of the heavens; but he will come again: 1 Cor. 16:22, 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema maranatha;' that is, cursed till the Lord come.

5. From his promise. We have his word in pawn. It is an ancient promise, made long ago: Jude 15, 'Behold the Lord cometh;' and hath been received in all ages by the Lord's messengers; Moses, and David, and Solomon, and Daniel, and Job, and Zechariah, and Malachi; and revived by Christ at his departure, John 14:3; by the angel, Acts 1:11. And the apostles everywhere put us in mind of Christ's coming. Now we may reason thus: *Fidelis Deus in omnibus, in ultimo non deficiet.* God hath ever stood to his word, many

intervenient providences, yet promises still accomplished; not one word of God hath failed. Every one that hath had experience of God may make that acknowledgment that Joshua did: Josh. 23:14, 'Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth, and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you.' As unlikely things have come to pass, that have been foretold in the word. Were the old believers deceived, that expected his coming in the flesh? Surely God never meant to deceive us. He will come again: 'If it were not so, I would have told you,' John 14:3. Christ's deed and performance never gave his word the lie.

6. His promise is solemnly confirmed—

[1.] By an outward sign and memorial: 2 Cor. 11:26, 'For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death until he come.' God knew he had to do with distrustful creatures, therefore left a monument to keep the promise a-foot in the church, and to revive our hopes. Would Christ institute an ordinance for the solemn remembrance of his appearing, if he meant no more to come at us?

[2.] By a real pledge, his Spirit dwelling in us. He is gone to heaven, to prepare heaven for us, and hath left his Spirit with us to prepare us for heaven. He hath left his Spirit in the church, and doth give out frequent tokens of love, to show that he doth not forget us. Christ and a believer are not strange. There is a constant intercourse between them. We are absent from him in the body, but there are frequent messages of love. We hear from him in the word, prayer, supper, and will he not come again that is so mindful of us at every turn? He did not forget us in his exaltation, as the butler forgot Joseph; when preferred at court, he did not remember Joseph in

prison. Now, in his Father's house, he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and will not always leave us liable to sinning and suffering. Surely he that quickeneth us by the influences of his grace, and refresheth us with the tastes of his love, he will come again. In short, what would our faith be worth if Christ would not come again? Here we have but a slender enjoyment of Christ; our full communion is when he taketh us to himself.

Secondly, I shall now speak of the tarrying of the bridegroom, 'While the bridegroom tarried.' What! is Christ more backward than the church, that goeth forth to meet him? They are ready with their lamps, but he delayeth his coming.

Ans. 1. Some understand it of our opinion, not the reality of the thing. Though Christ come always with the soonest, yet to us he seemeth to tarry. Why? Because earnest desires crave a present satisfaction, and 'hope deferred maketh the heart sick,' Prov. 13:12; and Prov. 10:26, 'As vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.' Expectation is in itself tedious, especially when accompanied with difficulties. Certainly being accompanied with present troubles, it is more tedious. The flesh groweth impatient after its own ease; and in this sense the bridegroom is not slack, but we are hasty. I do observe it the rather, because the same happeneth when we expect Christ to help us in our particular distresses. Because of the impatience of the flesh, and the levity of our minds, and the weariness of expectation, the time seemeth long. There is our time, and Christ's time. Our time is always with us, but his time is not come: Jer. 14:19, 'We looked for peace, and there is no good; for the time of healing, and behold trouble.' In this sense Christ only seemeth to delay his coming. We are eager upon enjoyment, we would have it now.

Ans. 2. Really. He doth tarry, and suspends his coming. There is a great efflux of time between his ascension and second coming, and that for wise reasons.

1. That all this while there may be space for the world to repent. *Mora sponsi pœnitentiœ tempus est*, saith Jerome: Rom. 2:4, 'Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?' There is *finis operis et operantis*. Whatever God's intentions be, his dealings, his forbearance and long-suffering should lead us to repentance. God useth great patience to the wicked: Rom. 9:22, 'Endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.' So Rev. 2:21, 'I gave her space to repent, and she repented not.' God giveth leave to repent, visible means to repent, and space to repent, even there where he giveth not effectual grace. Wicked men abuse his patience, take encouragement from thence to run into all extravagancy; but God's aim is to leave them without excuse.

2. That all the elect may be gathered: 2 Peter 3:9, 'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' God would have the world filled with mankind, and endure for many generations, till it come to that period which his providence hath appointed. And what is that period? Till all that belong to the election of his grace be brought in to him; for all things are for the elect's sake. Now when his number is full, he will come. These were not to be born all at once; and it requireth time and pains to work upon each elect soul after they are come into the world: therefore 'he is not slack as men are slack.' Men's slowness in performing their promises cometh from their unwillingness, or backwardness to do the thing; or from impotency

and weakness, or want of foresight of all possible difficulties; or else from their forgetfulness. None of these are in God: not forgetfulness; for 'he is mindful of his people,' Ps. 111:5. He will not stay longer than the appointed time. Not backwardness; for he waiteth, as well as you wait, for the fittest time, Isa. 30:18. Not from weariness; for he can do whatever he will.

3. To exercise our patience to the full: Col. 1:24, 'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you; that fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in the flesh for his body's sake, which is his church.' Not as if Christ's personal sufferings for the redemption of sinners were imperfect, and so to be supplied by the sufferings of others: no; it is meant of Christ mystical. So the sufferings are not perfect, or filled up, till every member of his body endure their allotted portion and share. This cup goeth by course, and round: Christ first, we next. It goeth from hand to hand, while the world continueth: James 1:4, 'Let patience have its perfect work.' That cannot be but under great and long troubles. And as it is for the exercise of our patience, so to awaken our desires: 2 Peter 3:12, 'Looking for and hastening to the coming of the day of God.' Hasten it by your prayers, and further the great works that are to be done before. God will not bestow heaven upon us as we lay on gilding and fair colours on wood or stone, that have no sense of it, nor desire of it; but we must first groan, Rom. 8:23.

Thirdly, His coming at midnight. He tarried somewhat beyond the season, to show that he would come unlooked for. Jerome saith it was an ancient tradition that Christ should come at midnight; and therefore in the vigil, or watch before Easter, anciently they were not wont to be sent away till midnight: 'But of that day and hour knoweth no man.' It is put for an unexpected time; as Zech. 13:9, 'At evening it shall be light.' Christ cometh when he is least expected,

when the world groweth secure, and his own people weary with looking. His coming is often compared in scripture to the coming of a thief in the night: 1 Thes. 5:2, 'For ye yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night;' by way of surprise; the thief doth not make appointment, nor forewarn the good man of the house: Luke 12:46, 'The Lord of those servants shall come in a day that he looketh not for him.' Now God hideth this day from us.

1. To show his sovereignty: Prov. 25:2, 'The glory of God is to conceal a thing.' There are arcana imperii: and the time and season of his coming to judgment is one of God's secrets.

2. That we might always keep ready: Rev. 3:3, 'Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief; and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee;' and Rev. 16:15, 'Behold I come as a thief; blessed is he that watcheth.' Cæsar would never let his soldiers know his resolution for battle onset, or the removal of his camp, *ut paratum et intentum momentis omnibus quo vellet statim educeret*, that they might be always in a ready posture. So Christ's coming at the last day will be by way of surprisal, that he may have us always ready. Had it been expedient for us to know, he would have told us of it. Men will say, if they knew just the hour and the day, they would be found praying. But you should always watch and be ready, because you 'know not the hour.' Would our preparation be hastened, think you? No; we should say as they, Isa. 22:13, 'And behold joy and gladness, slaying of oxen, and killing of sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine. Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die;' and 1 Cor. 15:32, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die.' Therefore Christ will choose his own time.

Fourthly, I come to speak of the cry made. The cry is the means whereby God rouseth them up out of this slumber. Christ sendeth his cry to awaken souls before his coming. This cry is twofold:—

1. The more remote cry; which is for the rousing of particular persons in all ages; and that is the voice of the ministry of the word. Thus Christ at his first coming had a crier went before him to alarm the world, and prepare them for his reception; and that was John the Baptist: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness.' So still before his second coming he hath some to raise a cry. The cry of the word is often spoken of in scripture: Prov. 1:24, 'I cried to them, and they would not hear.' So Isa. 58:1, 'Cry aloud, lift up thy voice like a trumpet.' And it is the great means to awaken us out of our security. All God's faithful servants in all ages have been crying, 'The Lord is at hand.' Our work is to rouse up the hearts of men, that they may be prepared more and more for the joyful receiving of Christ at his coming. We should not keep silence, nor deal sleepily. It is a convincing powerful word that is a cry; and it is your duty to be awakened by the cry. If this word be not entertained, he hath his rod: Ps. 2:5, 'Then shall he speak to them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.' So Micah 6:9, 'The voice of the Lord crieth unto the city; and the man of wisdom shall see thy name. Hear ye the rod, and him that hath appointed it.' We shall hear the voice of the rough teacher. The word crieth; and if the word be not heard, the rod crieth. We need all kinds of excitations to rouse us out of our careless walking, and heartless praying, and negligent sleepy thoughts; that we may think more seriously of the coming of the bridegroom.

2. There is a more immediate and general cry, for rousing and raising up all at once; and that is the trump of the archangel, spoken of in many places: John 5:28, 29, 'The dead in their graves shall hear his voice, and come forth, some to the resurrection of life, and some to

the resurrection of damnation.' The means employed in the resurrection is the voice of Christ Jesus, who shall 'descend with a shout,' 1 Thes. 4:16, and with the 'sound of a trumpet' sounded by angels: Mat. 24:31, 'He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet.' So 1 Cor. 15:52, 'The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised.' Christ, that had a forerunner at his first coming, hath also at his second. This trumpet soundeth to summon all to appear before Christ's tribunal to be judged. There was an audible trumpet at the giving of the law, Exod. 19:20. This sound shall be heard all the world over.

Use 1. Let us improve this to the particular use of Christ's coming, either in a way of mercy to his people, or in a way of judgment.

1. In a way of mercy. The Lord tarrieth sometimes when men think he should come sooner: John 11:6, Jesus loved Lazarus; and he abode still two days in the same place that he was when he heard that he was sick. Let there be no misconstruction. It is not want of love, nor want of power: he could raise him up when he was ready to stink. He may delay our help till a fit time come, wherein his glory may shine forth, and the mercy be more conspicuous. To come late is many times the best time. God keepeth back his best blessings for a while; and detaineth them long in his own hands before they come unto us. Therefore wait his leisure. Expectation is tedious, and reckoneth every minute. Strong desires are importunate; and usually we go by an ill count: not by eternity, but time. The timing of all things is in God's hand; not left to our foolish fancies, but his wise ordering. The dial some times goeth before the sun; so doth our time before God's time. We would make short work for faith and patience; and so our graces would not be found to praise and honour. In all such cases let us remember—

[1.] The Lord hath chosen the fittest time, Eccles. 3:11; it will not come one jot too soon, or too late; but the fittest time for him to give and us to receive.

[2.] God is very precise in keeping his time: Exod. 12:41, 42, 'And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day it came to pass, that all the host of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord, for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.'

[3.] God stayeth for us, rather than we for him. Christ will come before we are ready. The great let of mercy was, the people's hearts were not prepared.

[4.] Every delay will bring some advantage. There is somewhat more of ourselves, and somewhat more of God to be discovered: some intervening experience that is worth the having, before full and final deliverance cometh, Isa. 40:31; Ps. 138:39.

2. In a way of judgment. Sometimes Christ raiseth the cry, and giveth notice of great changes. It concerneth us to take notice of this voice, that we may not be taken unprovided: Amos 4:12, 'Thus will I do unto thee; prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.' When God threateneth, we had need make serious preparation how we shall prevent or bear the stroke of an angry God. It is good counsel: Luke 14:31, 32, 'When a king goeth to war against another king, he sitteth down and considereth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand. Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassador, and desireth terms of peace.' There needs in such cases serious

preparation. The work will be the more difficult when the storm is broken out upon you.

Use 2. We may improve this as to his coming to us by death, or rather our coming to him. The end of time and all things in it are near to every particular person. Christ and we are to meet shortly; it should be our care to meet him by true and serious repentance, that we may meet him with joy. We are frail creatures, and within a very little while death will summon us to appear before the Lord; and when you die, you are speedily to come to your trial. Now are all things ready?

1. Is Christ your bridegroom? Was there ever a solemn covenant struck between you and him, as Hosea 3:3, by renouncing all other husbands, and giving up yourselves to do his will?

2. Are your lamps burning, your graces kept in exercise, and shining forth to the Lord's glory? Are you in a constant and continual readiness to have immediate communion with Christ, or to set sail into the world to come? It should be a cheerful thing to you to depart hence, Phil. 1:23.

3. Have you oil in your vessels; such a deep and powerful work as will keep up this affection? Are these things in you, and 'abound in you'? 2 Peter 1:8–11. What hast thou that others have not, that shall never see God's face? Can you say as Christ, John 17:4, 'I have glorified thee upon earth; I have finished the work thou hast given me to do'? Have you been adding one grace to another, so that now you have nothing to do but to wait for the crowning of all?

Use 3. We should improve it as to Christ's general coming. If it be so that the bridegroom will certainly come, but at his own time—

1. Then be not of the number of those scoffers and mockers that either deny or doubt of his coming. The most part of men expect no such matter; the profane scoff at it, and would fain shake off this bridle and restraint upon their lusts, 2 Peter 3:3. Therefore take heed of the whispers of atheism, which would tempt us to turn unto the world and present things, and give over our hopes. Most men's faith about the eternal recompenses is but pretended, at best but too cold and speculative; an opinion rather than a sound belief, as appeareth by the little fruit and effect it hath upon them; for if we had such a belief of them as we have of other things, we should be 'other manner of persons, in all holy conversation and godliness.' Two things are to be wondered at, viz., that any man should doubt of the Christian faith that is acquainted with it; and that, having embraced it, should live sinfully and carelessly. Therefore believe it as if you saw it: Rev. 20:12, 'I saw the dead,' &c.

2. Take heed of apprehending it as a thing afar off; look upon it as sure and near, to hasten your preparation. It cannot be long to the end of time, if we compare the remainder with what is past, and the whole with eternity: Ps. 90:4, 'A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.' Alas! it is nothing to the true measure of things: 'He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.' Therefore we should have more quick and lively thoughts and apprehensions about it, such as will awaken us out of our security.

3. Take heed of a cold and ineffectual thinking of it. There is a certain time appointed, and when that appointed time is come, he will certainly appear; therefore look for it and long for it. The saints are described by their looking for it: Titus 2:13, 'Looking for the blessed hope;' Phil. 3:20, 'From whence we look for a Saviour;' and Heb. 9:28. Actual expectation enliveneth all our actions. Rebecca espied Isaac a great way off. Faith and hope standeth ready to embrace him.

And also by their longing for it, 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 22:17, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.' Long for it for Christ's sake, and your own sakes. For Christ's sake: His interest is concerned in it, that the glory of his person may be cleared. His first coming was obscure; but now he will come in great splendour, accompanied with his holy hosts, ten thousands of saints and angels: 1 Peter 4:13, 'That when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad with exceeding joy.' His justice will then be demonstrated: Acts 17:31, 'He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness;' and 2 Thes. 1:6, 7, 'It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you that are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed with his mighty angels.' And long for it for your own sake; it is a day of the manifestation of the sons of God, Rom. 8:19. Then you shall receive your reward to the full: 1 Peter 1:13, 'Hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.' Then is the fullest manifestation of the love of God. Now we are pressed with the remainders of corruption within, and temptations and persecutions without: wait for his coming. The people tarried without for the high priest, till he came forth to bless them: so must we look for his return when he will come to bless us.

SERMON VI

Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.—MAT. 25:7, 8

THE meaning of this part of the parable is, that the virgins being roused by the cry made, went to trim their lamps and fit themselves for their march; while they were so doing, some of them had oil left; but others had spent all their store, and their lamps were going, or had gone out. Three things are remarkable in these parabolical expressions:—

1. That which is common to them all, 'All those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps;' which must be differently interpreted of the wise and the foolish. The arising and trimming their lamps noteth in the wise their actual preparation for the Lord's coming; in the foolish, it noteth the strength of their confidence and self-conceit. The foolish think they are as prepared and ready for Christ's coming as the wise; they arise and address themselves to meet the bridegroom.

2. On the part of the foolish, they found their oil spent.

3. That they go to the wise for a supply: 'Give us of your oil.'

First, The effect of the cry that is common to them all, 'They arose and trimmed their lamps.' Which is first to be considered on the wise virgins' part, and so it will teach us this note:—

Doct. That the faithful, as often as they think of the coming of the Lord, should more rouse up themselves, and prepare themselves to meet him with joy and comfort.

For the trimming of the lamps, on their part it noteth the rousing up of themselves out of their negligence and security, and a serious preparation for his coming. To evidence this to you, we shall consider

1. How the scripture presseth this upon us.
2. What reasons there are in the thing itself to awaken us to this serious preparation.

First, How the scripture presseth this upon us. In the word of God we have not only the doctrine of Christ's coming to judgment, but the uses and inferences built thereupon. I shall instance in two places in one chapter, 2 Peter 3:11 and 14.

Ver. 11, 'What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?' Where observe—

1. That it is not enough to believe the doctrine of Christ's coming, but we must improve it to the use of holy living. The improvement is pressed in scripture, as well as the doctrine is revealed. In God's account no faith will go for faith, but the working faith; all else is but opinion and cold speculation; whatever truths we believe, we must bring forth to practice. Therefore if we believe steadfastly, we must live accordingly; live as men that look for such things. A bare apprehension or assent to the truth is nothing worth, unless it be accompanied with that care and diligence which belongeth to the truth so apprehended. The Christian religion consisteth not in word, but in deed; and our belief of it is not tried by a speculative assent, especially in the absence of temptations, but by a constant and diligent practice of those duties whereunto this belief bindeth us. So that they do not truly and savingly believe such things who are not seriously and constantly diligent in the spiritual life. I cannot say that an assent separate from practice is no faith, but it is no saving faith; it is such a faith as the devils may have, who know there is a God, and a Christ, and a world to come; they believe it and fear it. So may carnal men believe it so far as to stir up bondage and legal fears in their hearts; but while they improve it not, and prepare not for their

everlasting estate, their faith is ineffectual to salvation. True faith is tried rather by living than by talking: 1 John 2:4, 'He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' There is a difference between an untruth and a lie. Now where the actions do not correspond to the profession, that profession is not only an untruth but a lie. There is a denying in word as well as works, Titus 1:16. Many profess and believe as Christians, but live as atheists. It is not notions, but affections, living rather than talking, that will demonstrate true faith. Now the paucity of serious walkers showeth the paucity of true believers.

2. In this improvement there is an appeal to conscience; for here is a question put to our own hearts, let reason and conscience speak: After the serious consideration of the glory and terror of Christ's second coming, what holiness and preparation is necessary on our part! Surely the holiest upon earth, if they would put this question to their own hearts, they would not be satisfied with that holiness which they had, but would seek after more; their desires would be strengthened, their endeavours quickened, their diligence doubled. It is for want of self-communing that we are so dull and sluggish. If men did oftener ask of themselves, reason would tell them that no slight thing will serve the turn. But truths are not improved. First, for want of a sound belief; secondly, for want of a serious consideration. Therefore in scripture, when any notable truth is propounded and improved, there are these appeals to conscience: Heb. 2:3, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' and Rom. 8:31, 'What shall we say to these things?'

3. In this appeal the qualification of our persons is first regarded and looked after. For pray mark the question: it is not, How holy ought our conversations to be? but, What manner of persons? The state of the person must be first regarded, and then the course of our actions

and conversations. There are some persons at whose hands God will not accept a gift. God had respect first to Abel, and then to his offering. The state of the person is to be judged of according to the two great privileges of Christianity—justification and sanctification.

[1.] That we be justified, and reconciled to God through Christ; that we daily renew friendship by the exercise of a godly sorrow for sin, and a lively faith in Christ: 1 John 5:1, 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God;' and 1 John 2:1, 'Little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not: and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' Others are not accepted with God.

[2.] That we be sanctified, or renewed by the Spirit, Titus 3:5, and so fitted and framed by this general holiness for the particular duties we are called to. A bowl must be made round before it can run round; the instrument must be framed, and strung, and put in tune before it can make any melody; the tree must first be made good before we can expect any good fruit from it, Mat. 12:33. Actions are holy by their rule; a person is holy by his principle. Therefore, till there be a principle of grace wrought in our hearts, we are not such manner of persons as God will accept; nor are we fitted to perform him any service, or to meet him at his coming.

4. When our persons are in frame, we must look to the course of our actions or walking; for the tree is known by its fruit, and a man by the course of his actions. We do but imagine we have holiness within, unless we manifest it in our outward conversation; and will strive to show ourselves mindful and respectful of God's commands at every turn: Ps. 119:1, 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord;' not only undefiled in the rule, but undefiled in the way. A sincere, constant, uniform obedience to God's law, or a

careful endeavour to approve ourselves to God in all our ways, is the mark of true blessedness. A man is judged by the tenor of his life, not by one action.

5. This holiness must be in all the parts of our conversation: 'In all holy conversation.' In our outward carriage and secret practice, common affairs and religious duties; in the duties of God's immediate worship and the duties of relations; towards superiors, inferiors, and equals, 1 Peter 1:5; in every creek and turning of our lives. There is no part of a Christian conversation but should savour of holiness and godliness: his common and civil actions, in adversity, prosperity, at home and abroad. So Titus 2:12, 13, 'The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying all ungodliness, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' Soberly as to ourselves; righteously as to our neighbour; godly as to God. To rest in a partial practice of holiness will not become the expectation of Christ's coming, who will examine us upon every point of duty.

6. Godliness is added to holiness to increase the sense and signification. There is some formal difference between these two. Holiness signifieth the purity of our actions, and godliness the respect they have to God, that he be eyed and aimed at in all that we do; that all things should be done in and to the Lord, or for his glory. This should be the supreme end of all our ways and actions. If we consider grace as it provideth for the rectitude of our actions, positively it is called holiness; if relatively, with respect to our dedication to God, it is called godliness. Well, then, we should be such manner of persons, not only in all holy conversation, but godliness. We should stir up ourselves to do more for God in the world, and love him, and fear him, and honour him in all that we do.

7. In both we should endeavour the highest pitch that possibly we can attain unto; for it is in the original, 'All holy conversations and godlinesses;' which doth not only imply the extension (as we render it), 'in all holy conversation and godliness,' but the intension and degree, as well as all the parts and points of godliness. Those that have made most progress in godliness should still aspire after higher degrees: the more will our comfort be now, and the more our glory when Christ cometh. We cannot be over, it is easy to be short. The most serious and the most painful do exceedingly lament their negligence when they come to die; but none ever begrudged their pains, or bewailed their diligence. There should be holinesses and godlinesses. Therefore we should not only keep what we have, but seek to get more. This is the apostle's use of the resurrection of the dead, and so by consequence of Christ's second coming, 1 Cor. 15:18, 19. So Phil. 3:11.

The next place is ver. 14, 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things, be diligent, that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.' In which words observe—

1. The exhortation is generally propounded, 'Be diligent.'
2. Particularly, in what this diligence is to be exercised and laid out.

[1.] With respect to the means, 'That ye may be without spot, and blameless.'

[2.] With respect to the end, 'That ye may be found of him in peace.' In the original the posture of the words is thus: 'That ye, being without spot and blameless, may be found of him in peace.' All these circumstances deserve to be considered by us.

1. The general exhortation, 'Be diligent.' Rouse up yourselves, set speedily and earnestly about it. We are apt to delay, therefore make haste: we are too slight and sluggish; therefore be earnest, and zealous, and hard at work every slight endeavour will not serve the turn. The wife that looketh for her husband's coming home will put all things in readiness: the servant that expects his master's coming will ply his work. Therefore let us not be remiss and negligent, but make serious preparation. A loitering profession will fail us in our greatest need; and when the bridegroom cometh, our lamps will be gone out. The devil's bondslaves spare no cost to serve their lusts; their faulty self-denial may put Christians to shame: Isa. 5:17, 'They draw on iniquity with cart-ropes.' The men of the world use all possible diligence to obtain the good things of this life, Ps. 127:2, 'Rise early, and go to bed late;' and shall we put our hand in our bosom, and think all will do well, though we mind our business only by the by? No; if your scope be to meet Christ with joy, religion must be your work and main employment.

2. Particularly, wherein you are to show your diligence; for we flatter ourselves with general notions.

[1.] With respect to the means, 'That ye be without spot and blameless.' The one word relateth to the heart, 'That we may be without spot,' and the other to our conversation, 'blameless.'

(1.) The first thing wherein diligence is to be improved is the washing away of our sinful spots, or the washing away of sin in the guilt and filth of it, or in a way of justification and sanctification, 1 Cor. 6:11, suing out our pardon in the name of Christ, and by his Spirit using all holy means for the cleansing of our polluted natures. This is a work to be done not once, but often; for we are all washed but in part: Prov. 20:7, 'Who can say his heart is clean?' And when we have once

washed, we are inclined to defile ourselves again: John 11:13, 'He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet.' Every day we contract defilement by living in the world. Our final consummation is in Christ's day, when we shall be presented to God, 'not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,' Eph. 5:27. For the present, still we are cleansing, and making use of the blood and Spirit of Christ for that end and purpose.

(2.) Blameless; that relateth to our carriage and conversation, as it is said, Luke 1:6, that Zachariah and Elizabeth 'walked in all the commandments of God blameless.' So should we take care that we incur no just blame for all those things Christ hath left in trust with us, as to the improvement of our talents, keeping his laws, observing his ordinances, or carriage to his servants and all men.

[2.] As to the end, 'that we may be found of him in peace.' The word found is often used with respect to Christ's second coming: 2 Cor. 5:3, 'If so be we shall not be found naked;' Phil. 3:9, 'That I may be found in him.' It is used, because the last day is a day of exact search and trial, and because that day cometh upon the greatest part of the world by way of surprisal. We do not look for it, nor prepare for it, but it cometh, unthought of, unexpected by the most. But the word found noteth either a state of reconciliation with God, Rom. 5:1, or it noteth comfort and joy, 1 John 4:17. The wicked are then at their wits' end, Rev. 19:18, call for the rocks and mountains to fall upon them. But when you have made diligent preparation, you may have boldness in that day, and 'lift up your heads, because your redemption draweth near.' A peace that will hold out when Christ cometh, is a peace indeed; otherwise what a terror will unpardoned guilt, and an unrenewed nature, a fruitless life, and a blemished conversation breed in us? Thus you see how the scripture presses this.

Secondly, What reasons there are in the thing itself to awaken us to this serious preparation—

1. Because of the person coming, our Redeemer, the bridegroom, the Lord himself, who is so great and holy. If we mean to do him honour, we must prepare to meet him in the best manner we can, as the bride would provide her ornaments against the nuptial day. Oh! what cleansing of soul, what fruitfulness and exercise of grace should there be, that we may not put our Redeemer to shame when he cometh to be glorified in his saints, and to show forth the fruits of his death in us! I say, this preparation should be not only for our own honour, that the bridegroom may not refuse us his company and approbation, 1 Peter 1:7; but for the honour of Christ, that he may be glorified in the faithfulness and obedience of his servants, when it shall be produced to the view of all the world, as the fruits of his purchase and Spirit: Eph. 5:27, 'That he might present it to himself a glorious church, nor having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.' It is begun here, and consummated there, Col. 1:22, and Jude 25.

2. Because of the manner of his coming, in power and great glory. Every coming of Christ should be entertained with great reverence. When our first parents heard but the voice of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, they hid themselves from his presence among the trees of the garden. When he came to give the law, Heb. 12, it was terrible, and made them quake and tremble; much more, now he cometh to judge according to the law, when articles of faith are to be made objects of sense, and God is no longer in a way of trial with the world. Christ, in the days of his flesh, when he came not to judge but to save, yet sometimes beamed out his majesty, as in the miracle of the great draught of fishes, Luke 5:3, but especially when his enemies fell backward with a look or word from his mouth, John

18:6; his whipping the buyers and sellers out of the temple, Mat. 21:12; and at his transfiguration his disciples were afraid, Mat. 17:6. If his voice was so terrible in the days of his flesh, what will it be then? He came at first in the form of a servant, Phil. 2:6, 7; now he cometh as Lord and heir of all things, Heb. 1:2. Then he came in the similitude of sinful flesh, Rom. 8:3; now without sin, Heb. 9:28. Then he had a forerunner, John the Baptist, 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness,' Mat. 3:3; now the archangel, 1 Thes. 4:16. Then he had twelve companions, poor fishermen; now with saints and angels, his holy ten thousands, Jude 7. Then he raised some few to life; now 'all shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live,' John 5:28. Then he came riding upon an ass; now he shall come in the clouds of heaven, and the Judge shall sit in the throne of majesty, summoning the world to appear before him. As this will be comfortable to the godly, so terrible to the unprepared.

3. Because of his work when he cometh, which is to judge the world, and to make a strict inquiry into the ways of men: Rev. 20:12, 'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of the things that were written in the books, according to their works.' All actions are set in order, Ps. 50:21, with such impartiality and strictness, that we should all tremble at the thought of it. Surely if we did believe these things we would prepare ourselves accordingly: Acts 17:31, 'He hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness.' God governeth the world now in righteousness, but the justice of God hath not its full scope and measure. God useth patience to the wicked, and doth not give the godly their full reward. God is arbitrary in his gifts, but not in his judgments: all are under a rule, either the law of works or the gospel law: James 2:12, 13, 'So speak and so do, as those that are to be judged by the law of liberty.'

4. After judgment sentence is passed, never to be reversed again. Here there is a possibility of retrieving it by repentance, for here it is *sententia legis*, but there it is *sententia judicis*, there is no appeal from this sentence. Here sentence may be repealed, Ezek. 18:12, 'If the wicked shall turn from his sins that he hath committed, and keep my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.' Therefore we have need to provide for this day.

5. Prepared or unprepared, we must all go forth to meet the bridegroom. Therefore we had need to consider with ourselves whether we are in case to meet him or no. Others think we make too much ado about it; but this is the great thing that should take up our care and thoughts, whether we are upon a sure bottom for eternity: Luke 10:42, 'This is the one thing necessary.' Alas! that we should make no greater matter of it, and set ourselves about it with no more care and seriousness, Ps. 27:4. It is necessity, and our own necessity, and a necessity for so great an end; not to live honourably and comfortably in the world, but for ever with God. In reason necessary things should be preferred before superfluous; that which cannot be spared should be first regarded.

Use 1. Is to quicken you to rouse up yourselves, and to trim your lamps. God's messengers in all ages have raised the cry: Enoch long ago: Jude 14, 15, 'Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.' He speaks of it as a thing in being, and actually in view; so do we call upon men. If we had a deeper sense and more lively apprehensions of that day, surely we would more bestir ourselves.

1. To rouse up ourselves. Shake off sloth and security: 2 Tim. 1:6, 'Stir up the gift that is in thee;' Isa. 64:7, 'There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.' There is need of awakening ourselves yet more and more. Conscience is too sleepy, the will too remiss, the

affections are dead and earthly, and are not so active and powerful upon our hearts as they were wont to be. Oh! do not rest in a lukewarm drowsy profession, but seriously bestir yourselves.

2. Trim up your lamps; that is, let your practice and profession of godliness be more lively and powerful, and grace kept in constant exercise: 'Having your loins girt, and your lamps burning,' Luke 12:35. Oh! it is a blessed thing to be found so doing. You will never do so—

[1.] While you content yourselves with a little religiousness by the by, and do not make godliness your main work and business: 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.'

[2.] While you content yourselves with doubtful questionable grace, and do not put it out of all doubt: 1 Peter 1:10, 11, 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure, that so an abundant entrance may be ministered unto you.'

[3.] You will never do so while you content yourselves with a little general religion, without looking into every part and point of duty: 1 Peter 1:15, 'Be ye holy in all manner of conversation.' Wherein you are to exercise your obedience to God: Acts 26:7, 8, 'Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God night and day, hope to come.'

[4.] You will never do so till your minds be taken off from the present world, and more deeply fixed upon the world to come, Mat. 6:21. Till that be your treasure, Col. 3:1, 'Set your affections upon things above.' Our affections often cool, being scattered too much upon present things; we have little or no thoughts of our spiritual journey: 1 Peter 1:13, 'Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of

Jesus Christ.' It is meant of the affections. It is the lively expectation of blessedness to come that keepeth us in life and exercise.

Secondly, We now come to the consideration of it as to the foolish virgins, 'They all arose and trimmed their lamps.' The foolish virgins made a fair flourish; on their part it noteth their vain confidence, as if they were as ready to meet the bridegroom as the wise, though the event showeth the contrary; so that on their part it doth not note so much their serious preparation as their foolish presumption.

Doct. 2. Many think they have grace enough to meet Christ at his coming, when the event showeth no such matter; or, many have great confidence of the goodness of their condition, that will be found foolish virgins at last. As in the text, the foolish virgins; and in the 7th of Matthew, the foolish builder.

There are four reasons of this:—

1. Self-love, which blindeth a man in judging of his state and actions: Prov. 16:2, 'All the ways of a man are right in his own eyes.' It is natural to a man to have a good conceit of his own ways; so Prov. 30:12, 'There is a generation of men pure in their own eyes, yet not washed from their filthiness.' A man will favour himself, be a parasite to himself. A self-suspecting heart is very rare, John 13:23, 24, and 2 Sam. 12:7.

2. An overly sense of their duty, and belief of the world to come. Temporaries have but a taste of heavenly doctrine, Heb. 6:4, a light tincture. The act of their faith is not so intense and serious as to set them a-work with all life and diligence, or to enable them to judge impartially, whether they are able to bear the coming of Christ, yea or no. Presumption is the child of ignorance and incogitancy; they do not consider of the strictness of the gospel law, or the impartiality of

the last day's account; there is but a notional, slight, superficial, ineffectual apprehension of these things. An ignorant person is foolhardy, he doth not weigh the danger. It is not the greatness of our confidence, but the acuteness of our sense.

3. Want of searching or taking the course whereby we may be undeceived: Jer. 8:6, 'No man repented of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?' Yea, when searched, and their natural face showed them, James 1:23, 24; they will not search and try their ways. A temporary is seldom discovered to himself till it be too late; but you may find him by these notes. Usually he is slothful; he is not a laborious Christian—sound exercise maketh us feel our condition; he is not self-searching, he doth not look into himself, he smothereth those misgivings of heart which he hath, and will not consider the case, or return upon himself. If they do not search, they cannot know themselves; if they should search, they do not like themselves; they choose the latter.

4. Building upon false evidences, or upon sandy foundations. A formal professor may go very far towards salvation. Temporaries may have awakening grace, much trouble about their condition; as Ahab and Judas. So many are full of doubts and stinging fears, and make their case known, would fain be eased of their smart. They may have enlightening grace, Heb. 6:7, more than many true Christians have; Rom. 2:18, have an 'approbation of the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law;' 2 Tim. 2:5, 'having a form of godliness.' Grammatically and logically have a clearer understanding of the sense of words, the contexture and dependence of truths, be able to defend any sacred verity, and express their minds about it; yea, some sense of Christ and heaven and glory; yea, they may have affecting grace, be wonderfully taken with the glad tidings of the gospel; may have some taste of the grapes of the good

land, may desire to die the 'death of the righteous,' Num. 23:10; desire the 'bread of life,' John 6:34; they may delight in holy things, Isa. 58:2, as Herod heard the word which John preached gladly, Mark 6:20; the stony ground heard the word with joy. But they have not renewing grace, heart-transforming grace, sin-mortifying grace, nor world-conquering grace. Yet something like these they may have, something like transforming grace; a change wrought in them, though not such as puts grace in sovereignty and dominion. As to sin-mortifying grace, there are some conflicts with sin, and they may sacrifice some of their weaker lusts, yet the flesh is not crucified. As to world-conquering grace, they may profess long, hold out against a persecution: 1 Cor. 13:1, 'If I should give my body to be burnt, and have not charity, it profiteth not.' Compare Acts 19:33 with 2 Tim. 2:10, and 2 Tim. 4:14. Yea, they may keep some profession till death, have a good esteem among the people of God, and yet the heart never be thoroughly subdued to God.

Use 1. Oh! then, 'let us not be high-minded, but fear,' Rom. 11:20; and let all this that hath been spoken tend to weaken the security of the flesh, but not the joy of faith. Let it batter down all your false confidence and carnal security, by which you are apt to deceive your own souls, and make you build more surely for heaven. Consider—

1. God may see that which yourselves or men do not; for he seeth not as man seeth. Others look upon appearance, you yourselves may be blinded with your own self-love, but God knoweth all things, seeth all things; therefore, though thou hast a name, yet perhaps art dead, Rev. 3:1; and though we 'know nothing by ourselves, yet we are not thereby justified,' 2 Cor. 4:4.

2. How dreadful it is to know our error by the event rather than by a search! The foolish virgins said to the wise, 'Give us of your oil, for

our lamps are gone out.' They began to see their defect when it was too late. The foolish builder, that built his house upon the sand, his building made as fair a show as any; but it fell, 'and great was the fall of it.' So is the hope of the hypocrite when God cometh to take away his soul: then they will see and bewail their deceits of heart, but have no time to remedy them. Many think they have godliness enough while they live, but when they come to die they will find it little enough, and all their false hopes will leave them ashamed.

3. We have need again and again to bring the grounds of our confidence into the sight and view of conscience, that we may be sure they will hold weight: Ps. 44:18, 'Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined thy way;' 2 Cor. 1:12, 'This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience.' At least, when you suspect yourselves, how do you make a shift to quiet your consciences? Is it upon solid grounds, and such as will bear weight in the day of Christ? Many are strongly conceited of themselves, when there is little ground for it: Luke 13:24, 'Many shall seek to enter, but shall not be able;' Rev. 3:17, 'Thou thoughtest that thou wert rich, and increased with goods, when thou art poor, and wretched, and blind, and naked.' In a poor case to meet the bridegroom, but they thought themselves in a happy condition.

Use 2. To excite you to this duty, take these considerations:—

1. Your cure is not fully wrought, you are not yet brought home to God: 1 Peter 3:18, 'Christ also suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.'

2. To keep to your first beginnings, after a long time of growth, is to be babes still: Heb. 5:12–14, 'When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong

meat: for every one that useth milk, is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe; but strong meat belongeth unto them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their sense exercised to discern good and evil.' A child, if he should continue a child and an infant still, is a monster.

3. The same reasons that invited you to begin with Christ should invite you to go on with his service. If a little grace is desirable, surely more is desirable, because it is the adorning of the soul. Excellency in grace is a great means to convince and convert the world: Mat. 5:16, 'Let your light so shine before men, that others seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven;' and John 15:6, 'Hereby is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit.' Deprive not God of the honour you owe him, nor the world of such a powerful help; we put forth our utmost endeavours to get excellent things here on earth, and shall eternal glory be only coldly thought of, and carelessly sought after?

4. The more serviceable you are for Christ here, the more glory you shall receive in heaven. We believe there are degrees of glory; we read of being ruler of many cities, and sitting at Christ's right hand and left, Mat. 20:13. The mother, of Zebedee's children, when she asked Christ that her sons might sit one at his right hand and the other at his left, Christ doth not deny the thing, that there were degrees of glory, but it was to be given them for whom it was prepared of his Father.

The next thing observable in the parable is the going out of their lamps: Our lamps are going, or gone out. What is the meaning of that? Sometimes the phrase is used in scripture for the failing and ceasing of the wicked's happiness, or the splendour and glory wherein they lived in the world; as Job 19:6, 'The light shall be dark

in his tabernacle, and his lamp shall be put out with him;' and Job 21:17, 'How often is the candle of the wicked put out!' But here it must be interpreted with respect to the scope of this parable, and so by the lamps two things are intended:—

1. The glorious profession that they make of religion.
2. The hope and comfort that is built thereupon.

Doct. 3. Their lamps will go out who have not a stock of grace to feed and maintain them.

First, Let us explain this.

1. What is this going out of their lamps?
2. When is this verified?

First, What is this going out of their lamps?

1. It may note an extinction of their profession, and so profession, where it hath not a bottom of grace, will fail: Prov. 26:26, 'His wickedness shall be showed before all the congregation.' God loveth to uncase hypocrites. In the course of his providence one occasion or other falleth out to make them stumble and break the neck of all their respects to the ways of God: John 15:6, 'If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch that is withered.' Christ drieth up their gifts and seeming graces, their duties; they are given up headlong to their own apostate courses.

2. It may be meant of the extinction of their vain hopes and foolish confidence and false peace, which is grounded upon their outward profession and formal practice of external duties; thus we read that 'the hope of the wicked shall be as the spider's web,' Job 8:14,

curiously woven, but gone with the turn of the besom. So Job 11:20, 'The hope of the wicked shall be as the giving up of the ghost.' No more hope of them than of a man's life that is giving up the ghost; or with pains and gripes; which is not only to be meant of the hope, or the continuance of their prosperous condition in the world, but of heavenly happiness; there is a groundless expectation of that, the apostle's expression intimateth it: Rom. 5:5, 'And hope that maketh not ashamed.' The hope of temporaries will at length deceive them in their greatest need, and leave them ashamed. As Absalom's mule left his master hanging on an oak, so will their hopes fail them, and their pretences vanish.

Secondly, When is this verified, and upon what occasions?

1. Sometimes in life. They took offence at Christ, his doctrine, or something that did accompany it: John 6:66, 'At that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him;' some one prejudice or other took them off.

2. Sometimes at death, if their profession and hope thereupon tarry so long: Job 27:8, 'What hope hath the hypocrite, when God cometh to take away his soul?' A man may live by a form, but he cannot die by a form with comfort. Men are more serious in the confines of eternity, when present enjoyments cease, and we have nothing left to comfort us but the expectation of the world to come: then we shall repent that we have been no more provident for eternity; if God would spare them a little longer, they would get oil then. When they come to die, oh! that they could live over their life again. Men that have neglected their time of present profiting then see their folly; then how serious, anxious, and solicitous are they!

3. It is possible men may go down with a careless profession, and a blind confidence to the grave, but in God's judgment it will not hold

out; for the day of revelation and manifestation is hereafter, and every one is not in a safe condition that dieth in peace, or without actual horror and trouble. Usually, indeed, 1 Cor. 15:56, 'The sting of death is sin;' but it is possible hypocrites may die with stupid and benumbed consciences, and therefore Christ maketh their vain conceits to be blown away in the day of accounts: Mat. 7:22, 'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord!' that is, till the day of doom, may think their plea sufficient.

Reasons why this profession is apt to fail, for there is a distinct consideration of these things:—

1. Because they have a principle of apostasy in their hearts still. The love of some created thing is predominant, as it is in all temporaries; either honour, riches, or pleasure, which when it cometh to be touched or intrenched upon, religion must give way. Christ's first lesson is self-denial. Till there be a universal sovereignty of grace over all our desires and inclinations, so as they shall all give way to the love of God, something is left that will tempt us to leave our profession of godliness, though unwillingly; as the young man went away sad, Mark 10:22; and that which is lame is soon turned out of the way, Heb. 12; and therefore we can have no satisfaction and security while any one lust remaineth unmortified; if you are not fallen, you are falling.

2. Because they do not improve what they have received. The great want of temporaries is the want of a constant, serious, lively diligence; now when men have made a good progress in religion, and stop there, they lose what they have: Luke 8:18, 'From him that hath not shall be taken what he seemeth to have;' to him that employeth his stock, more shall be given; but the other is on the losing hand.

Secondly, As to the hope and comfort that followeth this profession. An inclination to that which is good: I suppose without that there can be no true comfort, until we should submit to the conditions of the gospel law, Mat. 5:28–30. There temporaries are defective, all therefore see it and know it when they are serious and considerative, and their mistakes and misconceits are blown away by death and judgment. Now the conditions are believing, repenting, and gospel walking. Now their faith will not yield comfort: Gal. 5:6, 'Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything, but faith that worketh by love.' Not their repenting, not a little sorrow for sin past, until carnal distempers are mortified, 2 Cor. 7:10. So for gospel-walking; not a loose owning of Christ, Mat. 7:21; until there be a full obedience to his law, putting it in practice with an upright heart, which is not consistent with allowed failings. A man may profess himself a Christian, yet if he do not his Father's will, he may come short.

Use. Oh! then, let us take heed we be not of the number of those whose lamps are gone out. The lamps of the sanctuary were never to go out, but to burn always, Exod. 27:20. To this end—

1. Apply yourselves to Christ in the use of his appointed means, for the renewing your natures, that his Spirit may give you a new understanding and a new heart: God hath made the offer, Ezek. 36:26, and it is only made good to those that diligently attend upon the appointed means.

2. Improve what you receive in that way: 1 Thes. 5:14, 'Quench not the Spirit.' Fire may be quenched by pouring on water, or withdrawing the fuel: quench, not the Spirit by fleshly delights, nor by a careless conversation.

3. They ask the wise, 'Give us of your oil.' First, This demand was unseasonable; to be getting oil when they should use it, to have their oil to buy when their lamps should have been burning. There is a time of getting, if we lose that, our opportunity is gone, Luke 14:32; Isa. 55:2; John 9:4. While 'you have the day work, for the night cometh in which no man can work.' Secondly, it was extorted by mere necessity. In a time of straits and distresses men will call upon the people of God to help them, as Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, when God's judgments were upon him.

SERMON VII

But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.—MAT. 25:9

IN the words we have—(1.) A denial; (2.) The reason of the denial; (3.) Their advice and counsel to the foolish.

First, The denial, not so. It is not a churlish and envious denial, but such an answer as the nature of the thing would bear. If they should be so kind, they would deprive themselves, and not leave sufficient for them both; therefore they were better take the usual way of supply. Three points are in this verse:—

Doct. 1. Every one must get oil into his own lamp, or get grace of his own, or else in the day of his accounts the grace of others will do him no good.

Secondly, From the reason, 'Lest there be not enough for us and you.'

Doct. 2. They that have most grace have none to spare.

Doct. 3. If we would get grace, we must have recourse to the ordinances.

For the first point, that every man must get grace of his own.

1. I do not hereby exclude the righteousness of Christ, or his communicating his Spirit to us. There is a great deal of difference between Christ and the saints in point of sufficiency, power, and authority.

[1.] They have not a sufficiency for themselves and us too. Christ hath a fulness out of which you may receive enough: John 1:16, 'Of his fulness we receive grace for grace. There is plenitudo fontis et plenitudo vasis—the fulness of a fountain and the fulness of a vessel. The fulness of a vessel is lessened and abated the more you take out of it; the creature is wasted by giving, but a fountain is ever flowing and overflowing; it keepeth its fulness still, though it affordeth to others. God saith to Moses, Num. 11:12, 'I will take of the spirit that is upon thee, and put it upon them.' The words seem principally to intend as if his own gifts and abilities were given to them to help bear a part in the burden of the government.

[2.] In point of power, they have no power to transfuse and put over their righteousness to another; as a man cannot divide and part his life between him and another. But Christ, who liveth in us, and is spiritually united to us, he can impart his grace and righteousness: 2 Cor. 5:21, 'He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;' Gal. 2:20, 'The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.'

[3.] If they could do so, they have no authority and commission to do it, as God hath given to Christ: John 3:34, 35, 'For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand;' and John 17:2, 'As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.' Such a difference there is between the Lord Jesus Christ and the saints. He can give us of his oil, and will do it, will not deny those that seek it humbly and seasonably, and have enough himself; as the 'precious ointment upon Aaron's head and beard ran down to the skirts of his garments,' Ps. 133:2, so doth Christ the head communicate his gifts and graces to all his members.

2. I do not hereby exclude the benefit which we have by the 'communion of the saints' in the mystical body of Christ here in this world. The members are mutually useful to one another; as it is said, Col. 2:19, 'From which all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.' It is from the head, but knit together by nerves, veins, and arteries. The apostle saith, that 'every joint supplieth something,' Eph. 4:16. We communicate to one another that strength and nourishment which all receive by the head. There is no member but is of use; we have benefit from one another's gifts and graces, or else we could not be serviceable in the body. But the case in the text is different; these foolish virgins had their former advantages, which they should have improved, to have supplied them in the day of their account. Now the wise could not help the foolish, nor the foolish the wise; but every man shall be judged according to what is within him.

3. As to the keeping off of temporal judgments, the very society and neighbourhood of the godly may be a means to respite the wicked: Jer. 5:1, 'Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man that executeth judgment, that seeketh truth, and I will pardon it.' If they are not pardoned they may be respited for a time. So the sentence against Sodom; we read that if ten righteous persons had been found therein, Gen. 18:32, God would have spared it. And God gave Paul the lives of all them that sailed in the ship with him for his sake. As to temporal things, God may stay the judgment upon others for the godly's sake, though not always; for it is said, Ezek. 14:14, 'Though Noah, Daniel, and Job stood before me, they should deliver but their own souls by their own righteousness.' When the decree was irrevocably past, and their provocations grown to an insufferable height. So it is said in the Jewish proverb, that two dry sticks may set a green one on fire: to which Christ is supposed to allude when he

saith, 'If this be done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?' Well, but bating these cases, we shall not be the better for others' righteousness, and this is often pressed in scripture: Hab. 2:4, 'The just shall live by his faith;' by his own, not by another man's: Ezek. 18:20, 'The soul that sinneth it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him;' that is, as to eternal rewards and punishments, every one is to be considered according to their own personal estate. Every tub shall stand upon its own bottom, and every soul shall be dealt with according to its own capacity. So Rom. 14:12, 'Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.' We shall give an account of our own thoughts, words, and actions; not shuffled together by the lump, and in gross, but every one severally. One shall not appear for another, as here we may appear by proctor or attorney; nor the whole party and profession for single persons, but every one is to give an account of himself apart, man by man. So Gal. 6:4, 5, 'Let every man approve his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another, for every man shall bear his own burden.' We should every one look to his own actions, and our own spiritual estate and frame of heart: to fetch the grounds of our rejoicing from abroad will not be so comfortable and safe to us. We are to look to our own selves.

Use 1. Is to disprove the conceit of works of supererogation, or doing more than is required of us, to increase the stock of good works to be put into the treasury of the church, as if others should fare the better for their over-godlying it.

2. To disprove the vain and foolish confidence by which men please themselves in the goodness of others about them, their relations, and

societies in which they live. They have friendship with such good people, are in relation to such eminent and pious persons; a godly wife, or husband, or father: Mat. 3:9, 'And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.' No; they cannot give us of their oil. Men will catch at anything rather than a right ground of confidence.

Use 2. Is to exhort us to 'work out our salvation with fear and trembling,' Phil. 2:12, or to be more careful of our own personal qualification, if we would be saved in the day of the Lord.

1. It is not enough that Christ engaged for us as the public surety of the church, Heb. 7:22. He did some things for us, and in our names, that we might take a bond upon ourselves, that we may enter ourselves heirs to the benefits of his undertaking. You must give up yourselves to the Lord, 2 Cor. 8:5. All that are brought home to God do personally covenant for themselves: Ezek. 20:37, 'I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant,' one by one. God would not trust the Jews with their own choice, but would take the tenth that came out of the fold by course. God will not covenant with us in the lump or mass, but man by man.

2. It is not enough that the church as a visible political body, professing faith in Christ, doth engage for us: Ezek. 16:7, 'I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine.' There is a visible church covenanting which is made between God and whole societies, as they do profess submission to Christ's gospel. Alas! in these societies, there may be many persons whose souls have not particularly and personally, each one for himself, entered into covenant with God, therefore we cannot satisfy ourselves with this, but every one of us must engage himself to the Lord.

3. It is not enough that our parents did engage for us, and dedicate us to God in baptism, as they did in their own names, and in the names of their little ones, Deut 29:10–12, as we devote, and dedicate, and engage our children to God in baptism; but this is a work and business that no man can savingly transact for another. The engaging of a soul to Christ is a thing that a man cannot do by proxy or assignee; we must personally enter into covenant with God for ourselves, or else our parents' dedication will not profit us; we shall be children of Ethiopians to God, though children of the covenant, Amos 9:7.

4. It is not enough that we belong to strict and reformed societies, unless we come visibly to ratify the covenant in our own persons, by that which the apostle calleth 'a professed subjection to the gospel of Christ,' 2 Cor. 13:9. Unless there be a hearty and real subjection, as well as a public professed subjection, our company will not save us, nor our church save us. Many fall asleep in Christ's own lap that shall awake in flames. He looketh to single persons, knoweth his sheep by name, and whether they obey and follow him, yea or no. He considereth the frame of their hearts, and how they stand affected to him: 'My son, give me thy heart,' Prov. 23:26. It is the heart he seeketh for: Jer. 30:21, 'Who is he that hath engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord.'

Lastly, Consider the distinction Christ will make at the last day between persons of the same vicinity, family, religion: the one is taken, the other left.

Now, to excite you to get grace into your own hearts, consider—

1. None is more near to you than yourselves. God hath made you guardians of your own souls. We read, Eph. 5:20, that 'no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it.' Oh! that

we could say so in this case, that no man ever hated his own soul! It is no less monstrous and unnatural not to take care of our souls, than not to take care of our bodies. The soul is the man, the nobler and better part, that should be first cared for; therefore, if you love yourselves, you should look after your personal interest in Christ.

2. Your happiness is left merely as on your own consent. God offereth his grace to you as well as to others: Isa. 55:1, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters and drink;' Rev. 20:22, 'Whosoever will,' &c. If you refuse it, you wrong your own souls, Prov. 8:36, forsake your own mercies, Jonah 2:8. And if you miss of Christ, and be shut out of heaven, it is by your own default. You have none to blame but yourselves, if you do not enter into covenant with God, and so qualify yourselves for the great blessings and favours thereof.

3. Consider how much others have done for you in a way of means, though they can do nothing in a way of merit. You have received as much benefit by others as can rationally be expected; you were born of Christian parents, by them dedicated to God, and trained up in his fear; and now, after all this, when you come to stand upon your own bottom, you wrest yourselves out of the arms of grace: your obstinate refusing seriously and heartily to enter into personal covenant with God will exclude you out of heaven; you are not moved by the examples of the word, and self-denying Christians. If you never try to bring your heart to consent to the Lord's terms, you will find your oil to seek when you should use it, at the bridegroom's coming.

Secondly, I now come to the reason alleged, 'Lest there be not enough for us and you.'

Doct. 2. They that have most grace have none to spare.

1. With respect to our great hopes, all our endeavours are little enough for heaven; we cannot be at, more cost and pains than our blessed hope is worth: Phil. 2:12, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' Work, because it is for salvation: 2 Thes. 2:12, 'Walk worthy of God, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory.' That is the worthiness of condecency; walk suitable to your high and holy calling, walk as those that expect such a kingdom and glory, walk as those that are contented with a little here, Heb. 13:5. A little here should serve our turn, but in heavenly things it is otherwise; there should be a holy covetousness, and an insatiableness of desiring more, and a suitableness in our walking to that state of life which we expect. But alas! it is otherwise with most, for the comforts of this life, which are but as a vapour, they are insatiable as the grave; but in grace, every little, yea, a bare nothing, is thought sufficient. Surely these men have not a true sense of God's punishments and rewards, nor what preparation is necessary for that heavenly happiness they expect.

2. With respect to our great temptations, not a jot of grace can be spared. We are told that 'the righteous are scarcely saved,' 1 Peter 4:18. There are so many trials by the way, and our folly and weakness is so great, that it is no easy matter to get safe to heaven. If we have strength to carry us through our present condition, yet we know not what we may meet with before our service be over; a day may come when all the grace we have may be thought little enough, and too little for the trials we may be put upon. Little grace is as no grace when a temptation cometh: Luke 8:25, 'Where is your faith?' But Mark 4:4, 'How is it that ye have no faith?' and Mat. 8:26, it is said, 'Why are ye fearful? O ye of little faith!' Little faith in some cases is as if they had no faith: faith in the habit they had, but they could not put it into act, in that sudden and great trial: Eph. 6:10, 'Be ye strong in the Lord, and the power of his might.'

3. With respect to our comfort, a large measure of grace is necessary. We are bidden to give all diligence, that we may enter abundantly, 2 Peter 1:11. Not only make a hard shift to get to heaven, but to get thither with full sails of comfort; now this will never be, unless we have much grace, and that kept in lively action; for otherwise it will not come into the view and notice of conscience, to make up an evidence there.

[1.] I do suppose that conscience hath a vote in the matters of our peace, Rom. 8:16. In the matters of our sense, Rom. 9:1, the bosom witness is conscience; the knowledge of our estate is not intuitive, but discursive.

[2.] That small things are inconspicuous, and not easily to be discerned, especially by weak eyes; therefore it is a hard matter for conscience to discern a little grace in a great heap of corruption. Man's heart is not watchful, nor so tender, nor are things in such order there, as that every lesser thing should be taken notice of; though conscience be a secret spy, yet small things escape its view and notice, both in a way of sin and grace; in a drowsy and inattentive soul, it cannot be imagined: therefore there must be a great deal of grace before it can be seen and distinguished from a common work; for the heart of man is deceitful: the woman was forced to light a candle, and search diligently, before she could find her lost groat; so hard will it be to discover that in the soul which is small and little.

[3.] The testimony of the Spirit is usually given in upon the greatest exercise and abounding of grace; for the oil of gladness followeth the oil of grace, and comfort is dispensed according to the rate of obedience: John 15:10, 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love;' and John 14:21, 'He that hath my commandments and

keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and is loved of my Father, and I will love him,' and manifest myself unto him.' Therefore out of all this it followeth, that if we would maintain any comfortable and delightful sense of our interest in Christ, and the glory of the world to come, we should not be contented with a little grace.

4. With respect to the nature of grace, it is a sign we have no grace when we think we have enough and to spare; surely they that have tasted that the Lord is gracious, 1 Peter 3:2, they are not cloyed, but will long for more; that man that doth not desire to be better was never good. As the little seed works through the hard and dry clods, that it may grow up to stalk and flower, so is grace, it is working and increasing to perfection: therefore it is an ill sign, to be satisfied with small measures of grace, to say I have enough. Every degree of grace, is as desirable as that we have attained to; and those whose hearts God hath touched, they earnestly desire more.

5. All is too little to stand before the Lord, and therefore none have any surplusage of grace, or more than will serve their own turn; as in the gathering of manna, he that had much, had nothing over. If we consider the glorious and holy presence of Christ, we have all little enough: Ps. 143:2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant;' Non dicit Cum hostibus tuis, sed Cum servo tuo. He doth not say, O Lord, enter not into judgment with thine enemies, but, Enter not into judgment with thy servant.

6. Every one is to be considered according to his advantages, and opportunities of growth and improvement. Less may be sufficient to salvation, but not to them to whom more is given; as they distinguish of a fundamental in se and quoad nos. God may accept of an implicit faith in some, but not in others; so it is true of grace, that rule, Luke 12:48, 'He that knew not and did things worthy of stripes, shall be

beaten with few stripes.' God may accept that from others which he will not from us, and we are to be answerable for our means of growth; we expect he should come sooner that rideth on horseback than he that travelleth on foot; and therefore we must not be contented with a bare competency, but labour for abundance.

7. The greatest graces have many times the greatest corruptions and temptations to wrestle with. God doth not call every one to such a trial as he called Abraham; but as Jacob drove as the little ones were able to bear, so doth God proportion temptations according to the measure of grace and strength that every one hath; and therefore he that hath most grace, hath but enough for that condition of life wherein God will exercise and try him.

8. You may easily have too little, you cannot have too much. There are many come short, none over; you never read of any that had too much faith, too much of the love of God and the fear of God. In the internals and essentials of religion, there is no nimium: a man may spend too much time in praying and hearing, when it encroacheth upon other duties; but he cannot fear God too much with a filial fear, or love God too much; many love him too little, and therefore are kept so doubtful all their days, that they cannot tell whether they love God at all or no.

9. Because of that conformity that should be between us and Christ, who is our glorious head; and all the heirs of glory are destined to be conformed to the first-born, Rom. 8:24, chiefly in grace, purity, and holiness: indeed this cannot so full and exactly be till we see him as he is, but the present sight that we have of him by grace should make some change in us, 2 Cor. 3:18. In heaven we shall be holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, as he, Heb. 7:26; above the reach of temptations, as he, John 10:30; our vile bodies shall be

changed, Phil. 3:21, and both soul and body conformed to that glorious estate, as he, Rom. 6:9; but it must be begun here; the very hopes of it should put us upon purifying ourselves: 1 John 3:3, 'He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as Christ is pure:' you are to do so, that there may be some proportion between head and members.

10. Because a little grace is not so honourable to God: John 15:8, 'Herein is my Father glorified, in that ye bring forth much fruit;' and Phil. 1:11, 'Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God;' 2 Peter 1:8, 'If these things be in you and abound, you shall not be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ.' It is not a naked and empty profession, it is not sleepy habits, or a little grace, but when grace hath a deep power and sovereignty over our hearts and lives, that bringeth God into request, and commendeth him to the consciences of men. The knowledge of Christ is reproached as a low institution by carnal men; but to the truly wise, no such excellent and noble spirits as they that are bred up under him.

Use 1. Of reproof to those that think we make more ado than needeth. When we press men to a constant watchfulness, and serious diligence in the spiritual life, no wonder that every slight thing seemeth enough; so the foolish virgins, 'Give us of your oil;' the wise virgins are more cautious; their saying is, 'Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you.' What thoughts have you of Christ, when you think every slight preparation enough for him? what sense of the world to come, when you do so little in order to it? what is it that you call grace, that you do so easily come by it, and maintain it upon such cheap terms? Surely men have no sense of the end, or else mistake the way, that think so little will serve the turn. Indeed a little in the world will serve the turn, if men had sober and moderate desires,

and did not increase their necessities by the largeness of their affections. A man may have estate enough for ten men, yea, twenty men, and yet not be satisfied, but the best hath scarce grace enough for one; but alas! how soon are men satisfied (such is their indifferency) about spiritual things! instead of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, a little or none contents them; here only they are for sobriety and moderation; all is too much, and too easily passed over that seemeth to awaken them to a lively sense of that religion they do profess. Christ saith, 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven,' Mat. 5:20. What do ye more than they? and Luke 11:24, 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate.' They cannot endure that Christ's authority should be urged on the conscience; can you hope to be saved on easier terms without all this ado? A little time will determine whose word shall stand, God's or yours; you cannot do too much as long as you do but what God bids you. Certainly if you judge by that rule which God hath given to try by, no man on earth is as good as he should be, and he that is best is too bad, and he that doth most, cometh unspeakably short of what he should do. All the holy ones of God complain of their naughty hearts, that they cannot do the things that they would; they groan under the body of death, and cry out, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?' And will they then obtrude this sorry perfunctory obedience upon God as a full satisfaction of his gospel law?

2. It is to reprove those that think they have grace enough to bring them to heaven. Now they may go rest, and trouble themselves no further. Alas! they know not what belongeth to the spiritual life; for if they had true grace, they would see a need to keep it lively and growing; they would find they could not keep what they had unless they did increase it; the daily lapses make breaches upon it, and

conscience would tell them how easily they lose many degrees, and a sense of it, and that every day they need serious humiliation; and it is a naughty heart that can satisfy itself with the minimum *quod sit*, a bare competency, without seeking after greater measures. When men do things against their will, they do not more than needs; but love hath an amplitude and largeness in it, it thinks it can never do enough.

Use 2. Is to excite us: Phil. 2:13, 14, 'Forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching to the things that are before, I press towards the mark of the high prize of God in Christ Jesus.' You have not answered your holy rule, nor done things worthy of your blessed hope, nor answerable to the great obligations laid upon you, nor becoming the glorious salvation which you expect: if these things were well thought of, you would see a need of making a speedy addition to your stock every day. Oh! then, as to the internal habits of grace, we beseech you let your love abound more and more, Phil. 1:9; and as to the external acts of obedience: 1 Thes. 4:1, 'As ye have received of us how to walk, and how to please God, so you would abound more and more.' Let your vessel be fuller, and your lamps burn brighter; you owe God a thousand times more than ever yet you have paid him; he hath both deserved and required more at your hand; you cannot make out your gospel qualification of sincerity, unless there be a lamenting of defects, and a striving after perfection.

Thirdly, We come to the advice and counsel, 'But go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.' Go to them that sell; that is, go where it may be had; for selling and buying are put improperly for getting into our hand. *Emptum cedit in jus emptoris*. Things are said to be bought when they are made ours, as if we had paid a just price for them, as Prov. 23:23, 'Buy the truth, and sell it not;' that is, keep it, and do not part with it. So Isa. 55:1, 'Buy wine and milk;' and Rev.

3:18, 'I counsel thee to buy of me gold.' Calvin is of opinion, non admonitio est, sed exprobratio; and Austin before, non consulentium, sed irridentium est ista responsio. It is a check and rebuke to their negligence; as if it were said, Go buy now if you can; heretofore you had a time of buying, which you neglected; the shops were open, but now the opportunity is lost: and so think it not a counsel but a rebuke. You should have bought for yourselves. I rather think it is an advice, directing them to the remedy, or the true course that must be taken if we would get oil, as appeareth by the practice of the foolish virgins in the next verse; and if they used this remedy too late, it was their own folly.

Doct. 3. Those that would have grace must have recourse to the ordinances.

1. Mark 4:24, 'Take heed how you hear, for with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.' And you that attend upon hearing, more shall be given to you. 'With what measure ye mete,' that is a proper rule for commerce between man and man, and our Saviour urgeth it, Mat. 7:12. But it is true also in commerce between God and man; if you take heed how you hear, and do what you hear, that is, seriously weigh that divine and heavenly doctrine in your deep and ponderous thoughts; if they would use such conscionable care to profit as was fit, the Lord would recompense their diligence with an answerable blessing on the soul. Another place is 1 Thes. 5:19, 20, 'Quench not the Spirit; despise not prophesying.' If you would not quench the Spirit, his convictions, excitations, and counsels, you must use the means; they are instituted to this end, and God instituteth nothing in vain; they have a tendency to that end; the formality of the institution is a word of command and a word of promise.

2. Christ hath sanctified ordinances to this end, Eph. 5:26, 27; and John 17:8, 'Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth.'

Use 3. If we would have the graces of the Spirit begotten, strengthened, and increased in us, let us use the means, Acts 17:11. Let us use them more conscionably, and see that by every converse with God we may get some new blessing from him.

SERMON VIII

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.—MAT. 25:10

THREE things are here remarkable:—

1. The coming of the bridegroom while they went to buy.
2. The entering in, or admission of those that were ready, into the marriage-chamber.
3. The shutting of the door to exclude the rest.

For the first of these, their going to buy must be interpreted according to the scope of the parable; and so it signifieth their unreadiness and unpreparedness for Christ's coming: they were to seek of grace when they had most need to use it. In parables, things are said to be done in the day of judgment which are done in order to

or with respect unto that day; not that men do go and buy oil then, &c. I might observe from hence—

1. The certainty of Christ's coming. We heard before of a great expectation, of his tarrying, of the cry raised, now of his coming, he really came at last; but of that point before.

2. Of the suddenness of his coming, by way of surprise on the carnal world. When the careless were little ready for him, he came; when they went to buy; but of that in verse the 13th.

3. I shall choose to speak now of the quality in which he cometh; he cometh as a bridegroom.

Doct. 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ shall come to his people as a bridegroom at his second coming.

Rev. 19:7, 9, 'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready: and he saith unto me, write, Blessed are they that are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb.'

To evidence this unto you. consider these propositions:—

1. That between Christ and believers there is a mutual tie, consent, and obligation each to other, which may be notably represented by the marriage covenant, Ps. 45, Isa. 45:5, and elsewhere. There is a living relation between Christ and them, beyond what is between him and others; a relation not only notional and imaginary, but is really transacted between them, as between two parties in the marriage covenant. So Cant. 2:16, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his.' Both the parties are mutually, explicitly, and formally engaged and contracted to one another; Christ to us as head, we to him as members of his

mystical body. As it is real, so it is near; they twain shall be one flesh, we one spirit: 1 Cor. 6:17, 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.' Whole Christ is ours, we are or should be altogether his, as full of kindness and love, Eph. 5:25–27; Zeph. 3:17. And it is indissoluble; the marriage-knot remaineth inviolable for ever: 'I will betroth thee to me for ever,' Hosea 2:19.

2. This marriage may be considered in four respects:—(1.) With respect to the ground and foundation of it; (2.) With respect to our first entrance into this relation; (3.) With respect to the state of it in this world; (4.) With respect to its perfect consummation.

[1.] With respect to the ground and foundation that was laid for it in Christ's incarnation, or at his first coming. Marriage is between parties of the same kind, as, in the first marriage, Adam called Eve bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, Gen. 2:20. So Christ came to fit himself for that relation of husband to his church, by taking our nature upon him; and therefore the apostle, when he speaketh of the marriage between Christ and his church, useth the same name which Adam had used: Eph. 5:30, 'For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bone.' When Christ was in the world, he made a way for the marriage: he parted from us it is true, but there was an interchange of tokens; he took our flesh, and left with us his Spirit.

[2.] With respect to our first entrance into this relation, when first converted to God, or upon our thankful, broken-hearted, willing acceptance of Christ for Lord and husband. All marriage is entered into by a consent: Christ giveth his consent in the promises, and we by faith, which is a broken-hearted, willing, and thankful acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ to the ends for which God offereth him. Where note, that faith is an acceptance of Christ: John 1:12, 'To as many as received him.' Next, for the mode and manner of this

acceptance, it is broken-hearted, because we are undeserving and ill-deserving creatures, altogether unworthy to be taken into such a near relation to Christ; as Abigail, when David sent to her to make her his wife, debased herself: 1 Sam. 25:40, 41, 'Let thine handmaid wash the feet of thy servants.' Alas! who are we? A poor trembling soul is afraid of being too bold, but God's offer encourageth it. And as it is a broken-hearted, so it is a willing acceptance of Christ; for Christ will not draw us into this relation by force, or bestow the privileges of it without or against our consent: Rev. 22:17, 'Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.' If the will be to Christ, the great difficulty is over. Christianity is but a hearty consent to accept of Christ and his benefits; but the creature's will is not soon gained: Mat. 23:37, 'I would, but ye would not;' he inviteth and clucketh by the renewed messages of his grace, but we will not be gathered: Isa. 65:2, 'I have spread out my hands all the day long to a rebellious people.' The ungodly careless world knoweth not the worth of God's greatest mercies, and therefore despise them, yea, take them for intolerable injuries and troubles, because they are against their fleshly appetites; but when the will is once thoroughly gained to God, the great work of conversion is drawing to a happy period; the consent of the will is the closing act, when we yield ourselves to the Lord, resolving to become his, and to be disposed, ordered, and governed by him at his own pleasure: 'I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine,' Ezek. 16:8. And as it is a willing acceptance, so it is a thankful acceptance of Christ; because it is a great favour and honour done to us, considering the infinite distance between the parties to be joined in the marriage-covenant, God over all blessed for ever, and we poor wretched creatures. There may be among us great distance between the persons that enter into the marriage-covenant, but all that distance is but finite, for it is but such as can be between creature and creature, which are equal in their being, notwithstanding the inequality of many extrinsical respects;

but in this distance between Christ and his people, the distance is between the Creator and the creature, the potter and the clay, the thing formed, and him that formed it; betwixt the most lovely person, and the most loathsome; between the heir of all things, and the children of wrath; the king immortal, and a poor vassal to sin and Satan. And consider also the many benefits we enjoy by it; we have the communion of his righteousness, Spirit, and graces: 2 Cor. 5:21, 'He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' There are two maxims in the civil law, *Uxor fulget radiis mariti*—the wife participateth in the honour of the husband; so we have the communion of Christ's righteousness; and *Uxori lis non intenditur*—the husband is answerable for the wife; the pleas must be brought against him. So Jesus Christ hath paid our debts, and representeth the merit of his sacrifice; he is responsible for the debts we owe to divine justice. Participation is another benefit: Eph. 5:26, 'Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water.' Christ upon the cross had merit enough to purchase, and love enough to intend, and wisdom enough to choose, the greatest benefit for us; and what did he purchase, intend, and choose, but to sanctify and cleanse us by the washing of water through the word? And lastly, we must receive him to the ends for which God offereth him; that is, to be Lord and husband; which importeth a forsaking all others, and a devoting and giving up ourselves to Christ, to live in his love and obedience.

(1.) Before there can be a receiving, there must be a renouncing of all other loves. Christ will be entertained alone. The husband cannot endure a co-rival and competitor. And the marriage consent implieth an election and choice, which is a renouncing all others, and a preferring him alone. So the marriage covenant runneth: Hosea 3:3, 'Thou shalt not be for another, but shalt be for me.' So Ps. 45:10, 11,

'Hearken, O daughter, and consider; incline thine ear: forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him.' All that do consider what is offered in Christ's name, and consent to the motion, they must forsake all their old ways, the old corruptions, and old passions, and old affections; and seriously think of leaving all their worldly pleasures and vanities; they must not stick at their choicest interests, most pleasing lusts, and dearest sins, though it be a right hand, and a right eye, Mat. 5:29. If we consent to take Christ, and retain our old loves still, we shall be little the better for being Christians.

(2.) You must give yourselves up to him, to live in his love and obedience. There are two grand duties we must resolve upon, if we enter into this relation—conjugal love and conjugal obedience.

(1st.) Conjugal love. There is no want of love on Christ's part: Isa. 62:5, 'As a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.' Now this love must be mutual; as he in us, so we in him. Now conjugal love is such a love as is greater to the yokefellow than to any other. So our love to Christ is a superlative love. We must not only love him not less than other things, nor equal with other things, but above them, cleaving to him alone. Some love Christ less than other things; they love him a little, but love the world better. Honour and greatness better: John 12:42, 'How can you believe that seek honour one of another?' Pleasure: 2 Tim. 3:4, 'Lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God.' Profit: 2 Tim. 4:10, 'Demas hath forsaken us, and embraced the present world.' Some love Christ, but love other things equal with him. They are divided; it is a nice case; hard to say which hath the mastery: they make a pother with religion, but never feel the true force of it. But the true conjugal affection is superlative: Ps. 73:25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?

and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee;' Phil. 3:8–10, 'I count all things but dung and dross, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord.' They prefer Jesus Christ before all things in the world. Besides, as an husband, he must have this love.

(2d.) This is a Lord that must have conjugal obedience: Eph. 5:23, 24, 'The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, and the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so let wives be to their own husbands in everything.' I urge it, as wives are subject to their husbands in everything, so let the church and each believing soul be to Christ. Surely, if you consent to marry to Christ, you must reckon upon it, that you are no longer your own to dispose of, and therefore henceforth you must no more live to yourselves. Christ is accepted and received for Lord, Col. 2:6, and as such you must consent to serve and obey him: Ps. 45:12, 'He is thy Lord, worship thou him.' You must take him so as never to be ashamed to own him; take him for better, for worse; take him and his cross, Mat. 16:24; take him and his yoke, Mat. 11:29; take him and his spiritual laws, John 14:21. You are to be obedient to Christ in all things. You are no more to do what you will, but what will please the Lord, 1 Cor. 7:30. In short, you must obey him, if you will have benefit by him, Heb. 5:9.

[3.] It is spoken of with respect to its present state in this world. The relation is begun, but it is not publicly solemnised: 2 Cor. 11:2, 'I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.' The church is sponsa, not uxor. Here by the offers of the gospel we are espoused, and by faith engaged to him: it is called a betrothing to him, Hosea 2:19, 20, 'I will betroth thee to me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee to me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and mercy: I will betroth thee to me in

faithfulness.' The word is not taken generally for marriage, but strictly, and hath a special emphasis in that place; and so noteth either the goodness of God; he would not receive Israel as an unchaste prostitute, that had broken covenant with him, but as a virgin, as if never any breach of contract before; or rather noteth the present state of the church: she is betrothed to Christ, but the marriage is not consummate. The day of espousals and public solemnities are deferred till the resurrection, when Christ will come as a bridegroom to conduct his spouse into his Father's house, for ever to remain with him.

[4.] With respect to its consummation; it is perfected at his second coming; and it is properly called a marriage. It was but a wooing or betrothing before then, when the queen is brought to the king, and abides with him for ever: Ps. 45:15, 'With joy and gladness shall she be brought; they shall enter into the king's palace.'

Now there are many reasons why this second coming of Christ is called a consummation of the marriage, and Christ may then be said to come as a bridegroom.

1. Because there is a personal meeting and interview between his spouse and himself. Now he employeth spokesmen: 2 Cor. 5:20, 'Now we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God.' As Eliezer, Abraham's servant, went to get a match for his master's son, so the ministers of the gospel: 2 Cor. 11:2, 'I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ.' He sends tokens and spiritual refreshings: John 14:21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.' Then he cometh himself, we meet him in person. Here we meet

him in ordinances, Isa. 64:5: 'Present in spirit,' 2 Cor. 5. At death our souls meet him, Eccles. 12:7, but then our whole man shall meet him, Job 19:26, with these arms embrace him. We are indeed brought near to him by faith, and have some fellowship and communion with him; but we do not see him as he is, nor see him face to face, as afterwards.

2. For the public solemnisation of the marriage, the bridegroom and the bride do both deck and adorn themselves. The bridegroom cometh in the glory of his Father, with great abundance of the holy angels: Rev. 19:7, 'Let us be glad, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.' Common garments are not for that wedding: we must be active in the purifying ourselves, but the grace is given by God: ver. 8, 'And to her was granted that she might be clothed in white linen; the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.' As Esther was supplied out of the king's wardrobe, these ornaments and garments of salvation are purchased and bestowed freely upon us; by Jesus Christ all is given. We are here but renewed in part, and cleansed in part; all our filthy garments are not yet put off; but then we shall not have the least remainder of sin and misery. If we should meet Christ with our deformities, we should meet him with shame and discomfort; it would be a dishonour to our bridegroom to come into his presence with our filthy rags; therefore we come to present his bride with glory.

3. Then there is an open manifestation of his dearest love. Before the last day the match is concluded between the parties; there is love expressed, but it is secret and hidden: 'Our life is hid with Christ in God.' But then he will own believers man by man, Luke 12:8, invite them into his bosom in the sight of the world, Mat. 25:34, pronounce their pardon on the throne, Acts 3:19, set them at his right hand, as

judging the world together with himself, 2 Cor. 6:2. Alas! now all is under a veil; the world sees us not, 1 John 3:1; now we ourselves question whether he loves us or no, question it often: 'If the Lord be with us, why are these things befallen us?' But then all is open and clear; when the clouds vanish about Christ's person, so about us also. It is called 'the day of the manifestation of the sons of God,' Rom. 8:19.

4. Then we are brought home to his house, conducted in state to heaven, John 14:3. Then the day is come when you shall have all that you have hoped, desired, looked for. Oh! what a happy day will that be, when the great shepherd of the sheep shall lead his flock into their everlasting fold, and the husband of the church carry her with him into his father's house: John 17:24, 'Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be where I am, and behold my glory.' And his will and testament is made good. Now we are in the outer court. If one day in the house of God be better than a thousand elsewhere, oh! what is it to be brought home to God! In these blessed mansions there we shall abide for ever, and never to part more.

5. Everlasting cohabitation and living with him: 'We shall be ever with the Lord,' 1 Thes. 4:17; not get a glimpse and away, but for ever to enjoy his presence. Christ's presence for a time upon earth was very sweet to his disciples; it was bitter to them to think of his going from them, though it were expedient for them; but now remain in an everlasting state of intimacy and familiarity with him. Now we have a taste of Christ, but then our communion shall be without intermission or interruption; we shall be out of the crowd and press of troubles and temptations and sins, and study divinity in the Lamb's face, and he will communicate himself to us according to the vastest extent of our capacity.

Use, Oh! then, be espoused to Christ; otherwise he will not come as a bridegroom, but as a judge. For motives—

1. Consider your necessity. There is a deep necessity lieth upon you; you are undone for ever if you are not married to Christ. The apostle saith, 1 Cor. 7, if a woman can live without a husband, she doth well if she marrieth not; but now you are undone for ever if you have him not; you are liable to the wrath of the eternal God. The apostle saith, Rom. 7:4, that all those are dead to the law who are married to Christ: that must be done necessarily. First, now, what is it to be dead to the law, but to see ourselves miserable and undone for ever, and impotent, and no way able to help ourselves? The law which is written upon every man's conscience is there represented as a hard and cruel husband, that requireth a hard task to do, but affordeth no strength at all to do it; therefore it bindeth us over to death and the curse. The sense of the law, being inbred in the conscience and natural to us, cannot be extinguished, but will return with the more violence. Well, then, the law suggesteth what we should do, threateneth us if we do it not; and conscience telling us we have not done it, this is a continual grief and vexation to us, and a man is kept under fear of death and hell all his days.

2. Consider the excellency of Christ, who is altogether lovely as to his person and offices, and every way suited to your necessities. As to his person, he is God-man, able and willing to do you good; for what cannot God do? and surely he will not be strange to his own flesh. You are condemned by the law; he is a priest to make atonement for you. You are ignorant of the way to true happiness; he is a prophet to teach and guide you. You have many enemies and difficulties to overcome in that way; he points it out to you; and your own flesh is weak, but he is a king to vanquish your enemies, and to assist you with the powerful succours of his Spirit; he will help you to perform

your duty in the midst of all temptations to the contrary; for we are to serve him in newness of spirit, Rom. 7:5, 6.

3. Consider the utility and profit of it: 1 Cor. 3:22, 23, 'All things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' If you could as heartily devote yourselves to the service of Christ, as Christ as mediator did to the work of redemption, nothing would he wanting to you to promote your present holiness and future happiness.

4. It is no presumption to aspire to this marriage, for God maketh the first motion. God hath made love to you, and wooed you by all manner of engaging expressions, that he may win your hearts, and engage your consent. Oh! do not refuse the Lord's kindness, or neglect to bestow your hearts upon him, or to give up yourselves to him. Christ hath employed spokesmen, sends his tokens as presents of love: Mat. 23:37, 'I would, but you would not.' All marriages are brought about by earnest suit on the one side, and consent on the other: so it is here. Oh! therefore consider, and say, as Rebecca, 'I can say no more nor no less; the thing is the Lord's.'

5. Consider how ill Christ will take it to be refused: Prov. 1:29, 30, 'They would none of my counsel, and despised all my reproofs;' and Ps. 81:11, 'But my people would not hearken to my voice; Israel would none of me.' Despising of kindness is very provoking. Oh! then, give Christ a free and a full and firm consent, and all is ended.

[1.] A free consent, not extorted. When men are a little frightened into a good conscience, Christ seemeth to be welcome to them; but as their trouble weareth off, so doth their resolution to take Christ for their Lord and Saviour: Ps. 78:34, 35, 'When he slew them, then they sought him, and returned and inquired early after God; and they remembered that God was their rock, and the Most High their redeemer.' In such cases men put a force upon themselves, and their

heart is not inclined, but compelled, as those that marry against their wills. It is only in a pang and fit of conscience that they like Christ, when some great distress forceth them to resolve for him, and their fears drive them to Christ, rather than his excellences draw them to him. That which is forced is not sincere. Many own Christ in their sickness and distress, that never care for him when they are well at ease; then they forget all, live as they did before, when their turn is served. There is a difference between a woman's coming to a physician for cure, and her coming to a husband to dwell with him. True conversion doth begin in fear, but it doth not end there; it endeth in a change of heart, and a settled love to God and holiness, and a hatred of sin. This is not only seen in men when the fear of death affrights them, but in their whole lives. Others, under some conviction, they would have Christ for their consciences, and the world for their hearts.

[2.] It must be a full and unbounded consent to all the terms and demands of the gospel, to be what he would have you to be, and to do what he would have you to do: Mat. 13:44, the man 'sold all to buy the pearl of great price.' You must not stick at anything. Though you are unwilling to let the match go, yet it is no full consent. Christ will be taken for better for worse; you must renounce your dearest lusts, devote and resign your choicest interests, or else you are unworthy of him. The bargain is not made till all your interests be laid at his feet, Luke 14:26–33. So for lusts, Mat. 5:29, 30. Here men usually stick, and had rather undergo any cost and pains, than undergo the mortification of sin, as you may see in Micah 6:6, 7, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, and calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, and the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' Now,

before it comes to this, man hath many debates of soul. They are convinced that sin is evil, contrary to God, and hurtful to themselves; and have some mind to let it go; but, in fine, their hearts are more for it than against it, and so do not come up to a saving consent to take Christ for their Lord and husband. The pleasures of sin are so bewitching, that they cannot come up roundly to Christ's terms, or to the whole business of Christianity.

[3.] It must be a firm and habitual consent, and such as is not retracted in our after conversation. Weak and wavering purposes soon come to nothing; but when this is your ordinary frame, and the new nature, and the inclination of your souls is this way, when there is a new bent put upon your spirits, then it will hold out: Ps. 119:112, 'I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always to the end.'

The second thing remarkable in the text is the entrance of those that were ready in to the nuptial feast; and—

1. Who are the persons? They that are inwardly renewed, and endowed with the saving graces of the Spirit.

2. What is their privilege? They went into the marriage, to the festivities of the marriage-chamber, or place of nuptial entertainment. Marriage-feasts are often spoken of in scripture: Judges 14:10, 'And Sampson made a feast, for so used the young men to do;' and Gen. 29:22, 'And Laban gathered all the young men of the place, and made a feast.' This figureth the joys of eternal life, and that full and sweet communion we shall have with Christ in heaven.

Doct. Those only who are ready and prepared for Christ shall enter into eternal joys, when others are excluded.

Luke 12:37, 'Blessed are those servants whom, when the Lord cometh, he shall find watching.' So Mat. 24:44, 'Therefore be ye also ready.'

1. I shall inquire what it is to be ready.
2. Show you why they only shall have eternal and immediate communion with Christ.

First, What it is to be ready? There is a twofold readiness—

1. A habitual and constant readiness.
 2. An actual readiness, when you specially compose yourselves to meet with Christ.
1. Of the habitual and constant readiness, that concerneth the state of the person, the frame of the heart, and the course of our conversations, as represented by oil in the vessel, and the lamps kept burning.

[1.] The state of the person. He must be one reconciled, and one at peace with God. There are two expressions in scripture that speak of the state that we must be found in when Christ cometh; 2 Peter 3:14, 'That we may be found of him in peace.' The other is, 2 Cor. 5:3, 'That we may not be found naked.' And both do principally relate to justification. Our peace depends upon our reconciliation with God, Rom. 5:1; and till your pardon be sued out in a humble and broken-hearted manner, how will you be able to stand before the Lord? till you be rectus in curia, and have a discharge of sin and the curse, and be not found in a natural and unconverted estate? The other expression is, 'That we may not be found naked.' It is sad to appear before God with no other covering but our own skins. No; there is no

getting the blessing but in the garment of our elder brother. Therefore we are so often bidden to 'put on the Lord Jesus,' Rom. 13:14, and Gal. 3:27, and that you buy of Him 'white raiment to cover your nakedness,' Rev. 3:17, 18. These places are principally to be interpreted of justification, though it will not exclude sanctification; for that is a garment of salvation to cover our loathsome nakedness from the sight of the Lord.

[2.] As to the frame of the heart, that it may be renewed and sanctified. Habitual grace is oil in the vessel, that there may be a spring or fountain of grace in the heart, John 7:38; but that I spake of before. The graces of the Spirit are the bride's jewels, and ornaments are the things which the bridegroom delights in: Isa. 61:10, 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robes of his righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels,' &c. The more these things are in us, and abound in us, the more lovely in Christ's eyes.

[3.] Something as to the course of our conversation. It is not enough to have oil in the vessel, but the lamp must be kept burning, our graces in actual and continual exercise; and we must always make it our study to please the Lord. This is part of our preparation; for men are judged according to their works: 'Therefore what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?' 2 Peter 3:10. The life of grace is seen in the fruits of it; for that end was it given us; not to lie idle in the heart, but to discover its influence and efficacy in every part of our conversation: 2 Peter 1:8, 'If these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

That will make a Christian busy and active in God's service. Well, then, by this you know who are prepared and who unprepared.

2. There is an actual preparation, which is like the trimming the lamps when they heard the cry, and that noteth our actual fitting ourselves for death and judgment. Besides our general habitual preparation, there needeth actual preparation. When Pharaoh sent for Joseph, he washed himself. It is no slight thing to appear before Christ. Our general work should often be reviewed, that we may get promises ready, evidences ready, experiences ready; that we may have nothing to do but to wait the good hour, and give welcome to the Lord Jesus Christ, as old Simeon, Luke 2:29, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' You should be so settled in conscience, weaned in heart, purified in spirit, that you do with comfort wait for the salvation of God; and not only wait for it, but long for it, love his appearing; especially after a long profession of the name of Christ, so it should be.

Now this actual preparation should be made, either—

[1.] Daily, and when you are in the greatest health and strength: we should think of our great change, Job 14:14, for death doth not always give warning; and to be provided doth no hurt. It enliveneth our general preparation, and maketh us the more serious: it is like poisoning our confidence, and weighing the strength and temper of it, to see if it can encounter the thoughts of death and judgment to come. A runaway cowardly faith, that cannot endure the serious thoughts and supposition of these things, will do us no good: presumption is a coward. Besides, it riddeth off the present work with more success when we live every day as if it were our last, and do all things as if presently to give an account to Christ of the doing

of them. Once more, to familiarise the thoughts of Christ's coming to us, it allayeth so much of the dread and terror of it as belongeth to bondage, and keepeth up so much as belongs to reverence, and serious and awful walking with God.

[2.] When God summons us by his providence to make up our account: Luke 16:2, 'Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.' Many are about to go into the other world, but they do not think of making ready for it. The wrath of God is even at the door, and they are stupid and careless. Surely such a frame of heart should be far from the children of God. They have a tender conscience, and a deep sense of the world to come; therefore in probability, when they have but a short time wherein to prepare, their preparation should be the more serious. So when we are to partake of the Lord's supper, a man would go aside and renew his evidences for heaven, and awaken his spiritual desire; so for hearing the word, a man would compose his heart to receive the word with meekness; and should we not set our hearts in frame when we are to meet with Christ, not only in the ordinances, but in person?

Secondly, Why those only that are ready and prepared are to enter into the nuptial chamber.

1. Those are only meet for heavenly happiness. It is most suitable to them, as having that life begun in their hearts which shall be perfected there, Col. 1:12. What should poor sensual, sinful creatures do with heaven? Heaven is prepared for us, and we for heaven, Rom. 6:23. When we are put into a heavenly frame and temper, heaven's gates stand open for us. It is the wisdom of God to put all things in their proper place; heavy and light bodies in their proper places. So here the apostle saith, 2 Cor. 5:5, 'He that wrought us for this very thing is God.' Excellent vessels are not thrown about the house, but

put into a place suitable. The purging and purifying of our souls is a kind of spiritualising of our bodies, and so we are fitted both in body and soul.

2. These only have a lively sense of the coming of the Lord. Temporaries are a sort of hypocrites; their work is real, though but a common work; not because they purposely and intendedly dissemble, but because they have not answerable impressions to the things which they profess to believe, and their affections and preparations are not answerable to what they know; and so it is a kind of mocking of God. They profess and believe God omniscient, yet fear not to sin in his presence; to believe eternity, yet temporal things have the greatest power and influence upon them: they look for the coming of Christ in great majesty and glory, but do not make suitable provision. If we had high thoughts of Christ, and a great respect to him, we would prepare accordingly; but surely we have lessening thoughts of Christ, and his glorious coming, if we do not make ready for him, how high soever our notions be about it.

Use. Are we ready? I must direct the edge of this use to four sorts of people:—

1. Some care not whether they be ready or no; they do but dally with eternity and things of religion; their hearts are not moved with joy, or grief, or hope, or fear at the remembrance of this day. Surely they have no faith, at least not a lively, but dead faith; and therefore are so dead-hearted; and besides they care for none of these things, 'They mind earthly things.' If they can live comfortably here, be well at ease here, they never take care to live eternally. Now to these I shall only say, Live in no state or frame of heart but what you would die in. Alas! in your serious moods you cannot but say, I would not die for all the world. But what if God should arrest thee before thou thinkest

of it? What would become of thee? On the other side consider, when our work is done, and our ornaments put on, then it will be pleasant to us to think of the coming of Christ: 'Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,' Luke 2:29.

2. Some think themselves ready when they are not: Rev. 3:17, 'Thou thoughtest thou wast rich, and increased with goods; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' I trust in God's mercy, and hope I shall go to Christ: it is easy to say this; but do you know what it is to meet with Christ, what honour he expecteth from you at the last day, and how little a naked trust and a dead and empty faith will do to your acceptance with him? I confess we have all from Christ, and all the honour we can do him results from his own grace; but yet it is said, Rev. 19:5, 'The bride hath made herself ready.' There is work required of us, and such as may be answerable to the dignity of so great a Lord and husband.

3. Others think a habitual readiness will serve the turn. They mind present duties, but do not enliven them by the remembrance of the coming of the Lord; or they have not done their main work, and therefore take more liberty about the world than others, and a greater liberty in the delights of sense; and therefore we have that caution, Luke 21:24, 'Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life; and so that day come upon you unawares.' That will make you wither and contract; deadness and drowsiness hinder your comfort and peace, and that cheerful testimony you may give for God to others; as Peter's question, 'Lord, speakest thou to us, or to all?' Luke 12:41.

4. Many are ready, but think themselves unready. It concerneth them to study gospel grounds of comfort and peace, if they can endure the touchstone, though not the balance. Where there is a sincere bent of heart to please him, there is a law of liberty, James 2:12; a law of liberty, not for the carnal, but the sincere; not a law of trial, but of gospel liberty.

We now come to the third thing in the text, 'And the door was shut.' The shutting the door noteth the impossibility of getting our condition altered when the day of grace and trial is once over. There is a twofold door:—

1. *Janua misericordiae ad ignoscendum*—the door of Christ's pity and mercy to returning sinners: Mat. 7:7, 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' And John 6:37, 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast off.' But then this door is shut.

2. *Janua gratiae ad convertendum*—there is the door of repentance and conversion; but there is no repentance when we are in termino. They may have a sense of their misery, but their habitual hatred to God remaineth: they that have wittingly and wilfully rejected his counsel, remain so still. The fire of hell doth not soften, but harden them; their self-love may make them sensible of their pain.

Reason 1. His love to his people. Though Christ waiteth long for the preparation of the wicked, yet he will not always delay the desire of the godly.

Reason 2. His justice. It is fit that they that live so long in their unbelief, and disobedience of the counsels and precepts of the gospel, should at length find this dispensation continued, who grow

unteachable and hardened in their negligences: Ps. 95:7, 8, 'To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.'

Use. Is to press us to begin with God betimes. You that are young, take warning this day; do not think there is time enough hereafter. You that are old, do not think it is too late, nor be ashamed to begin now. (1.) The present time is the only opportunity of salvation, or embracing the offer of God's grace, Heb. 3:7; Ps. 95:7. Oh! do not reject his counsel. (2.) Love is impatient of delay; if we could hope to prevail with you that way. (3.) When the angels sinned, the Lord immediately shut the door against them; to us he hath given leave, Acts 11:13, 14, and 'space to repent,' Rev. 2:21; let us not 'receive the grace of God in vain,' 2 Cor. 6:1.

SERMON IX

Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not—MAT. 25:11, 12

IN these words we have two branches:—

1. The supplication of the foolish virgins, ver. 11.
2. The answer of the bridegroom, ver. 12.

In the first consider the time when it was. These foolish virgins came afterwards, when the door was shut.

Secondly, The blandishment and compellation here used, Lord, Lord.

First, For the time when it was. These virgins came afterwards, when it was too late. They should have knocked and cried for mercy before

the door was shut: Isa. 55:6, 'Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.' Otherwise our cries are but howlings, the fruit of our discontent rather than our own choice. Heb. 11:5, it is said of Enoch that he pleased God. If we would live with God in a blessed estate hereafter, we must please God ere we depart hence. This is the time of grace, or God's patience: Luke 2:14, 'Peace upon earth, good-will to men;' and 2 Cor. 6:1, 2. This is the time of labour and service, Eccles. 9:10. Judgment findeth us as death leaveth us, Eccles. 11:3. Then we are in termino. When this life is ended, all opportunities of doing good end with it. Corn doth not grow in the barn, but in the field; therefore we had need to work now, seek grace now, be instant with God now: John 9:4, 'I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh, wherein no man can work.' And now, that is, not only while life lasteth, but instantly.

Secondly, Here is the blandishment, and compellation used, Lord, Lord! 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 which is in heaven;' and ver. 22, 'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord.'

1. Here is a title of honour given to Christ by hypocrites, and it is ingeminated. The title of honour given to Christ is due to him: John 13:13, 'Ye call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.' But the title must be verified by suitable practice. Men may delight to be flattered with the title of Lord, Lord, by those that inwardly bear them no reverence; but Christ, who knoweth the heart, will not be pleased with those glorious titles, when your hearts give your tongues the lie: Luke 6:46, 'Why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?' As they cried, 'Hail king of the Jews,' when the soldiers mocked him. Many often intitle Christ to their party, take upon them to be his disciples in words; but the 'kingdom of God

standeth not in word, but in power.' But these served their master more with mouth than with heart; therefore Christ doth not accept of them, nor approve of them for his servants. They call Christ Lord, but obey the devil, are led and governed by the flesh, disobedient to Christ's counsels and precepts. I hear 'Lord, Lord;' but what means the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen? Therefore it is vain to use this honourable title to move pity in the judge.

2. They ingeminate it to show the ardency of their desires, and earnestness to have Christ for their Lord. Now, first or last every knee shall bow to Christ; they are forced to fly to him now in their extremity and pressures of misery. Though men will not come to Christ for grace, yet they will come to him for glory, Now they cannot come because busied about something else, Luke 14:18–20; indeed, will not come: John 5:40, 'And ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.' But then it is all 'Lord, Lord.' Oh! how fain would they own Christ, and be owned by him! But alas! their repentance cometh too late, their desires too late, their tears too late; it is all forced by their extremity: Job 27:9, 'Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?' A hypocrite would not much care if he were heard in the times of peace, and the affluence of outward enjoyments; but then, when he would fain flatter God into a hearing, God rejecteth him. In extremity they prize mercy above a thousand worlds; but all will not do, the door is shut.

3. The matter of the petition, 'Open to us;' that is, the door of the nuptial chamber. None but desire happiness. This petition, as set here, noteth two things:—

[1.] The innate desire of happiness that is in man. All desire to enter, and to be saved at length, however they neglect the means for the present, to get oil in their vessels, or to keep in their lamps.

[2.] How deeply leavened with self-confidence and self-conceit the hearts of men are, so that they are not easily dispossessed of it. When the door is shut, the foolish virgins make full account to enter. The most sottish think they shall do well enough: Deut. 29:19, 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart, and add drunkenness to thirst.' Especially the temporary, who is the refined hypocrite: 'Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name,' &c.; make full account to go to heaven, that shall never come there. They trust to false evidences; use negligent endeavours, please themselves with uncertain and deceitful hopes; but all vain and false pretences shall then be confuted, and those that have a high and false opinion of their interest in Christ shall then be disapproved by him.

Secondly, I now come to the bridegroom's reply, Where note—

1. The vehemency and asseveration, 'Verily I say unto you.' To cut off all further hope, his answer is peremptory and decisive.

2. The reply itself, 'I know you not.' There is a twofold knowledge—intuitive and approbative. (1.) By an intuitive knowledge: 'Known unto the Lord from the beginning are all his works,' Acts 15:18. God had an idea of all things in himself before he gave them actual being: he knoweth all whom he conserves by his providence. Every wise man knoweth what he hath. Christ knew that virtue went from him in the throng. (2.) But this knowledge is here meant of the knowledge of approbation, as we find it often in scripture. Now Christ's knowledge of his own people is threefold:—

[1.] As they fall under the purposes of his grace. So it is said, 2 Tim. 2:12, 'The Lord knoweth them that are his.' This is also in scripture called his fore-knowledge: Rom. 8:29, 'Whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son;' 1 Peter

1:2, 'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.' God the Father having all persons that ever should be in the world under his all-seeing eye, he did out of his free love single and choose out some to be the objects of his grace, designing them by the redemption of Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit to come unto glory. He particularly treated with Christ about them, John 17:6, put them into his hands, to be justified, sanctified, and finally saved. This is 'the foundation of the Lord that standeth sure.'

[2.] As they are under the care of his special providence, when they are in actual being, to supply them with all things necessary and good for them. So it is said, Ps. 1:6, 'The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked shall perish;' John 10:14, 'I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.' Christ knoweth them man by man, person by person; and all their safety cometh from his particular care over them: Gal. 4:9, 'But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God.' He assigneth the work of conversion to God's preventing grace. Sinners in an unconverted estate are such of whom God taketh no notice and knowledge so as to be familiar with them, and to communicate his special and saving blessings to them.

[3.] It is put for his rewarding grace; and so he is said to know, or not to know. To know his people: 1 Cor. 8:3, 'If any man love God, the same is known of him.' Those that choose God for their portion, and cleave to him, and serve him faithfully, Christ will own them or 'confess them before his Father in heaven,' Luke 12:8; but others he will not own. See Mat. 7:21, 'And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you.' He will not own them in judgment that will not own and obey him now. So Luke 13:25–27, 'When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door; and ye begin to stand without, and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; and

he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not, whence you are: then shall ye begin to say, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell ye, I know you not.' Here is no entertainment for such as you, who have by your sloth, negligence, and improvidence forfeited the advantages offered you. I never approved you for my disciples and servants. Μᾶλλον δὲ τῆς γέενης τουτο, &c., saith Chryssostom; these words are more cutting and grievous than hell itself, 'I know you not.' Well, these three sorts of knowing must be distinguished.

The first is this, that Christ hath a particular and exact knowledge of all the elect, and who they are that shall be saved, wherein he will not be disappointed: John 13:18, 'I know whom I have chosen.'

The second is the ground of our present comfort and support. He hath a special affection to them, taketh special notice and care of them, and will bring them to know, love, and acknowledge him, as he doth also them: he beareth a suitable impression thereto.

The third is matter of our hope, and will be our honour at the last day, that Christ will come to us, and own us, and reward us for all that we have done or suffered for him here. When others have the entertainment of strangers, and are rejected as no true believers and professors of the gospel, then shall we be owned and admitted into heaven by him.

Here is a large field of matter. I shall single out those things that are most obvious and worthy of our remark and observation.

First, That they came afterwards; I shall take occasion to show the necessity of hastening our preparation for the day of our accounts.

Secondly, From their passionate desire to have the door opened to them; here is a strong insinuation, and vehement desire, 'Lord, Lord;' that even in reprobates and castaways there may be a desire of entering into the joys of everlasting life.

Thirdly, From Christ's reply, I shall show you the dreadful misery and direful effect of being disowned by Christ at his coming.

For the first, since the foolish virgins came too late, we should all take care to begin with God betimes; the sooner the better.

1. Because you make a necessary work sure, and put it out of doubt and hazard. The time of life is the time of grace, Luke 2:14; 2 Cor. 6:2. Now the time of life is uncertain: James 4:14, 'Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? it is but a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.' And a work of necessity should not be left on peradventures: therefore we ought to bestir ourselves without delay or fore-slowness. We know not how soon opportunity will be over. It cannot be done too soon, it may be done too late: and therefore it is good to be on the surest side. Ludovicus Capellus telleth us, out of Rabbi Jonah's book of the Mystery of Repentance, that when a disciple came to his teacher to know what was the fittest time to repent in, he answered, One day before his death, meaning presently; for we have not assurance of another day: Prov. 27:1, 'Thou knowest not what tomorrow may bring forth.' Our greatest works, and of most absolute necessity, should be done first, and have the quickest despatch, lest it be too late before we go about them. Oh! woe to us if God should call us off before we have minded coming to him, and walking with him.

2. In point of obedience; God presseth to now. God doth not only command us to please him, but to do it presently: Heb. 3:7, 8, 'Now, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts.' Pompilius the

Roman ambassador, when he made delays and excuses, the emperor drew a circle on the ground, saying, *Intra hunc*—answer me before thou stirrest from this place. God standeth upon his authority, and will have a present answer: if he say, To-day, it is flat disobedience for you to say, To-morrow. Now is the time of salvation, at this instant, 2 Cor. 6:2. You are charged in his name, as you will answer the contrary. You say, No; I will please the flesh a little longer. It may be just with God, if you refuse him, never to call you more.

3. In point of ingenuity: we receive a plenteous recompense for a small service. When a man thinketh what God hath provided for them that love him and serve him, he should be ashamed that he receives so much and does so little; and therefore he should redeem all the time that he can, that he may answer his expectations from God. Shall we adjourn and put off God to our decrepid time, when he hath provided for us eternal happiness? Can a man that hath any ingenuity in his breast be content to dishonour God longer, grieve his Spirit longer, provided that at length he may be saved? Those that have any due sense of God's kindness, or their own duty, will think God hath too long been kept out of his right, and that all the time that remaineth is too little to express our love and thankfulness to him, 1 Peter 4:3. Men that do delay, do in effect say, Let me despise thy commands, and abuse thy mercy a little longer; but then when my lusts are satisfied, and youthful heats are spent, I will see what I can do to be saved. What baseness of spirit is this!

4. It is our advantage to begin betimes, both here and hereafter.

[1.] Here. The sooner you begin to please God, the sooner you have an evidence of your interest in his favour, more experience of his love, more hopes of living with him in heaven. Oh! these things are not slight things! When once you come to taste the comfort of them

you will be sorry that you had begun no sooner; as Paul complaineth that he was 'born out of due time,' 1 Cor. 15:8, because he lost the advantage of seeing Christ in the flesh, and so of many sweet conferences, and many sweet visits of love and experiences of grace, that otherwise might fall to his share: Rom. 16:7, 'They were in Christ before me.' An early acquaintance with Christ bringeth many benefits with it, as peace, and comfort, and joy, and hope, which others that set forth later want. The consolations of God should not be vile and cheap with us: if you were acquainted with them you would leave your husks for bread in your Father's house.

[2.] The sooner you begin with God the greater will your glory be hereafter, for the more we improve our talents here, the greater will our reward be in heaven: Luke 19:16–19, 'And he said unto him, Well done, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, and said, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds: and he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.' And when the mother of Zebedee's children came to Christ, and desired that her two sons might sit, one at his right hand, and the other at his left, Mat. 20:23, Christ doth not deny the thing, that there are degrees of glory, set forth by sitting on the right hand, and on the left; but telleth her that it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of his Father; as in hell there is a hotter and cooler judgment. Certainly then they that have long pleased God, and made it the whole business of their lives, shall have larger measures of happiness.

Use. Is to reprove those that adjourn and put off the work of religion from time to time, till they have lost all time. It is Satan's artifice to cheat men of the present opportunity, by promises of a future obedience. Oh! consider the work is much, and life is short. If we did live as many years as days, all would be little enough; therefore let us

begin betimes. There are three arguments to press this. If this work must be once done, why not now? your hearts will not be better, nor the terms less.

1. Your hearts are not like to be better; for the longer we continue in sin, the heart is the more hardened. As the highway by continual treading groweth the harder, and the anvil by continual smiting is hardened the more, so long use in sin obdureth the heart, and long resistance grieveth the Spirit, and carnal affections grow upon us: Jer. 13:23, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.' It is hard to transplant an old tree. The affections are now more settled in a course of sin.

2. The terms of the gospel will not be more easy, and we better able to obey them hereafter than now we are. The laws of Christianity are always the same. The pleasures of sin must one day be renounced, or we are for ever miserable; and why not now? Sin will be as sweet hereafter as now it is; and salvation dispensed upon the same terms. You cannot be saved hereafter with less ado, or bring down Christ or heaven to a lower rate. If this be a reason, it will ever be as a reason against Christ and religion, because you are loath to part with this or that pleasing lust; and so it will never be.

3. The suspicion that is upon a late repentance. It is seldom sound, and therefore always questionable. That is no true repentance which ariseth merely from horror and the sense of hell. This sensible work that men have upon them may be but the beginning of everlasting despair. All men seek the Lord at length, but the wise seek him in time. This was the great difference between the wise and foolish virgins; one sought him 'in time,' the other 'out of time.' They would covet his favour at last. Upon a death-bed the most profane would

have God for their portion: when they can sin no more, and enjoy the world no longer, then they cry and howl for mercy and comfort, and a little well-grounded hope of heaven or eternal life: but who can tell whether this sensible work that is upon them be not merely an act of self-love, and the fruit of those natural desires which all the creatures have after their own happiness, or a mere retreat others have when they can hold the world no longer. We cannot say this repentance is true, nor affirm the contrary, that it is false; but it is doubtful. There is but that one instance of the thief on the cross, that truly repented when he came to die. The scriptures contain a history of four thousand years, or thereabouts; and yet all that while we have but this one instance of a true repentance just at death; and in that instance there is an extraordinary conjunction of circumstances which cannot reasonably be expected again. Christ was now at his right hand, in the height of his love drawing sinners to God: never such a season as then; and it is more than probable he had never a call before then. Well, then, let us put this necessary work of preparation for God out of doubt betimes; yea, let the children of God, if they have not yet prevailed against such a lust, or lived in the neglect of such a duty, could not bring their hearts to it hitherto, make speed, lest they be surprised, and this defect in their preparation make their death uncomfortable. A good Christian is always converting, yet not fully converted: the first work is often gone over, and he is still getting nearer to God by a more affectionate compliance with his whole will.

Doct 2. That those that are finally refused by the Lord may yet have a desire of the joys of heaven.

1. Consider them in this world, and in the world to come. These two respects are different; for though self-love be the common cause of their desiring heaven both now and then, yet there is a difference: it

is more commendable to desire it now than to desire it then, though neither be an argument of any gracious constitution of soul. It is more commendable to desire it now, when it is a matter of faith to believe the world to come, than when it is a matter of sense; as when all shadows are chased away, then it is no hard matter to convince men of things that lie within the veil; that is, of the truth and worth of heavenly things: and yet if they should be convinced of this, we cannot say they are gracious, however they are better than mere infidels; for carnal men may desire a share in the state of the blessed, as Num. 23:10, 'Oh! that I might die the death of the righteous!' Balaam had his wishes. And those that did not like Christ's doctrine, but departed from him, said, John 6:34, 'Lord, evermore give us of this bread of life.' They would fain be happy. When this happiness was represented unto them, it may and doth stir up strange motions in the hearts of those that are unrenewed and unchanged.

2. There is a difference in the end and use of this desire of happiness. Now and then God leaveth these velleities and inclinations as a stock upon which to graft grace; as a spinster leaveth a lock of wool to fasten the next thread; as Nebuchadnezzar's shape remained when he was turned a-grazing among the beasts; and as Job's messengers, 'I alone am escaped to tell thee.' There are these inclinations to happiness that are escaped out of the ruins of the fall. God by our self-love would draw us to love himself: man will not be dealt with else. It leaveth men capable of heaven the doctrine of life represented to them, they are without excuse if they refuse it. This is the use of it now; but then when we are in termino, it hath another use. This love of their own happiness, and desire to be saved, serveth for this very use, to make them sensible of their loss, the grief of their condemnation and lost estate is increased thereby. Now this is little thought of by carnal men, because they have oblectamenta sensus, the entertainments of sense to divert their minds; but when separate

and set apart from all these, then, if they have no other punishment, this is enough. Surely their understanding remaineth, having nothing to comfort them and allay the bitter sense of their loss. But now let us see—

1. How far carnal and unregenerate men desire happiness.

2. Why this is so little improved, and they make so little use of it. First, How far a carnal and unregenerate man may desire happiness?

1. They may desire good confuse, non indefinite, happiness in the general; but this desire cometh under no deliberation and choice. The happiness that is offered by Christ, or that life and immortality that he bringeth to light, cometh under another consideration. Good, good, is the cry of the world. Certainly no man would be miserable, but all would be happy, and live at ease. Christians, pagans, all good men, bad men, they that seldom agree in anything, do all agree in this, they would have good. To ask men whether they would be happy or no, is to ask them whether they love themselves, yea or no.

2. They would not only have good in the general, but some eternal good. And because this is not so evident by nature, they grope and feel about for it, Acts 17:26. There is an unsatisfiedness in present things, and therefore they are scrambling and feeling about for some better thing. As Solomon tried all experiments, so do men go about seeking for good, Eccles. 7:29. Since we lost the straight line of God's direction, we seek it sometimes in one thing, sometimes in another; and Christ saith, Mat. 13:45, 46, that the 'kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; and when he had found one pearl of good price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.' Man would have something contentful, that may be an everlasting ground of rejoicing to him.

3. As to true happiness and eternal good, when it is discovered to us, our inclinations to it are but weak and ineffectual. Without grace we discern it but weakly; for there is a great mist upon eternity, and the light of nature being dim, cannot pierce through it, 2 Peter 1:9. As a spire at a distance, men see it so that they cannot know whether they see it, yea or nay; or as the blind man, when his eyes were first touched by Christ, he saw men walking like trees. Again we consider it but weakly, the mind being diverted by other objects. As when we see a man in a crowd, we can hardly take notice of him; so men seldom retire to consider what God offereth them in Christ. When God promised Abraham the land of Canaan, he biddeth him go and view the length and the breadth of it, Gen. 13:14–17. So when he promiseth the kingdom of heaven, he doth in effect speak the same to us; for certainly no man shall enter into that land of promise but he that hath considered it, and well viewed it, and can lay aside his earthly distractions sometimes, to take a turn in the land of promise: but few do this; few send their thoughts before them as spies into that blessed land, and therefore it worketh so little upon them. And we desire it but weakly; the affections being prepossessed and pre-engaged by things that come next to hand, we conceive only a wish or a velleity for this happy estate, not a serious volition, or a firm bent of heart; and therefore we pursue it but weakly, as children desire a thing passionately, but are soon put out of the humour: they do not pursue it with that earnestness, exactness, and uniformity, which is requisite: 'The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing,' Prov. 13:4, 'because his hands refuse to labour,' Prov. 21:25. So that this inclination to happiness is neither serious, nor constant, nor laborious: these desires are but desires.

4. If they like the end, they dislike the means. Our souls are more averse from the means than from the end. All agree in opinions and wishes about a supreme and immortal happiness; yet there is a great

discord in the way that leadeth to it, not so much in opinion as practice. Men like not God's terms: Esau would have the blessing, yet sold the birthright, Heb. 12:16, 17. Indeed in things natural we do not expect the end without the means; but in things supernatural we do, and so by refusing the means, we do separate the end, Ps. 106:24. Heaven is a good place, but it is a hard matter to get thither; so loath are we to be at the cost and pains: we desire happiness, not holiness. God doth promote those things we naturally desire; but still that we submit to those things we are naturally against. Whatsoever maketh for ourselves we are naturally more willing of than what maketh for the honour of God: now if we will not submit to the one, we shall not have the other. We would all be pardoned, and freed from the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell; but we are unwilling to let go the profit and pleasure that we fancy in sin.

Secondly, Why this is no more improved, and why we make no better use of it? There are four causes of it—(1.) Ignorance. To many the object is not represented; as to heathens and to sottish Christians. (2.) Inconsideration. Spiritual objects must not only be represented, but enforced upon the will by the efficacy and weight of meditation, Ps. 1:3. (3.) Unbelief. They have not a sound persuasion of these truths: Heb. 11:13, 'They were persuaded of them, and embraced them.' They had not a guess, but a sound belief. (4.) Unsubjection of will: Rom. 8:7, 'Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' It is easier to cure their errors than to mortify their affections.

Use. Oh! do not rest in desiring to be happy; there is no great matter in that; the damned would have the door opened to them: but desire grace, Ps. 119:5; Rom. 7:23; desire it prevalently, so as not to be put out of the humour; as children would fain have something when they are in pain, but are pleased with rattles or any toy. If your vain

delights abate not, this desire will do you no good. Desire it so as to labour for it, yea, so as to make it your main business, Ps. 27:4; yea, to part with all for it, Mat. 13:46. This is the way to be happy indeed.

Doct. 3. That it is a dreadful misery to be disowned by Christ at his coming: 'I know you not.'

1. Consider who may be disowned. Many that profess respect to Christ, and may be well esteemed of in the visible church; many that cry 'Lord, Lord;' many that have 'eat and drunk in his presence.' There is a great deal of difference between the esteem of God and the judgment of the world. Many whom we take to be forward professors, yea, many that have great gifts and employments in the ministry, and with great success, Mat. 7:22. If only pagans, or only profane persons were damned, or the opposite party to Christ, it were another matter; there were not such cause of fear: but those of Christ's faction, many that profess to know him, but were never subdued by the power of his grace, John 11:52–54, Christ doth not know, because he doth not love them.

2. The misery of being disowned. (1.) This disowning is the act and sentence of a judge. If it were the frown of a bare friend in our misery, it even cuts the heart in sunder; but when a neglected Saviour shall become an angry judge, when his favour hath been slighted long, then he will stir up all his wrath. When it is 'kindled but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him,' Ps. 2:12. (2.) It is the disappointment of a hope. They supposed he meant to own them, and therefore put in their plea. There is a hope that will leave ashamed, Rom. 5:5. (3.) It is the cause of all other misery. *Pœna damni* maketh way for *pœna sensus*. Here we care not for him, so long as we can be well without him. It may be now you esteem it

nothing to have a frown from Christ in the day of his patience; but then, 'Depart, ye cursed.'

Use. Oh! let this make you more serious for the time to come. Do not grieve the Spirit any longer, Eph. 4:30. Do you receive and own Christ when others refuse him, and you will be owned by Christ: Luke 12:8, 9, 'And I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God. But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God.'

SERMON X

Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.—MAT. 25:13.

HERE is the conclusion of the whole parable, as the illative particle therefore showeth. Every passage in it will infer this conclusion.

First, The suddenness and unexpectedness of his coming, watch therefore.

Secondly, Only those that are ready shall enter into the marriage-chamber, watch therefore, that ye may be always ready.

Thirdly, The shutting the door, and exclusion of the unprepared, watch therefore.

Fourthly, The door is shut, as never to be opened again. When they beg entrance they are refused and disowned by Christ, as having not his mark upon them, watch therefore; for ye know not the day, neither the hour, &c.

In the words we have—(1.) A duty; (2.) The reason of it. The one will explain the other.

1. For the duty; what is meant by watching? Because we are pressed to it upon the account of the uncertain time of Christ's coming. Here it meaneth a care to get and keep ourselves always ready, and in a posture to receive him for our Lord, as himself explaineth it, Mat. 24:42, 'Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.'

2. The reason, 'For ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh;' Mat. 24:44, 'For in such an hour you think not of, the Son of man cometh.'

Doct. The great duty that lieth upon them that believe and look for Christ's coming is watching.

My business will be to show you what watching is in the general notion of it. As it is taken spiritually and metaphorically, it implieth a diligent care and heed to the great affairs of our souls; for it is a mixed thing, made up of prudence and diligence. It implieth a prudent foresight of the soul's danger, with a diligent care to avoid it. It is pressed in scripture to a double end; partly that we may maintain the present state, and partly that we may prepare for the future: the one quickeneth the other. And though the latter be of chief consideration in this place, yet it will not be amiss to consider both; for there is no hope to stand before Christ at his coming, unless we be careful to get and keep grace for the present. And on the other side, the argument to quicken us to present care and diligence is the blessedness we shall have at Christ's coming, and the danger of being disallowed at last.

1. Watching with respect to our present preservation is pressed: Mat. 26:41, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;' and 1 Cor. 16:13, 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith.'

2. Watching with respect to future acceptation. That is pressed in other places: Mat. 24:42, 'Watch ye, for ye know not in what hour the Lord cometh.' The particular time of Christ's coming is kept secret, that we may be moved at all times to prepare for it. The Lord foresaw that we would be prone to negligence and carnal security, and that the knowledge of the express time of his coming would be hurtful to us; therefore it is inter arcana imperii, among the secrets kept in the Father's bosom, that we might be always ready. So Luke 21:36, 'Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of man.' The meaning is, that we may escape the judgments then to be poured out upon the wicked and the careless; that we may not *causa cadere*; that we may have a sentence of approbation passed in our favour. These are the two sorts of watching pressed upon us in scripture, the one to avoid the snares of the devil, the other that we may be ready for the coming of the Lord.

First, Watching with respect to our present state and safety. This again is twofold—a watching to avoid evil, and a watching for the careful performance of that which is good. The scripture speaketh of both; and both are enforced by their own proper reasons.

1. For the avoiding of evil. There is in us all a sinful proneness to evil, which we must seek to cure and prevent: Prov. 4:23, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.' The heart is *terminus actionum ad intra, et fons actionum ad extra*. It is the heart that God aimeth at in all that he doth upon us, and it is the heart that is the ground of all our actions. The fountain must be kept pure from pollutions, that the streams may be the more limpid and clear. Every

man hath a little garrison to keep, and he himself is the watchman of it; his conscience is to sit porter at the door, and to examine whatever cometh out and entereth in, as a watchman doth at the gates of a city. All the thoughts, affections, words, actions, are to be examined, what they are, whither they go, whence they come, whither they tend, lest a temptation be let in, or a corruption be let out; otherwise the heart cannot be kept pure and loyal to God. Solomon telleth us, Prov. 25:28, 'He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is without walls.' A town without walls lieth open to every comer: sin and danger, and all kind of evil motions go to and fro, without any kind of check and control: things will pass out which should be suppressed and kept in, and temptations will enter which should be kept out. Now this caution is no more than needeth, if we consider the enemies of our salvation, the devil, the world, and the flesh.

[1.] The malice of Satan. Our adversary is very watchful, and getteth advantage by nothing so much as our security. *Vigilat hostis, et dormis?* It was an old word: the devil is neither dead nor asleep, and shall not we stand upon our guard? 1 Peter 5:8, 'Be sober and watchful, for your adversary the devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.' Satan is a restless adversary, full of malice and craft; his end is to destroy and to devour souls, and his diligence is answerable to his malice. Night and day we are in danger every one of us. There were but two Adams, and they were both tempted, though the one was made after God's image, and the other had the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily. Adam in innocency and Christ in human nature were tempted, and can we hope to escape? Neglect your watch, and you become a ready prey to the devil: 'When the servants slept, the enemy sowed tares,' Mat. 13:25. He observeth all our drowsy fits, and is waiting for some advantage, or at least some occasion. Sometimes we give him an advantage by our folly and indiscretion: 2 Cor. 2:11, 'Lest Satan

should get an advantage against us.' Or if not, he taketh occasion, as he tempted Christ when he was an hungry, Mat. 4:2; and 2 Cor. 7:5, 'That Satan tempt you not.' He can interpret the silent language of a blush, a smile, a frown, a look, the glance of a lustful eye, the most secret discovery of wrath and discontent, and suiteth his temptations to all the postures of spirit we are in.

[2.] There is besides this, *hostis domesticus*, the bosom enemy, the flesh, or the inbred corruption of our nature, that is ready to betray us to the basest temptations, and to open the gates to the enemy without. Man needeth no devil to tempt him, we have enough in our own bosoms to prompt and urge us to sin: James 1:5, 'The spirit in us lusteth to envy;' Gen. 6:5, 'The thoughts and imaginations of our hearts are evil continually.' It is easy to set tinder, gunpowder, or flax on fire, and therefore they had need to be kept asunder. We cannot be too careful, the best of us have a good self and a bad self; the one must watch over the other, or all will come to ruin, and grace will be ready to die: Rev. 2:2, 'Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die.' From whence cometh the vanity of our minds, our proneness to break the bounds of due liberty in all our comforts, our readiness to err in speech, our frequent miscarriages in conversation, our frequent unfitness for holy duties, our unfruitfulness in our conversing with others, our unsettledness in our consciences, our immoderate cares and fears; whence, I say, cometh all this, but from our want of watching against this inward enemy our flesh? Especially when temptations are near, importunate, and constant. We proceed every step to heaven by conflict and contest, because sin is always at hand, ready to assault us and taint us; so that a serious Christian cannot but take himself to be still in danger.

[3.] The world. We walk in the midst of snares and temptations, saith Austin; and Bernard saith that our life is a continual temptation. We are in the midst of tempting objects, that are comfortable to our senses, necessary to our uses, and present to our embraces, that we can hardly distinguish between what necessity craveth, and lust desireth, and so we are strangely gained upon: 1 John 2:16, 'For all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and pride of life.' He doth not say, 'Whatsoever is in our corrupt hearts;' but he describeth the objects by the lusts, because they are readily excited by them: 'All that is in the world.' There are baits for every temper; honour for the ambitious, wealth for the covetous, pleasure for the sensual. Now every distemper loveth the diet that feedeth it: lust in the soul, or unmortified corruption maketh our abode in the world dangerous: 2 Peter 1:4, that 'having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.' Here one plungeth himself over head and ears in the world; another is intemperate in the delights of the flesh and the entertainments of sense; another is aspiring after honour, great places, and pomp of living, or esteem in the world; or at least we give ourselves too great a liberty and freedom in these things. Therefore you see what need there is of watching, when alluring objects lay such close siege to the appetite and senses.

2. There is a watching unto good, or for the performance of our duties, that we go about them in a holy, serious, conscionable manner, observing the best opportunities, and taking heed there be no secret leaven of hypocrisy in them. Of all holy duties the scripture applieth it to prayer, which of all other holy services is the commonest and the chiefest; and watching therein is a great help; though by analogy it holdeth good in other duties, as we shall see in a few places: Col. 4:2, 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same, with thanksgiving.' So 1 Peter 4:7, 'Be sober, and watch unto prayer.' So Eph. 6:18, 'Watching therein with all perseverance.' Satan is a great

enemy to this duty, and our hearts are averse, and hardly brought and kept to it. Unless it be well performed, our communion with God is interrupted and at a stand. Out of all these places we may well collect that there is—(1.) A watching unto prayer, or before prayer. (2.) A watching in prayer, or in the duty. (3.) A watching after prayer, or when the duty is over.

[1.] The watching unto prayer, or before the duty, is mainly to keep up a praying frame, that we may be ready upon all occasions to call upon God. The praying frame lieth partly in brokenness of heart, or a due sense of our necessities; and partly in an earnest bent of heart towards God, and holy and heavenly things; and partly in a holy liberty, and child-like confidence. If either of these be lost, how slack and backward shall we be in God's worship, or slight in the performance of it, whether in closet, or family, or public assemblies; and slubber it over in any fashion. But when this frame of spirit is kept up, the soul is mightily actuated and enlarged in the duty. As when there is brokenness of heart, or a due sense of our necessities, which is the occasion of prayer, or an earnest desire of grace, which is the soul of prayer, or our liberty and confidence is not broken, which is the great encouragement of prayer, then we are like light and airy bodies, whose natural motion is upwards; so are we carried out towards God, and prayer is our element in which we live and breathe. Indeed the whole spiritual life is but a 'watching unto prayer,' that we may have always a readiness for communion with God, 1 Peter 3:7.

[2.] There is a watching in prayer, that the duty be performed with that seriousness, attention, and affection that the nature of it doth require. This watching is necessary because of the slipperiness of our hearts, which easily go off from the work in hand. We often mingle sulphur with our incense, interline our prayers with carnal

distractions, suffer our hearts to be stolen away from under Christ's own arm; therefore we had need to watch, Eccles. 5:1, 2.

[3.] There is a watching after prayer, partly that we may observe God's dealing with us, whether our souls have been straitened, or whether he hath given liberty, hidden his face, or showed himself gracious. Here we may gather some matter of comfort to ourselves and thanksgiving to God, Col. 4:2. We must not throw away our prayers, as children shoot away their arrows, and never look after them: Hab. 2:1, 'I will pray and look up,' to spy the blessing a-coming. We should have many an argument against atheism, great helps to faith, and encouragements to love God, and many a sure ground of comfort in ourselves, if we did look after the answer of our prayers. And partly that we lose not that affection which we have professed and expressed before God. We seemed to express a great desire of glorifying his name, and doing his will, and being sanctified, pardoned, and strengthened against temptations. Now it is but the personating and acting a part before God, if we be not such in some measure as we professed ourselves to be in prayer; if we be not careful to glorify his name, zealous to promote his kingdom, ready to do his will, earnest for pardoning grace, watchful against temptations. A Christian's life is a comment upon his prayers, and his prayers do interpret his life; we understand the one by the other. Our endeavours and diligent use of means do show what we really desire; for what we pray to God for we bind ourselves to seek after.

Secondly, There is a watching with respect to our future estate, that we may be ready to meet Christ at his coming. Now this consisteth—

1. In a deep and lively sense of Christ's appearing, and the whole state of the world to come. We look for nothing but what we believe. Faith is a realising sight of things not yet in being; and maketh them

in some measure to work as if they were at hand and ready to be enjoyed. Now the more lively sense we have of the concernments of the other world, the more diligent and serious shall we be in our preparation; when we have a deep sense of these things, as if presently to be arraigned, and walk as before the judge to whom we are to give an account of all our actions. Most men live as if there were no day of reckoning, no God to see and punish, no books to be opened: the careless spending their time showeth they have no deep sense of these things, no sound belief of them. But faith looketh upon these things as great, sure, and near, and so keepeth the soul awake and alive. It greateneth our apprehensions of these things; for it is no slight matter for the creature to meet with his creator, the sinner with his judge, from whom he must now receive his final doom. Faith doth speak aloud to a sluggish soul, Thou must be judged: Rom. 14:12, 'So then every one of us must give an account of himself to God.' And as it is sure, so it is near: 'The judge is at the door,' James 5:9. You must hear of what you now speak and do another day: Mat. 12:36, 'For every idle word that a man shall speak, he shall give an account of at the day of judgment.' It suppresseth sin, and quickeneth and awakeneth to duty, 2 Peter 3:11, 12. Without faith we have no sensible, awakening, practical knowledge of these things. The sight of faith differeth from the sight of sense. Sense can discern little more than we see, taste, smell, hear, and feel. We are affected with these things; so are the beasts, who only see things before their eyes by the eye of sense. We see nothing but what dogs may see and beasts may see; that it is comfortable to eat well, and drink well, and sleep well, and be well clothed, and walk up and down at pleasure, and pursue the advantages of the animal life. There is a mist upon eternity; how acute soever men be in worldly things, they are blind here: 2 Peter 1:9, 'He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off;' sharp-sighted in things that concern the back and belly, and this present world, but know nothing of the hazard of perishing

for ever, or the worth of salvation, their need of Christ, and making serious preparation for their great account. Faith is a perspective, by which we look into the other world. None have such a sharp sight as believers have; for they can see beyond the limits of time, the corruption and changes of all things that are in the world, even to that blessedness which God hath reserved for them that love him. And the light of faith differeth from reason. That can only see things by guess, or see things in their causes, and that as probable; but faith can look through the mists and clouds of intervening ages: Heb. 11:13, 'Having seen them afar off, embraced them;' and with certainty, and such a sure persuasion, as if the things we are persuaded of were in hand and actually enjoyed. Reason corrects sense. A star to the eye of sense looks no bigger than a spangle, but reason showeth it must be of a vast bigness, because of its distance from us. But faith is a higher light; and compare it with the light of prophecy, Rev. 20:12; they agree in the common object, divine revelation; they agree in their common nature, that they are both for things future, and things future to us; but they differ, that faith depends upon the common revelation which God hath made to all the saints, whereas prophecy hath more of ecstasy and rapture in it, and the light is like the *lumen gloriæ*, the beatifical vision in some measure and degree. We do not see him face to face, but are desirous of this blessed estate, and persuaded of it, and are affected with it as if we saw it. The sight of faith is not a full enjoyment, but as sure, and so proportionably affects the heart. Nay, this *lumen fidei* is somewhat like the sight God hath of things. God seeth all things in his own design, and faith seeth them so far as they are manifested in the promises of the gospel. There is no hope to get rid of our dead-heartedness and security till we have this realising light of faith.

2. This watching consisteth in preparation. If we expect a thing to come, and do not prepare accordingly, we do not watch for it but

neglect it. Now this preparation must be speedy, thorough, and constant.

[1.] Watching implieth a speedy preparation. That we may be in a fit capacity to receive Christ at his coming, we must take the next advantage, lest we be surprised and called home before we are ready. This is not a work to be put off to age or sickness. Why should we provide a burden for that time when we are weakest and least able to bear it? And therefore now we should begin it. Every day brings burden enough for itself. He is an unthrifty tenant that suffers the rent of one year to run into another: how shall that crop discharge two years' rent that cannot pay one? If it be tedious now to turn to God, it will be more tedious when thou art hardened in sin, and thy neglects of God and Christ will provoke him to deny his grace. And what assurance have we of another year? We have this by the favour of providence. Our life was forfeited and lost in law the first moment, and therefore we have but a reprieve during pleasure. What warrant have I to expect another day but my own hope and fancy? He that is security for himself to himself is no whit the better secured; he doth but take the word of a spendthrift. If we had a lease of our lives, yet what hope of grace? when we have resisted the Spirit of God all our lives, what hope that he should assist us at death? We do but provide matter of despair to ourselves; every day will prove worse and worse. A traveller may easily pass over the head of a brook, but when he goeth down, thinking to find it narrower, it is so broad that he cannot pass at all. Every delay brings on a new degree of hardness of heart on our part, and a new desertion on God's part. Now how wilt thou untwist the former web which thou hast been so long a-weaving? That soul must needs be in perplexity at the hour of death that seeth the day spent and the business appointed to him not yet begun, and a disease disabling him for any serious reflections; as if a traveller seeth the sun setting when he is entering upon his journey the

evening of the day and the morning of the task do not well agree together. All the time that remaineth is too short to lament the lost time already past. Therefore, if watching inferreth preparation, it inferreth speedy preparation; and a man is not in a good condition to live that is not fit to die.

[2.] It must be a serious and thorough preparation, such as will serve the turn, and be accepted by Christ at his coming. The whole design of this parable is to caution us against the shallowness and slightness of the work of grace upon our hearts. Heathens have a conscience (as Felix trembled); much more Christians. Men may see and have a taste of sin's bitterness, and have a longing mind after Christ, but the life of grace is not begun in them; they do not 'awake to righteousness,' 1 Cor. 15:34. We should often think what is required in order to that day, and what the scripture maketh our readiness to consist in. Repentance and actual conversion to God, this is pressed upon us, Acts 3:19, 'Repent, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshment shall come from the presence of the Lord.' Repentance is the soul's return to God in love. And Acts 17:30, 31, 'Now he commandeth all men to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness.' That day is kept off that we might have time to repent, 2 Peter 3:9. So faith in Christ, that will unite us to him, or a hearty taking him for our Lord and Saviour: Rom. 8:1, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ;' Phil. 3:9, 'Found in him;' 1 John 2:28, 'And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear you may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.' We must be in Christ, and abide in Christ. To abide in Christ is to persevere in our adhering to him as our Lord and Saviour, in the profession of his name, observation of his precepts, recumbency on his merits, imitation of his graces, communion with his person. Certainly he will not cast off those who are members of his mystical body, and abide

in him by faith, nor condemn those whom he hath redeemed and washed in his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit. This is our preparation; yea, 'the scripture doth not only look to our hearts, but to our lives, James 2:1, 2.

[3.] It must be a constant and daily preparation. You must not only get ready, but keep ready. Besides habitual preparation, there must be actual preparation. We must every day be more in a readiness. The sentinel is to watch all hours; it is death to be taken sleeping, though he hath watched all the night before: 'We know neither the day nor the hour,' it is in the text, implying there must be no intermission of our care. What if my master should come and find me idle? said Calvin to his friends, that demanded of him why he wasted his body in such constant labours. Few are like-minded that put this question to their souls, Am I as I would meet with Christ? We should always stand with our lamps burning and our loins girt, Luke 12:35. A Christian should be always as a ship that hath taken in its lading, and is prepared and furnished with all manner of tackling, ready to set sail, only expecting the good wind to carry him out of the haven. So should we be ready to set sail for eternity, stand at heaven's gates, be in a perpetual exercise of faith and love, and be fittingly prepared to meet our Saviour. Oh! what a happiness is it to live so that we care not when death cometh upon us; and so live every day, as if we were presently to be summoned before the tribunal of Christ! The world thinketh this a foolish strictness, because many days go over our heads, and it proveth not so. But let them mock on; when they come to hell they will find this to be the greatest wisdom. A Christian will count every day his last. Not only his own necessity, but his love and earnest desire of Christ's coming maketh him look out.

3. The last thing in this watching is earnest expectation of Christ's last appearance, and the grace he will bring along with him: 1 Peter 1:15, 'Gird up the loins of your minds, and be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.' Our hearts and minds should be more taken up with the thoughts of his coming, and the privileges we shall have by him. It is expressed by looking, longing, waiting; and Christians are often described by these acts: Titus 3:13, 'Looking for the blessed hope;' Phil. 3:20, 21, 'From whence we look for a Saviour,' Heb. 10:27. We should stir up our minds to look for his coming; and not only stir up our hopes, but our desires: 2 Tim. 4:8, 'To them that love his appearing;' it is a sign and token that he cometh with a blessing to us: to them he cometh with a crown of righteousness. So for waiting: 1 Cor. 1:7, 'Ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' We were converted for this end, to wait for his coming from heaven, 1 Thes. 1:10.

Now I come to show you the reasons why this watching is required of us, or to move us to it.

1. Consider who it is that biddeth you watch. Christ himself, whom you call Lord and Master, who knows the worth and danger of souls, and hath a tender esteem and value for them. If we did impose so strict a duty upon you, you might take or leave it as it shall be for your conveniency. In the 1st of Proverbs, Solomon bringeth in Wisdom lifting up her voice, and crying, Prov. 1:20. What to do? To accept of the grace offered. The most then will miss the season; they shall never receive advantage by the cry if they neglect it, ver. 26; ver. 28, 'They shall call upon me, but I will not answer.' Many clauses in these verses do fitly agree with the passages of the parable. It agreeth with the foolish virgins, who lost their opportunity of getting oil; and with the wise, who in a time of plenty provided against a famine, as

Joseph advised the Egyptians: a greater than Joseph is here. Now in the times of grace watch.

2. Consider whom it is he inviteth. Do not put it off to others: Mark 13:37, 'What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.' Some persons are especially deputed to watch over others, as magistrates, Rom. 13:6; ministers, Heb. 13:12; but every man is made a guardian over his own soul; rich and poor, they are both to watch. The meanest people are then taken notice of, and that exactly: Mat. 24:40, 41, 'Two women grinding at the mill; one shall be taken, and the other left: two in the field, one taken, and the other left.' Those of the meanest degree. All that live in all ages, in all times, to them he said, Watch. Do not put it off to them that live in the age on which the ends of the world are come. You will be found at that day as death leaveth you. None of all degrees of grace are past this care. If there be any difference between Christian and Christian, one is more watchful than another; if of never so long standing and experience, yet if not watchful, soon surprised. God's best servants have been surprised for want of watching. Noah was overtaken in drunkenness; Lot, that was chaste in Sodom, committed incest in the mountains, where were none but his own family. And do but compare David and Joseph; you find David tempting, Joseph tempted. David was a king, Joseph a slave; David an old man of much experience, Joseph a young man; David a married man, and Joseph a single man. David was fain to plot and contrive to make way for his sin, but Joseph had the advantage of secrecy; but the one stood, and the other fell; David left his senses at random, but Joseph kept himself in an awful watchful posture: Gen. 39:9, 'How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?'

3. Consider when and how long we are to watch. The time is kept from our knowledge for this very end, that we may always be

watching: Mat. 21:36, 'Watch and pray always;' 2 Tim. 4:5, 'But watch thou in all things.' There must be a constant and continual watch. When we are secure we lose our actual fitness, and our common enemy breaks in upon us. There is a working, warring principle in our hearts.

4. There is a blessing promised to those that watch: Rev. 16:15, 'Blessed is he that watcheth;' and Luke 12:37, 'Blessed are those servants whom their Lord when he cometh shall find watching.' What do we lose by watching but a few trifling pleasures, which are abundantly recompensed here and hereafter by solid rejoicing in Christ? It is irksome to the flesh, but the reward sweeteneth it.

5. The hazard and danger of not watching. It is notably represented in this parable: only the ready enter. Take heed, therefore, the like do not happen to you as to the foolish virgins: they are excluded, and that irrevocably; if they would never so fain enter, Christ will not hearken unto them: Rev. 3:3, 'If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee like a thief in the night;' 1 Thes. 5:3. Woful is their condition that are secure and unprovided.

6. Consider what men would do to avoid temporal inconveniency: Mat. 24:43, 'If the good man of the house had known when the thief would come, he would have watched;' much more should Christ's disciples to avoid eternal destruction. It is an advantage to put the case in outward things, Mal. 1:8; it showeth the disproportion of our respects to temporals and spirituals. If we are so careful in looking to our bodies and goods, we are or should be more careful in watching over our souls, where the danger is greater. The world's diligence and double diligence in earthly things will condemn our neglect in spiritual things.

Use 1. I may from hence take occasion to bewail the neglect of this duty. Oh! how much is watching laid aside! Thence cometh our decay of grace. The church of Sardis was even dead for want of it, Rev. 3:2. Thence comes our want of comfort, and of assurance of God's love. Our peace of conscience is gotten by diligence, and kept with watchfulness. Thence comes our loathness to die, and our coldness to everlasting life. We do not 'gird up the loins of our minds, and watch.' Thence come all our afflictions. God is fain to use dreadful means to awaken his servants out of their drowsiness. We are apt to be drowsy and sleepy; God useth sharp discipline to awaken us; some smart cross or sickness to bring us to ourselves again. We should bewail the neglect of watching in two things:—

1. Our not watching for the coming of the Lord. Some can live merrily and quietly in a careless unprepared estate; but do these men consider what it is to meet with their Redeemer, before they have gotten any benefit by his blood? We cannot draw nigh to him with any comfort till we feel the benefit of his death, Heb. 10:22. His business is 'to present his people faultless to God,' Jude 24. These men do not consider what it is to meet with the judge, 1 Peter 4:5. There is no plea but innocency and pardon in Christ, Rom. 8:1; 1 John 3:8. These do not consider how they shall look Christ in the face, when so unlike him, 1 John 3:1, 2, and 1 John 4:17. These do not consider what it is to meet the bridegroom when their filthy garments are yet on.

2. Bewail the neglect of watching against present evils with care and circumspection. What is the matter? Is Satan less busy to tempt, or is the heart of man and human nature grown better, and sin less dangerous? Is our weakness and inability so far strengthened and cured, that we are out of danger of falling? Were the servants of God such weaklings, that prayed, as David, Ps. 39, 'I put a watch upon the

door of my lips;' and Job, that 'made a covenant with his eyes'? Job 31:1. But rather are not we more foolhardy and negligent, do not mind our business, and consider not the inconveniency of not watching?

Use 2. To press us to this duty; there is a God that watcheth, and enemies that watch, and conscience watcheth, and will do its office first or last; a day of judgment, when you are to answer for all that you have done; and will not you watch? When you consider how much you are in danger of sin, and in danger by sin, can you be negligent and secure? Oh! watch your hearts, Prov. 4:23; watch your tongue, Ps. 39:1; watch your senses, Job 31:1: gratify them and you wound your hearts. Watch your ways, Prov. 4:24; but above all watch your state. Let us examine well our case, that we may be found in Christ, and have the 'seal of his Spirit,' Eph. 1:13. That is your warrant.

For means to help us in this duty of watchfulness:—

1. Sobriety, or moderation in the use of all outward things: 1 Thes. 5:6, 'Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but watch and be sober,' 1 Peter 1:13, 4:7.

2. Go to God in prayer. Watching and prayer are often joined together. We are best kept when recommended into God's hand: Ps. 141:3, 'Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.' I do observe there—(1.) That unadvised and passionate speeches do easily drop from us in our troubles, especially in our persecution. (2.) That a godly conscientious man is very tender of these, as of all evil. He that would live in communion with God for the present, and hope to appear with comfort before him hereafter, is sensible of the least thing that tends to God's displeasure and God's dishonour. This is the true spirit of one that will be owned by Christ

at the last day. (3.) There is no way to prevent being provoked to impatience and rashness of speech, or any evil, but by keeping a watch, and renewing our obligations to God. (4.) Whoever would keep a watch must call in the aid and assistance of God's grace: 'Lord, set a watch upon the door of my lips.'

SERMON XI

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered to them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to every one according to his several ability.—MAT. 25:14, 15

THE particle for showeth that this parable hath some connection with the former. We have but two great affairs in the world—the one to promote God's glory, the other to save our own souls; or, in other words, to be faithful to God and wise for ourselves. This latter was taught us in the former parable; the wise and provident virgins made sufficient preparation for their reception into the nuptial feast. The other, faithfulness to God, in employing our gifts, talents, and opportunities for his glory, is taught in this parable. Therefore the drift of it is, to set us all a-work in our places and callings for the glory of God, that we may look Christ in the face at his coming, for the kingdom of heaven, &c.

In which words we have—

First, The person trusting, a man; who is here represented—

1. As a great lord and master, that hath servants of his own, and several gifts to bestow upon them at his pleasure. In Luke it is, 'A certain nobleman, who went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom,' Luke 19:12. In Mark, chap. 13:34, 'A great master of a house,' who intrusts his servants with his goods till his return.

2. He is here considered as travelling into a far country. Christ's ascending into heaven is thereby intended; for gifts are the fruits of his ascension.

Secondly, The persons intrusted; he called his own servants, and delivered to them. Not only ministers and officers of the church are meant, though they especially; but all Christians, who are Christ's servants, employed by him in one state of life or other.

Thirdly, The things intrusted, his goods; they are bona, things good in their nature; and they are dona, gifts freely given, and delivered to us: and not merely given; they are talenta, talents; not things merely given as we give money to a beggar, but as we give to a factor. As they are bona, they must not be despised; as dona, gifts, they call for thankfulness; as talents, for faithfulness. The Jewish talent was a hundred and eighty-one pounds ten shillings. Now these talents are ordinances, opportunities, estates, gifts, graces, all that we have received from God, either dona administrantia or sanctificantia: helps and means and opportunities to glorify him, which are the occasions or the graces of the Spirit; which are the dispositions to make us so to do.

Fourthly, The variety observed in the distribution, to one five, to another two, to another one; which difference expresseth the divers kinds of gifts, and the measure and the degree in which they are

bestowed. Though all have not equal measure, yet every one hath some gift and some measure, something that is peculiar to himself, whereby he may be useful.

Fifthly, The rule which is observed in the distribution, to every one according to his ability. As in the parable the wise master knoweth every servant, according to his prudence and skill, so in the explication of the parable every man is gifted and employed by Christ according to his natural receptivity. The eye hath its office as an eye, and the hand as a hand, and the foot as a foot.

I shall not pursue every minute circumstance, but only touch upon those things which are most remarkable.

First, Observe then—

Doct. 1. That Christ Jesus is the great Lord and owner.

He is so represented here with respect to persons and things. Persons: those that receive the talents are called 'his own servants;' and the several gifts and good things bestowed upon them are called 'his goods;' and these dispensed according to his sovereign will and pleasure, to one more, to another less.

Concerning Christ's being a lord and owner, let me give you these observations:—

First, The power of Christ as an owner and free lord is to be distinguished from his power as a governor and ruler. As a free lord, 'he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.' As a governor and ruler, so he 'judgeth the world in righteousness,' or according to the law or stated rule which he hath given of his will. With respect to the one, 'it is not in him that willeth, or in him that runneth, but in God

that showeth mercy.' But with respect to the other 'so run that you may obtain.' Compare Rom. 9:16, with 1 Cor. 9:24; for God, that is arbitrary in his gifts, is not arbitrary in his judgments. His law and the precepts of it is the rule of our duty; but in the sanction of it it is the rule of God's process. But as an owner he discovereth his sovereignty and dominion; as a ruler or judge, his justice or righteousness. All acts and matters of free favour are dispensed by him as a lord, but matters of right and wrong come before him as a judge. The goodman of the house pleaded ill, 'I may do with my own as it pleaseth me,' Mat. 20:15; that belongeth to a supreme owner. Besides, his being an owner goeth before his being a ruler, and is the foundation of it; for his absolute propriety in us giveth him a legislative power over us, to dispose of us or command us according to his own will. He may give his creatures what rules he pleaseth, and order them to what ends he thinketh good, and bind them to observe his order upon what terms he will: 'I am the Lord,' Lev. 18:1–6. Therefore, before the course of government established between him and the world, he is first considered as an owner.

Secondly, This power and ownership accrueth to Christ by a double title—*jure creationis, et redemptionis*.

1. By right of creation: Ezek. 18:4, 'Behold, all souls are mine.' He hath a right to dispose of man, and all the rest of his creatures, as being all of them the works of his hands. He that gave them their beings when they were not, and still supporteth them now they are, hath an undoubted just right to order them according to his own will. We have nothing but what we had from him; and we have nothing that we ourselves can keep a moment; and we have it upon these terms, to use it for his glory.

2. By right of redemption: Rom. 14:9, 'For to this end Christ both died and rose again, that he might be Lord of dead and living;' and 1 Cor. 6:20, 'Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and souls, which are his.' This giveth him a new title to us, though the former ceased not, but will continue.' Whilst man receiveth his being from God by creation, and the continuance of his being by preservation, it is a power commutative, not destructive; it is superadded to the former, and is more comfortable and beneficial to us, as well as bindeth us more firmly to God, wholly to be disposed, guided, and ordered by him at his will.

Thirdly, This power as owner is entire and absolute: Rom. 11:36, 'For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' We receiving our whole being from God, it is all at his dispose. All human propriety is derived, limited, and respective, because we in being and operation depend upon another; and therefore man cannot be *sui juris*, at his own dispose, and lord of his own actions. He hath principium et finem, a principle upon which he dependeth, and an end to which he is appointed. Now it is no more lawful to abstain from respecting and seeking his end, than it is possible not to depend upon his principle. He hath a superior, to whom he must give an account, seeing he wholly dependeth upon him, and is wholly subject to him. But this property is originally and primarily in God as a fountain, not subordinate, or dependent upon any higher. If this be not so intelligible, let me speak more plainly. There is *dominium jurisdictionis*, et *dominium proprietatis*; such as a prince hath over his goods and lands. His dominion is more absolute over his goods and lands than over his subjects; that is bounded by laws. God hath the most absolute title over us, and all that we possess; it is so great that it cannot be greater.

Fourthly, God cannot be divested of this power and interest in us.

1. It is so absolutely inherent in him, that it cannot be communicated to another; that is, we cannot alienate and make void this right by our sins. Though we sold ourselves for nought, Isa. 52:3, it was to our loss, not to God's. He hath a full right to command us to keep his law, whether men be faulty or innocent. A drunken servant is a servant, though he be disabled to do his master's work. No man's right can be vacated without his consent. Creatures are creatures still, obnoxious to the law of the Creator, or his punishment for the breach of it. In that interest we have in things, the default of another doth not make void our right, especially if it be inferiors; as the rebellion of the subject doth not exempt him from the power of his prince.

2. Neither doth God give it away by bestowing gifts upon the creature; for he hath given us only dispensationem, the employment of these things, not dominium, the sovereign power over them. Man hath nothing that is his own. As to life, it is clear man is not dominus vitæ, but custos; which is true not only of our life, but of our time, wealth, strength, parts, yea, of all that we have. Still we are subject to a higher lord, who hath an absolute uncontrollable right. All our owning is but a stewardship, Luke 16:2. We have a right to prevent the encroachment of our fellow-creatures. We have a right by way of charge and trust, as a steward to things committed to him, or as a workman hath a right to his tools or instruments to do his work, or a factor in the estates committed to him; but an absolute independent right we have not. They are not ours to use as we think meet. They were rebels that said, 'Our tongues are our own,' Ps. 12:4. Well, then, when God dispersed his gifts, he did not dispossess himself. As the husbandman doth not intend to throw away his seed when he scattereth it in the furrows, but soweth it to receive it again with increase, so God.

3. I will add this, that God cannot give this absolute right to another that is not God, no more than he can cut off the creature from depending upon himself. In our way of owning our petty interests it may be permitted, as a lord may make his vassal and slave free, or a prince his subjects; as Saul proclaimed that whosoever should overcome Goliath, he would make his house free in Israel; that is, free from taxes, imposts, service in war, 1 Sam. 17:25. But now no creature can be exempted from duty to God; for dependence upon God and subjection to him are so twisted together, that the one cannot be without the other. We wholly depend upon him for being, and all things else, and therefore must be wholly subject to him. We still continue in our being; now the continuance of our very duty and being doth still depend upon God.

Fifthly, God's sovereign dominion over us, and interest in us, may be set forth by these three things, at least to our present purpose:—

1. A right of making or framing anything as he willeth, in any manner as it pleaseth him: 'As the potter hath power over his own clay to form what vessel he pleaseth, either of honour or dishonour,' Rom. 9:21; and Jer. 8:16, 'As clay in the hand of the potter, so are ye in my hand, saith the Lord of hosts.' Nothing before it had a being had a right to dispose of itself, neither did God make it what it was by necessity of nature, nor by the command, counsel, or will of any superior, or the direction of any coadjutor; neither is there any to whom he should render an account of his work; but merely produced all things by the act of his own will, as an absolute owner and sovereign lord of all his actions: Eph. 1:11, 'He worketh all things according to the counsel of his will;' and Rev. 4:11, 'Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.' Such was God's absolute power. This should be thought of by us, because whatever was given us in creation is not a matter of right, but the

mere effect of God's good-will and good pleasure. He might have made us stocks and stones, and not living creatures, or, among living creatures, plants only, with a life of vegetation and growth; or if a sensitive life, in the lowest rank, toads and vipers, or at best, but as horse or mule, without understanding, and not men. Among men, all the blessings and privileges we were born to might have been withheld without any injustice. The various constitutions and complexions of men, all their gifts and natural capacities, are the fruits of his sovereign will.

2. A right of having and possessing all things so made and framed by him. Amongst men, whosoever maketh anything by his own proper art and labour, and of his own stuff, must needs have a full right to it, and a full power to dispose of it; yet no workman ever made anything without some matter; but God made all things without matter pre-existing, and therefore surely his right is greater. Wherefore God is called not only the maker of heaven and earth, but the possessor, Gen. 14:19. God is the great proprietor, and in a sense the only proprietor that hath dominium proprie dictum: 'Gold and silver are mine,' Hag. 2:8; and Hosea 2:9, 'I will return, and take away my corn and my wine in the season thereof;' Ps. 50:10, 'His are the cattle upon a thousand hills;' yea, 'The whole earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof,' Ps. 29:1, 16. All is God's, in whatsoever hands it be: 'The Lord hath need of him,' is argument enough. Now this doth mightily increase our confidence, check our usurpations, quicken us to faithfulness, that the great owner may not be deprived of his right.

3. He hath a right of using and disposing all things thus in his possession according to his own pleasure. Reason will tell us that the use, benefit, and utility of anything belongeth to him whose it is; so God is the sole disposer of all things. As he made them for himself, so he governeth them ultimately and terminatively for himself; some

things immediately, all things ultimately: 'By whom and for whom all things were made,' Prov. 16:4; all the conditions of men, riches, poverty, health, sickness, ease, pain, life, death. Now this right of disposing of us is of great use to keep us in a quiet subjection to God's laws and providence, without murmuring or repining. We cannot say to him, What makest thou? or, Why doest thou this? Isa. 45:9. It is enough God did it. But to apply the whole.

Use 1. It serveth to check many sins. All mischief and disorder cometh from looking upon ourselves as proprietaries and owners, and not considering who hath the great interest in us. Surely were these truths well digested and thought of by us, it would work a great cure upon mankind.

1. That nothing we have is our own.

2. That whatsoever is given us by God, is given us for his service, to be done to him.

3. That to this Lord of ours we must be answerable, who will one day call us to an account. Or will you take one of them, if all be too many to be remembered by you; and that one implieth all the rest: 'Ye are not your own, but are bought with a price.' If a man did think of this, My heart is not my own, it is God's, and he must have it, he would not fill it with the dross of evil thoughts. My time is not my own; my tongue, my wit, my language, it is not my own. Would the prodigal waste his estate so vainly? Reprove him, and he will tell you, I spend but my own. The covetous man saith, 'Shall I take my bread, and my water, and my flesh, and give it to men that I know not?' 1 Sam. 25:11. How easily might you persuade him to charity, could you convince him it is another's goods, and to be laid out when the Lord hath need of it. It would check our pride to consider 'who made us to differ,' 1 Cor. 4:7. Alas! master, it was borrowed, as Elisha's servant

told his master. A groom is proud of his master's horse: they are proud of that which is none of theirs, that are proud of their parts and proud of their estates. Yea, it would check our spiritual pride, when we have done anything for God, or suffered anything for God, or given anything for God's sake: 1 Chron. 29:12–14, 'Of thine own have we given thee, for all is thine.'

Use 2. Is to press us to more faithfulness in God's service; to serve him more with our parts, time, strength, wit, wealth, power, and interest. All the good things that God hath given us are God's still. Now you should 'give unto God the things that are God's. You are robbers if you lay not out all that you have according to his will, and for his glory. But (1.) 'Give yourselves to the Lord,' 2 Cor. 8:5, and then other things will come in the more easily. You are his already; you cannot add to God's right; yet it may add to the obligation, bind you more strongly to subjection and obedience. Oh! then, in the first place, become his servants and vassals; avouch God to be your God: Deut. 26:17, 'Thou hast avouched this day the Lord to be thy God.' Wicked men give up themselves to the Lord, but it is by constraint: 'All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.' But, 'Oh, that they had an heart!' Deut. 5:28, 29. (2.) Having given yourselves to the Lord, give other things to him. A Christian lays himself, and all his interests and capacities, at Jesus Christ's feet, that he may make an advantage of everything for God: Zech. 14:20, 'In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord; yea, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord.' We have received nothing from ourselves, and therefore should improve all we are and have for God. (3.) The reality of our dedication will be known by our use, if hard at work for God, and this be the business of our lives: Phil. 1:21, 'To me to live is Christ.' It is not enough negatively that our gifts be not employed against Christ as weapons of unrighteousness, but positively for God, that he gets something by

every relation and acquaintance: Neh. 1:11, 'Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and give him mercy in the sight of this man; for I was the king's cup-bearer.' He improved his place for God when he was in it. God hath made many great and rich, but what doth the Lord get by them? Are they more useful? Some have wit, but do not consecrate it to Jesus Christ; have power, interest, and great place, but they do not honour God thereby: though they profess to give up themselves to God, yet in the use of themselves there appeareth no such matter: they use their tongues as their own, hearts as their own, wealth, strength, and interests as their own. Therefore you should keep a constant reckoning how you lay out yourselves for God. Undertake nothing but what will bear this inscription upon it, 'Holiness to the Lord.' Put this question to yourselves, Can I dedicate this to the Lord? Eccles. 2:2, 'What doth it?'

Secondly, In the parable, this man, the owner, is represented as 'travelling into a far country,' and undertakes there to receive a kingdom, and disposing of all his interests till his return. This noteth Christ's ascension into heaven; and the point will be—

Doct. 2. That Christ at his departure appointed every man his work, and at his ascension gave gifts unto men, to be employed for his glory till he come again.

There are two things offered in the parable and in the point:—

1. His appointing every man his work; as the man disposed of all his matters till his return. Christ hath given order how every man, according to his ability and calling, should employ himself till he come again. We read, Acts 1:3, how Christ before his ascension instructed his disciples in 'all things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven;' that is, in all the duties of rulers and ruled, teachers and taught; the ordinances, laws, and institutions of his kingdom, the

duties and privileges of the subjects thereof; what immunities they enjoy, what obedience they must perform. This was his last charge before his departure. Now we are to keep his charge as we will answer it to him at his coming: 1 Tim. 6:13, 14, 'I charge thee in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ.' It was needful that Christ should go from us for a while; for he would not govern the world by sense, but by faith. Now he will make trial of our faithfulness and diligence during his absence; and therefore, having appointed us our work, he withdraweth. He will come again to take notice not only of the malice of his enemies against his people and interest, but also of the coldness and negligence of his own servants and domestics: 2 Thes. 1:8, 'He shall come in flaming fire, rendering vengeance upon them that know not God, and obey not the gospel;' nay, if not flatly disobedient, yet if evil slothful servants.

2. His giving gifts. Gifts were given at Christ's ascension; when he took his journey, then he bestowed his goods to his servants. As Elijah let fall his mantle, when he was translated, so did Christ bestow his gifts and the graces of his Spirit: Eph. 4:8, 'He ascended up on high, and gave gifts to men.' There is a threefold reason of this:

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[1.] The bestowing of the Spirit was necessary to supply the want of his bodily presence: John 16:7, 'Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.' While Christ was with them, the Spirit was not given; but when his bodily presence was removed, then cometh the Comforter: God will

not withhold what is useful. If he take away outward comforts, he will give us the Spirit.

[2.] It was fit he should enter upon his kingdom before his members participate so largely of his fulness, John 7:38. Before his incarnation grace was given upon trust, therefore more sparingly; afterwards coming in the flesh, the disciples were dull in comparison of what they were when the price was paid. He was entered into possession of his dignity, had taken actual possession of his kingdom; then he poureth out the gifts and graces of the Spirit, that the glorious estate of his church and subjects might not go before, but come after the glorious estate of their king and head.

[3.] To show that in his exaltation he is still mindful of his servants. As soon as warm in the mediatorial throne, he sendeth down gifts and graces: Acts 2:33, 'Being at the right hand of the Father exalted, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.' Presently he beginneth to show for what reason he is gone to heaven, powerfully to apply the work of redemption.

Use 1. Hath Christ appointed to men their work? It should quicken us to keep the charge of the Lord: Gen. 50:16, 'Thy father did command before he died.' If we have any respect to the memory of our Lord departed from us, any expectation of his coming again, so let us be faithful in the work appointed us to do. He instructed his apostles in all the duties and privileges of the kingdom of God, and they have instructed us, and you must answer it to Christ at his coming; therefore be diligent in glorifying God in your places.

Use 2. As he gave gifts. Look upon Christ as exalted at the right hand of God to dispense the gifts and graces of the Spirit, for the bringing about the salvation of all that come to God by him. It is said, 2 Kings 2:9, 10, that if Elisha should see his master ascending, he should

have his spirit doubled upon him. It is true here; if by faith we look to Christ ascended, his Spirit in some measure will come upon us; we have free liberty and access to him, to enjoy him for ever.

Thirdly, The master in the parable giveth not the same measure of talents to each servant: Christ giveth not a like measure of grace to every one; but to some more, to some less, as he thinketh expedient. Here are five talents, and two talents, and one talent, given to each servant, as there was a different measure given to Timothy and Demas.

Doct. 3. That it pleaseth the Lord to dispense his gifts variously among his people, to some more, to some fewer talents.

See this is often inculcated in the scripture: Rom. 12:6, 'Having then gifts, differing according to the grace given to us;' 1 Cor. 7:7, 'Every man hath his proper gift, one after this manner, another after that.' God giveth to every one in the church a measure and portion of gifts as it pleaseth him. So 1 Cor. 12:11, 'All these things worketh one and the same spirit,' which is the proper seat of this doctrine. So Eph. 4:7, 'To every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.' So 1 Peter 4:10, 'As every one hath received the gift, so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the grace of God.' I have brought all these scriptures to show you that this is a thing worthy to be taken notice of, and seriously improved by us.

I shall give you some observations concerning this diversity and variety.

1. That every one hath some talent or other to improve for God. He that had least, had one; and the least gift is compared to a talent: there is none of God's people but they have received some gift from him, which, being rightly employed, may make them useful for the

glory of God and the good of others; if not in the higher and more public office, yet as wives, children, servants, Titus 2:10. Every one hath his service and opportunity to do something for God: all offered to the tabernacle gold, or silver, or brass, or chittim-wood, or goats'-hair, or badgers'-skins. So, as Christ went to Jerusalem, some strewed the way with garments, others cut down branches, some cried Hosanna; that was all they could do.

2. That there is a great diversity in the talents which we have. The Lord doth not give all to one, nor to all alike.

[1.] There is a diversity of employments and offices. The apostle telleth us, Rom. 12:4, 'All members have not the same office;' some an eye, some a hand, some a head, some a foot. Magistracy, ministry are distinct offices in the church, which ought not to be confounded or invaded: Eph. 4:11, 12, 'And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying the body of Christ;' and Isa. 54:11, 'I will lay thy foundations with sapphires, and thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.' Here are variety of employments, foundations, windows, gates, borders, to hold forth the variety of the gifts and graces of the members of the Church.

[2.] There is a diversity in the kind of gifts. In the general, some are common, some saving, Heb. 6:5, 9. Carnal men have great abilities for the good of others, the stamp may be iron or brass, though the impress be on gold and silver; some bodily, some spiritual. Some are called to glorify God with their honour and estates; so Luke 9:11; others with the gifts of the mind. The gifts of the mind are common or saving. Among the common gifts, 'One hath the word of wisdom, another the word of knowledge,' 1 Cor. 12:8–10. Some are able to lay

down the truth soundly, others able to apply it forcibly. Some have the gift of prayer and utterance, others are able to inform the judgment or convince gainsayers; some to clear up doctrines, others to stir affections. As the three ministers of Geneva, *Vireto nemo docuit dulcius, Farello nemo tonuit fortius, nemo doctius locutus est Calvino*. Among hearers, some have more wisdom, some more knowledge, some more affection. Amongst the penmen of scripture, there is a great variety: John is sublime and seraphical, Paul spiritual and argumentative, Peter in an easy fluent and mild way, Isaiah more court-like and lofty, Jeremiah more priest-like and grave. Among the saving gifts there is a diversity of graces, though all have all in some measure. The new creature is not maimed, yet some are more eminent, some for one grace, some for another: Abraham for faith, Job for patience, Moses for meekness, Timothy for temperance; every grace working according to the diversity of tempers. Some are modest and mild, others bold and zealous; some are mourning for sin, others raised in the admiration of the grace of God in Christ; others exemplary for strictness, and weanedness from the delights of the animal life.

[3.] There is a diversity as to the measure and degrees. Every barque that saileth to heaven doth not draw a like depth: there is 'the measure of the gift of Christ,' Eph. 4:7; and 'the measure of every part,' ver. 16. To some it may be said, 'Great is thy faith;' to others, 'O ye of little faith!' Some are fathers, some young men, some babes in Christ, 1 John 2:13, 14; and in heaven there are degrees of glory suitable.

[4.] That this diversity cometh from the same free love of God, and therefore not to be used contrary to the mind of the giver. This is the free gift of God, flowing from his undeserved grace, there being nothing foreseen in any that can merit the least good at God's hand: 1

Cor. 4:7, 'Who made thee to differ?' Rom. 11:36, 'For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' The sun oweth nothing to the stars, nor the fountain to the streams.

[5.] Our account must be answerable to our receipts; there is a proportion of return expected: Hezekiah rendered not according to what he received. They that have received much shall account for much; and they that have received little shall account for little: he that received five talents must look to reckon for five: as he comforted his friend that had but one eye, that he should account but for the sins of one eye.

Now for the reasons of this diversity.

1. To show the liberty of his counsels. Christ may do with his own as he pleaseth; he will be known to be the sovereign Lord in the distribution of his gifts, and giving out his grace to his creatures as he shall see good: Mat. 11:26, 'Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight;' 1 Cor. 12:11, 'For all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, distributing to every man severally as he will.' Not as you will, but as he will. The Spirit is compared to wind, not only for its force, but its liberty, John 3:8; when and how lie pleaseth. To some he giveth riches, to some gifts, common knowledge and utterance; some have this gift, some that; some in a lower measure, some in a higher; some have a peculiar excellency in gifts and graces, others only the common sincerity.

2. That all may know that all fulness is only in himself, Col 1:19. The greatest degree of gifts and graces that God bestoweth upon any is far below that fulness that is in Christ; they have a measure, but Christ without measure, John 3:34. He giveth to none so much but there is always something wanting; and they that have received most are capable of receiving more.

3. God will have this difference for the beauty and order of the whole: variety is more grateful. Hills and valleys make the world beautiful; so do distinct orders, ranks, and degrees of men. All eye or all belly is monstrous; difference with proportion maketh beauty; therefore one excelleth another, and several gifts and ranks there are for the service of the whole.

4. That every one in the sight of his own wants may be kept humble. When we are singular for any excellency, we are apt to grow proud and unsociable; the eye is apt to say to the hand or foot, 'I have no need of thee,' 1 Cor. 12:21. Every man hath something to commend him to the respect of others; therefore God hath so scattered his gifts that every one should need another, that we may have the use of that gift which we have not the possession of.

[1.] To maintain love and mutual respect, and that there might be no schism in the body. The apostle saith, Eph. 4:16, 'The whole body compacted and joined together by that which every part supplieth.'

[2.] Diversity of gifts was most intended, not to dissolve the bonds of union, but to strengthen them rather; and therefore the apostle, when he had reckoned up the bonds of union, he presently addeth, 'But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ,' Eph. 4:7. First he speaketh of what is one in all, and then of those things which are not one in all, but diverse in every one. Every one hath his distinct excellency to endear him to the respects of others. Diversity of gifts are an ordinary occasion of division and strife; contempt, envy, pride, discouragement ariseth from hence, but in itself one of the strongest bonds of union; whilst all in their way contribute to the good of the whole, and make use of that excellency in another which themselves want, and we mutually communicate to one another our benefits. As divers countries have

divers commodities, and one needeth another; one aboundeth with wines, some have spices, others have skins, and commodities in other kinds, that by commerce and traffic there might be society maintained among mankind; so God in his church hath given to one gifts, to another grace, to maintain a holy society and spiritual commerce among themselves.

Use 1. Is to persuade us to employ our several talents for God, be they more or less; none are to be idle: 2 Tim. 2:6, 'Stir up the gift that is in thee.'

1. If we have but one talent, God expects the improvement of it: Adam in innocency had his work appointed him by God.

2. Those that have the greatest gifts should not contemn those that have few or less; and those that have few not envy others that have more, but be mutually helpful one to another, acknowledging the wisdom and goodness of God in all that we have. It is a base spirit that would shine alone, or set up one gift to the prejudice of another: 'Let no man glory, for all things are yours,' 1 Cor. 3:21. He that laid the world in hills and valleys would not have all champaign and smooth ground, Prov. 17:15.

Use. 2. Give yourselves and all that is yours to God. Nothing is more reasonable than that every one should have his own; therefore let us consent to God's propriety, and absolutely resign ourselves to the will, dispose, and use of our creator; but first ourselves, and then what is ours.

SERMON XII

Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. Likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.—MAT. 25:16–18

THIS is the second part of the parable. We have heard of the master's distribution, now we shall hear of the servants' negotiations, how they employed the talents received. There was a disparity and inequality in the distribution, so in the negotiation. Two of the servants used their talents well; the third traded not at all, but 'went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.' Among them that used their talents well there was a difference, but still with proportion to what they had received: 'He that had received five talents made them other five: and he also that had received two gained other two.'

Doct. 1. That those that have received talents must trade with them for God's glory and the salvation of their own souls and the good of others.

Doct. 2. In trading, our returns must carry proportion with our receipts.

Doct. 3. Among those that have received talents all are not faithful; for one hid his lord's money.

For the first point—

Doct. 1. That those that have received talents must trade with them for God's glory and the salvation of their own souls and the good of others, I shall first explain the point, and then prove it.

First, For the explication or illustration, I will inquire—

1. What things are to be accounted talents?
2. What it is to trade with them?
3. To whom the gain and increase redoundeth?

First, What are these talents? In the general, all the things God hath intrusted us with, or anything that may help to promote the glory of God; reason, health, strength, time, parts, interests, power, authority, wealth, the mercies of his providence, afflictions, ordinances, means of grace; yea, grace itself. All these are vouchsafed to us freely by God, and may be improved for his glory. There is none of us but have had many advantages and opportunities put into our hands of glorifying God and promoting our own and others' salvation. Of all it may be said, Prov. 17:16, 'Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to use it?' Reason and parts are a price put into your hands, so is time and strength, so are riches and power, so are ordinances and providences, and indeed all the blessings of this life. God must be gainer, and also yourselves. In a spiritual sense he must have a share in your time, strength, wealth, and power; and you must gain by every ordinance and every providence something whereby you may be more fitted to glorify his name, and to do good in your generation. But more particularly talents may be referred to two heads—*dona sanctificantia et administrantia*: graces, helps, and saving gifts.

1. *Dona sanctificantia*, sanctifying gifts, or the graces of the Spirit; these are highest, and are called the 'true riches;' Luke 16:11, 'If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who shall commit to your trust the true riches?' To be trusted with an estate is not so great a trust as to be trusted with grace: this is a gift

more precious, and should not lie idle. God trusts ordinary men with common gifts before he trusts them with grace. When we suspect that a vessel is leaky, we try it first with water before we fill it with wine. God expecteth more honour from new creatures than he doth from all the world besides, that they should do more good in their places; partly because they have new obligations by redemption: 1 Cor. 6:20, 'You are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies and souls, which are God's.' You are twice bound, and a double obligation will infer a double condemnation, if we answer it not. And partly because by regeneration they have new dispositions, they are more fitted to glorify God and do good to others; Eph. 1:12, 'That we should be to the praise of his glory.' Their τὸ εἶναι, their new being, fitteth, them to honour God. They serve mainly for this very use, and therefore this duty of trading for God lieth first and most upon them. Wherefore hath God created them anew in Christ Jesus but to glorify his name, and admire his grace, and live answerable to his love, and to bring him into request among all about them? Mat. 5:16, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' They that are eminent for the profession of godliness, and are set as lights in the world, or a city upon a hill, these should bring much honour to God, and provoke others to do so; as the stars, which are the shining part of heaven, draw eyes after them; if they should be eclipsed they set the world a-wondering: so should they shine as lights in the 'midst of a crooked generation,' Phil. 2:15; or as the star that shined at Christ's birth conducted the wise men to him, so should they by their profession and practice lead others to Christ.

2. *dona administrantia*, subservient helps. Now these are of several sorts.

[1.] Either gifts of nature, both of the mind and of the body. Of the mind, as promptness of wit, clearness of the understanding, soundness of judgment, or solid wisdom; all these were given you of God, and he expects an improvement of these for his glory; that every man should be what he is for his creator. It was a good saying of Epictetus in Arrian, *Si essem luscinia, &c.*—If I were a nightingale, I would sing as a nightingale: *Si essem alauda, &c.*—If I were a lark, I would pierce as a lark; but now I am a man I will glorify God as a man. But alas! how often do men of the best endowments miscarry! Isa. 47:10, 'For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness, thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none besides me.' Satan made use of the serpent, who was the subtlest of beasts of the field, Gen. 3:1. The devil loveth to go to work with the sharpest tools. God hath given great abilities to some above others, to enable them for his service. Now the devil, to despite God the more, turneth his own weapons against himself. But it should not be so. We should remember that we have nothing but what we have received, and 'who maketh us to differ?' 1 Cor. 4:7. So of the body, as health and strength. Surely these *bona corporis* are talents. God fitteth every man for the work wherein he will be honoured by him: Gal. 1:15, 'Separated from his mother's womb,' with a body fit to endure travel and hardship. Strength is not to be wasted in sin and vanity, but employed for God. It is better it should be worn out with labours than eaten out with rust.

[2.] Outward interests, such as wealth, honour, and power; these are comfortable to the animal life, and lay an obligation upon us, and also they give us many advantages of doing good, which should always be taken hold of, and used by us; as the greater veins abound with blood to supply the less: Prov. 3:9, 'Honour the Lord with thy substance, and the first-fruits of all thy increase.' Though many never

forget God more than when he hath blessed them, it is their duty to make some improvement of this talent also: Eccles. 7:11, 'Wisdom with an inheritance is good.' It is good of itself alone, but it is better, more useful and beneficial to ourselves and others, when God giveth us, with the blessings of this life, wisdom. Wealth is an excellent instrument, whereby a man is enabled to do much good, and is a help to piety and charity. Poor men are not heeded and regarded. So honour and great place is an opportunity whereby grace may put forth itself with greater advantage: Neh. 1:11, 'The Lord show me favour in the sight of this man; for I was the king's cup-bearer.' He mentions his relation as having made an advantage of it.

[3.] The providences we are exercised withal, whether mercies or afflictions, we are to give an account of them: mercies and comforts vouchsafed to us by God. It is a naughty heart that would enjoy anything apart from God, and looketh to his own personal contentment more than God's glory, Joel 2:14. In a great famine they desire plenty, that there may be a meat-offering and a drink-offering for the Lord. So for afflictions; God expecteth some improvement of them. There is mercy in it, that God will put us under his discipline: Job 7:18, 'What is man that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?' And we must account for our afflictions, Amos 4:2, 3. God reckoneth up our chastisements.

[4.] Ordinances and instituted helps; they come under a fourfold notion—duties, privileges, means, talents. As duties enjoined, so they are part of our homage due to God. It is not a matter arbitrary; there is a tie upon our consciences to keep us to the due observance of them. As privileges: Hosea 8:12, 'I have written to them the great things of my law.' This keepeth us from weariness, that we may not consider them as a burdensome task: they are a great privilege, dearly bought: it is by the blood of Jesus that we draw near to God.

As means for our growth and improvement; that notion is necessary, that we may not rest in the work wrought, but look after the grace dispensed thereby. There is much difference in doing things as a task and using them as a means; means are for some end. As talents for which we must give an account, which will quicken us to more earnest diligence in the improvement of them. Some do not look upon them as duties, and so neglect them; others not as privileges, and so are not so cheerful in the use of them; others not as means, and so rest in the work wrought; others not as talents, and so are indifferent whether they get good by them, yea or no.

Secondly, What is it to trade with them? It implieth—

1. A conscionable use of all our gifts.
2. A diligent improvement of them to the ends for which they were intended.

1. That we should use them well and holily; our graces well, our parts well, our estates well. Our gifts and graces are not for pride and ostentation: 'Open my lips, that my mouth may show forth thy praise,' not my own, saith holy David. The service of hell must not be maintained with the contributions of heaven, neither must we seek God's approbation to the setting up of our own glory: Phil. 1:15, some 'preached the gospel out of strife and envy.' Unmortified corruption will make a man's most excellent gifts subservient to his basest lusts, though exercised in the choicest duties of prayer and preaching. Applause, vainglory, and such like carnal motions and ends may set some men on work, and make them prostitute the service of Christ to their own lusts. This is not to trade as factors for God, but to set up for ourselves. So for estate; to spend it in pomp and vanity, it is 'sowing to the flesh,' Gal. 6:8. To spend our wit, time, and strength upon the service of our fleshly lusts, or to make our body a strainer

for meat and drink, or a channel for lust to run through; to be all for present profit, pleasure, and preferment; this is, instead of trading with talents, to use them to God's dishonour.

2. That we should be laborious according to our gifts and opportunities. As a servant is sent abroad to spy all advantages of gain for his master, so we are sent into the world to take all occasions of doing good: 1 Cor. 15:58, 'Always abounding in the work of the Lord.' Ministers are to watch for souls, and magistrates are to watch for good, and private Christians to be careful to maintain good works. To do a little good by the by will not be accepted; we must be hard at work for God.

Thirdly, To whom the gain and increase redoundeth? In a moral consideration there are three beings—God, neighbour, and self: accordingly we are appointed to work for three ends—the glory of God, the salvation of our own souls, and the good of others; and as we promote either of these ends, we are said to gain and increase our talents.

1. The glory of God must be regarded in the first place, or, which is always concerned with it, the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and his interest in the world; for all the gifts that we have received are for the Master's use. Though God cannot be enriched by anything that we can do, yet he counteth it an increase if we study to bring him into request, or to advance the kingdom of his Son. Therefore this must be our supreme end in all things: 1 Cor. 10:31, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' If in eating and drinking, and the use of our ordinary comforts, much more in the supreme and important actions of our lives, such as we would make a business of: God must be specially eyed there. God only is independent and self-sufficient, of himself and from himself; but

self-seeking is monstrous and unnatural in the creature; they are of him, and by him, and for him: Rom. 11:36, 'Of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' The motion of the creatures is circular, they end where they begun, man especially. Other creatures glorify God necessarily, we voluntarily and by choice; they passively, as they minister matter to the beholders to glorify God; we actively, as we are to intend and seek his glory in all things. They are made for God ultimately, but mediately for man; but we are made for his immediate service, and should glorify him in all.

2. The saving of our own souls, that must be regarded next to the glory of God. For next to the love of God, man is to love himself, and in himself first his better part. The great errors of the world come from mistaking self, and misplacing self: they misplace self when they set it above God, and prefer their interests before the conscience of their duty to him; then they mistake self, thinking themselves more concerned as a body than a soul, and prefer the satisfactions of the carnal life before the happiness of the spiritual. We never truly love ourselves but when we love our souls and seek their good. God ordereth all his providences for his own glory and the good of his people: Rom. 8:28, 'All things shall work together for good to them that love God.' So should we order all our actions. All things are sanctified to them that are sanctified to God, as helps and means, and something to bring us to him; so should we use all gifts, ordinances, and providences. We distinguished before of *dona sanctificantia*, et *administrantia*; this is the difference between them. The graces of sanctification, though profitable for others, yet are chiefly intended for the good of him that hath them; gifts of edification, though profitable for the owner, yet are principally intended for the good of others. A man that hath sanctifying grace, he doth good to others with it, that is but *utilitas emergens*, not *finis proprius*; it is not the proper and chief end for which those graces

were chiefly given; but other subservient gifts are for the good of the body, not for the worth of the person that hath them: 1 Cor. 12:7, 'The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.' That was the main and proper end.

3. For the good of others, their edification and benefit; as the sun doth not shine for himself, nor the fountains flow for themselves. We drive a joint-trade for heaven, and God hath scattered his gifts, that every part may supply somewhat for the good of the whole; as every member in the body hath its proper station and several use, by which the whole body receiveth benefit: Rom. 12:4, 'For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office;' 1 Cor. 12:14, 'For the body is not one member, but many.' A man hath not wealth for himself, nor parts for himself, not ministerial gifts for himself, to promote his own ends, but to bring in souls to God; not for pomp, but for use. All have their proper and distinct offices, some to serve, others to rule, some to counsel, others to execute. Every one hath their proper and distinct use; for God maketh nothing in vain, nor was the world appointed to be a hive for drones and idle ones. Therefore we should all in our places be doing good to others, helping them by our counsel, or by our estate and interest, or by our service; but especially should we do good to their souls; for we are to love our neighbour as ourselves, that is, by a regular love. Therefore first seek their spiritual good, as we would do our own, gaining upon them by assiduous counsels, provoking them by our example. Otherwise we hide what we have in a napkin; and what profit hath the world by hidden wisdom more than by hidden treasure?

Secondly, The reasons, or the confirmation of this point.

1. They that have received talents must trade, with them, because they are not only a gift, but a trust, given us to employ. As a gift, they

call for our thankfulness; as a trust, for our faithfulness. He that hath an estate made over to him in trust, and for certain uses expressed in the conveyance, hath indeed no estate therein at all, but only with respect to those uses. The right of a feoffee in trust is fidei commissarius, is quite distinct from that of an owner and possessor. Just so it is here; and oh! that we could make you sensible that all that you have is for such uses whereby you may bring some glory to God and some good to others, and so save your own souls by the discharge of your trust! Surely, then, men would use their gifts more industriously, spend their estates better, their time better, and be more profitable in all their relations.

2. This trust is committed to servants, not to strangers or freemen, who are at their own dispose; so that from the quality of the persons receiving there is an argument and obligation upon them. I may desire another to take a trust, who may refuse me; but those under command must do as their Lord would have them. Now, thus are we to Christ, who hath an absolute right in us, and both made us and bought us.

3. The argument is still more binding, if there be a formal covenant and promise on their part that they will faithfully perform this trust. Now there is a covenant between God and us: 'I will be your God, and you shall be my people.' In that covenant we bind ourselves to seek his glory, and to do his people good. As we take God, whole God, to be ours, so we give up ourselves and all that is ours to him, to be for his use and service. In this covenant the altera pars paciscens is an inferior. Though there be a mutual interest, yet there cannot be such an interest in God as God hath in us. God hath not only an interest in us, but a dominion over us, which an inferior cannot have over a superior; so that we are God's more fully than he can be ours. Now a trust accepted and broken afterwards involveth us in the greater

crime. I am God's, and will be God's, and would I could do more for his glory; as a Christian in general, as a husband, or wife, or father, or child, or servant, I will more honour God in my place.

4. The fruit, comfort, and excellency of the thing trusted is most seen in the use. It is true of all sorts of talents. Take the lowest outward subservient helps, wealth, power, and honour. A man doth not see the comfort and use of wealth so much in anything as when he doth employ it for God. If he hoard it up, he hath it only for show; if he layeth it out to clothe his back or to feed his belly, he doth but make himself a more honourable sort of brute beast; all the while he is sowing to the flesh, or sacrificing to his god, the belly, or offering up a meat-offering or a drink-offering to appetite. But how sweet is it when we have opportunities of doing more for God! Then he seeth the use of wealth indeed; it giveth him advantages of service, and a more diffusive charity. Ordinances, the worth of them is most known in the use and improvement; not when we resort to them out of custom and fashion's sake, but use them as means to do our souls good. So for gifts; as wells are the sweeter for draining, so gifts are improved by using: so graces of the Spirit. God's most precious gifts should not lie idle: 2 Cor. 6:1, 'We beseech you receive not the grace of God in vain.' In short, you do not taste the true sweetness of wealth when gorgeously attired, your tables plentifully furnished, and you glut yourselves with all manner of fleshly delights; but in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, that satisfieth the mind and conscience of them that do it; as you do not reap the increase of corn by scattering it in the sand, but casting it into a fruitful soil.

Use 1. To press us to this negotiation; for if these things be so, we should all rouse up ourselves, and say, What honour hath God by my wealth, my parts, my honour and greatness, my place and office? what protection to his cause, what relief and comfort to his people?

1. Consider, it is our business in the world. Now every one should ask for what end he was born, and continued in the world so long. Our Lord Jesus, John 18:37, saith, 'To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.' Every one is sent into the world for some end; for surely God would not make a creature in vain. We did not come into the world merely to fill up the number of things, as stones and rubbish, nor to grow in bulk and stature, as the plants, nor to enjoy pleasure without remorse, as the beasts: God would never then have given us those higher faculties of reason and conscience. For what end did I come into the world but to glorify God in my place, to act that part in the world which the great Master of the scenes appointed to me? Why do I live here? What have I done in pursuance of my great end? Most men live as beasts; eat, and drink, and sleep, and die, and there is an end of them; they never asked in good earnest for what purpose they came hither.

2. Every one is trading for somebody, the devil or the flesh, regarding his maker's glory or his own satisfaction: there is no medium. Now which are you doing, trading for heaven or hell?

3. Consider how much you are intrusted with. Look within you, without you, round about you, and see how much you have to account for; the faculties of the mind, the members of the body, your time, health, honour, estate, lifted up to heaven in ordinances, Mat. 11:23; much given, Mat. 12:48, and Neh. 1:11. Now improve all for God.

4. Talents are increased the more employed. We double our gifts by the faithful use of them: 'He that had five talents gained other five; and he that had two, other two.' The more grace here, the more glory hereafter. If they be not employed they are lost. How many poor,

blasted, withered Christians may we find, by slacking their zeal, and for want of diligent exercise I But on the contrary, as the widow's oil increased in the spending, and the loaves multiplied in the breaking, in Christ's miracle, and the right arm is bigger and fuller of spirits than the left, so grace, that decayeth by disuse, groweth by exercise. The corn sown bringeth in the increase.

5. We must give an account at last to God, Luke 19:23; he will 'demand his own with usury.' What honour hath God had by us as ministers, magistrates, masters of families, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants? Beasts are not called to an account, for they have no reason and conscience, as man hath. What will you say when God shall reckon with you, what you have done with your time, strength, and estates? If an ambassador that is sent abroad to serve his king and country should return no other account of his negotiation than I was busy at cards and dice, and could not mind the employment I was sent about; or a factor, I spent riotously that which I should have spent in the mart or fair, will this pass for an excuse?

6. What a sad thing is it to have gifts for this end, to leave us without excuse, as the Gentiles have the 'light of nature,' Rom. 1:20, and Christians the 'light of the gospel:' John 15:22, 'If I had not come, and spoken to them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin.' Others have the word preached to them: Mat. 24:14, 'And the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations;' compared with Mat. 13:9, 'Know that a prophet hath been among them;' have advantages and opportunities, but no heart to use them; only that God may be clear when he judgeth.

7. We improve the stock of corruption left us by Adam, why not the gifts given us by Jesus Christ? This fire needeth no blowing; of itself it breaketh out into a flame; and shall not we stir up ourselves, that we may be more useful? In employing our gifts three things are necessary—prudence, fidelity, and industry.

[1.] Prudence. This is necessary for a steward or factor: Luke 12:42, 'Who then is a wise and faithful steward, whom the Lord shall make ruler over his household?' Now, there is a twofold wisdom—a wisdom that is not from above, and a wisdom that is from above, James 3:16, 17. The first is earthly, sensual, devilish; it either serveth for earthly profits, or to give content to the flesh, or to affect dominion and greatness. He that hath this wisdom sets up for himself, and will never be a steward and factor for God. And this is to be wise for the present. But the wisdom we speak of is to be wise for the future, that it may be well with us to all eternity; and that is the wisdom that is 'pure and peaceable,' and full of good fruits; for that is the truest wisdom; it serveth all turns, and provideth for God and self too: that is a holy self-seeking, to seek self in God: it hath what the other affecteth in a more sincere way of enjoyment, 'Honour with God,' Rom. 2:7; 'Pleasures with God,' Ps. 16:2; 'Rich towards God,' Luke 12:20; 1 Tim. 6:18, 'Rich in good works, that they may lay hold of eternal life.' This prudence would serve the turn, and make a man take all advantages of doing good.

[2.] Faithful: 1 Cor. 4:2, 'Moreover, it is required of a steward that a man be found faithful;' that he sincerely seek the glory of God, and watch all advantages to promote his Lord's interest, and carry himself well in his trust.

[3.] Industry, that he stir up himself, 2 Tim. 1:6; 2 Tim. 4:14, 'Neglect not the gift that is in thee.' Oh! let us not be idle, but hunt out

occasions of doing good.

Doct. 2. In trading, our returns must carry proportion with our receipts.

'He that had five talents gained other five, and he that had two gained other two.' God will not accept of every man's rendering for the mercies of common providence, deliverances; 2 Chron. 32:25, Hezekiah rendered something, but not according to the benefit received. Nor for the mercies of his covenant, justification, or pardoning mercy: Luke 7:47, 'Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.' All love requireth love, and an answerable degree. So for sanctification: he expecteth more from them to whom he hath given more grace: 1 Cor. 15:10, 'But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.' And in general, of all talents, ordinances, he expecteth improvement suitable, clear knowledge, strong faith, more ready obedience: Luke 12:47, 48, 'And the servant that knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes: for unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required.' Otherwise his judgments will make it evident: Amos 3:2, the valley of visions had the heaviest burthen. So for gifts of the mind. God expecteth service according to their measure: Eph. 4:16, 'That which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part;' according to that place they hold in the body. No member is either dead, or idle, or living and working only to itself, but every one is to contribute for the good of others according to its measure. So for estate. God looks for more from them whose

superfluities are larger than others enjoy, that they should be 'rich in good works,' 1 Tim. 6:18. God accepteth the widow's two mites, that was more than the abundance of the rich; for 'she cast in all that she had,' Luke 21. Still the rule holdeth.

The account riseth with the gifts; and God will accept that at one man's hands that he will not accept of another, whose capacities and opportunities are greater, who have more time to spend in his immediate service, more wealth to bestow, more advantages of acquainting themselves with God. Only let me give you two cautions in judging of our returns.

First, That in gifts, either of mind or of the body, our faithfulness is measured by our endeavour, and not by our success. *Dominus non considerat, saith Jerome, luci magnitudinem, sed studii voluntatem.* The crown of faithfulness and the crown of faithfulness do both adorn the person that wears them. Though they be not gathered, yet our work is with God: Isa. 49:4, 'Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work is with God.' Though little fruit and effect on men, yet not the less regarded and rewarded by God.

Secondly, That in the laying out of our gifts, God doth not measure them by the quantity and value of what is given, but by the affection and heart of the giver. *Affectus pretium rebus imponit, saith Ambrose;* which is a comfort to the poorer sort, who have but little to give and contribute to good uses: 1 Cor. 8:11, 'If there be first a willing mind, a man is accepted according to what he hath, not according to what he hath not.' So in other things; the smallness and meanness of the benefit doth not diminish God's estimation of man's love and affection. On the other side, it is an awe to the great and

rich. All those pompous services, if not a real mind, are not accepted, 1 Cor. 13:1. God loveth non copiosum, sed hilarem datorem, not a large, but a cheerful giver.

Thirdly, Where the matter will afford it, a liberal and open heart will not be defective in quantity: they think nothing too much for God, and therefore will do all that they can; all seemeth too little: 1 Chron. 22:14, 'And now behold, in my trouble (Heb. or poverty), I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver, and brass and iron without weight.' Look, as there may be a winter's day in summer, and a summer's day in winter, for the proportion; so much may be little, and little much, according to the mind and love of the giver; the widow gave ὄλον τὸν βίον. Some do twice as much good with a little as others with a great deal. Love will not be backward.

Reasons of the point.

Because righteousness doth consist in a proportion, and so it holdeth good both for our duty and God's judgment.

1. For our duty; that we should be fruitful according to our means, opportunities, and helps; for every one of these increase our obligation.

2. For God's judgment. God is not a Pharaoh, to require the full tale of brick where he doth not afford stubble. In all his proceedings there is great equity; he considereth men according to their advantages: Rom. 2:9, 'Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.'

Use 1. Let this assuage the envy and trouble of the meanest. If thy gifts be mean, thy account will be so much the easier. Merchants that

have the greatest dealing are not ever the safest men: Eccles. 1:18, 'He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.' None so miserable as they that have received much and returned little; which should prevail with us to an acquiescence in God's providence, though our talents be not so large.

2. Let it quicken those that have received greater gifts than others to do so much the more good with them. You are more bound, and that which God will accept from others he will not from you. If you have many ordinances and means of improvement, you should get the more grace, Heb. 6:6, 7, and Mat. 11:22–24. You are deeper in the state of condemnation if you do not bring forth fruit proportionable to the means of salvation: if greater abilities, you must give God the more glory; if a greater estate, you must be richer in good works, 1 Tim. 6:7, 8; for you to shut up your bowels: 1 John 3:17, 'How dwelleth the love of God in you?' *Potentis potenter cruciabuntur.* Mighty shall be the destruction of the mighty. If we have greater mercies, there is greater duties; and greater duties, greater sins; and greater sins, greater judgments. Surely if men had any sense of their accounts, those that have much to answer for would have more trouble.

Doct. 3. Among those that have received talents all are not alike fruitful.

I shall handle the point with respect to the context we have in hand.

1. Though but one be mentioned, yet the number of unfaithful ones is very great. In parables the scope must be regarded. Now the general scope is to show that as the virgins are not all admitted, so all the servants of the house not accepted. In the parable, indeed, two of the servants are faithful, one unfaithful. We cannot conclude thence that the number of those that used their talents well should be greater

than of those that hid them or neglected the improvement of them; as in the former parable, that the number of the foolish shall be just equal with the number of the wise; or in the parable of the wedding garment, that but one shall come to the gospel-feast unprepared. No; the ornament of that scheme and figure which Christ would make use of to signify his mind required it should be so expressed; for since our Lord, to avoid perplexity and confusion, would mention but three servants, it was fit that one should be an instance of eminent faithfulness and service, another of service in a lower degree, that the meanest may not be discouraged, and the other should represent the unfruitful ones. Now experience showeth they are more than one to two; yea, more than ten to one, much the far greater number. Oh! how few are there even of those that bold much from God, that return him aught of love and service! The idle and unprofitable ones are found everywhere, in all ranks and conditions of men.

2. Observe, he that had but one talent is represented as the unfaithful one, and that with good advice. If the example of reprobation and punishment had been put in the servant that had five talents, or two talents, we might have thought that men of eminent gifts, rank, quality, and employment in the church, shall be called to an account, and punished for their neglect. No; but as our Lord hath laid it, it reacheth his full scope and purpose. For in the instance of the servant that had but one talent, those that had five and two may easily know how much sorer punishment shall light upon them, if he that had least be called to such a strict reckoning for his non-improvement. However, this we may observe, that he that had the least gift was unfaithful. To be sure, those that have most spiritual gifts, do usually improve them, and the rest are left without excuse.

3. Observe, his crime is, 'he went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.' Men dig in the earth to find metals and talents, not to

hide them there. Mark, it is not said he did embezzle his talent, as many waste their substance in riotous living, quench brave parts in excess, sin away many precious advantages of ordinances and education, and powerful convictions. No; he did not embezzle his talent, but hid it. Mark again, he did not misemploy his talent, as some do their wealth, others their wit, to scoff at religion, or to put a varnish on the devil's cause, their power to oppress and crush the good: the precious gifts that many have are like a sword in a madman's hand, they use them to hurt and mischief. No; no such thing is charged upon this evil and naughty servant. It is fault enough to hide our talents, though we do not abuse them. That you may conceive of this, I shall show you—

1. His sin, in hiding his lord's money.
2. What may be the cause of it in those that imitate him.

First, It was a sin, partly because it was against the command of his master. In Luke 19:13, 'He gave them a charge, occupy till I come.' Partly because it was against the end of the distribution of the talents. To keep money unprofitably by us is a loss; it was made for commerce, so were gifts given us to profit withal; scattered into several hands to bring in some increase to the Lord and owner. Partly because it was against the example of his fellow-servants, who were industrious and careful to comply with their charge: 2 Cor. 9:2, 'Your zeal hath provoked very many.' And partly as his obedience and account would have been easier; as it is more easy to give an account of a small sum than a greater, as there is less trouble, less danger; so his refusal is less excusable. And partly as it was an abuse of his master's patience; it was long ere he called him to a reckoning. God will bear long with us, in infancy, childhood, and youth, but he will not bear always; if we do not bethink ourselves at last, our

account is hastened, and God will suffer idle servants no longer to have an opportunity of promoting his glory, the good of others, and their own salvation.

Secondly, What may be the causes of such-like unfaithfulness? Men are taken off from improving their talents—

1. Sometimes by a slothful laziness, and should that hinder us, especially us that are servants to God? What man can endure an idle servant? Though he should not whore and steal, yet if he do not his work, you put him away. Everything in the world costs diligence, and shall not we be diligent in our master's work? How will men labour for a small reward in the world, and is not heaven worth our most industrious care? Shall not we be hard at work? 1 Cor. 15:58. The reward is still propounded to the diligent: 1 Cor. 3:8, 'Every man shall receive his reward according to his own labour;' 2 Cor. 9:6, 'He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly.' Idleness is its own punishment. An idle man is a burden to himself, like a man buried alive. When it is morning, would God it were evening. He contracts distempers; a key seldom turned rusts in the lock; standing pools are apt to putrify. David, when he was idle, fell into those foul faults. An idle man can think of nothing but the delights of the flesh, and so becometh a ready prey to Satan.

Oh! then, shake off laziness and the ease of the flesh! God is at work, John 5:17; the creatures are at work; the sun is always going up and down.

2. Another cause is a foolish modesty and pusillanimity. Oh! this should not be; we should not, like Saul, hide among the stuff when God calleth us forth to some employment for his glory, 1 Sam. 10:22; or, with Moses, draw back when opportunity is offered us to be

useful in our generation, Exod. 4:20. God can help the stammering tongue, and will bless mean gifts when you sincerely obey his call.

3. Self-love: Phil. 2:21, 'All men seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ.' Many care not how it goeth with Christ's matters, if their particular go right: they serve their own worldly ease, profit, credit, pleasure.

4. Distracting businesses, or love to the world; this is digging in the earth, and hiding our talent indeed: 2 Tim. 4:10, 'Demas hath forsaken me, and embraced the present world.'

5. Fear of danger, if publicly active for God. Some are so cowardly that they are browbeaten with a frown; cannot venture a lesser interest, cannot bear a scoff or a disgraceful word; therefore sneak, loath to own what they are, or to do for Christ and his despised cause. This is not a Christian frame: Phil. 1:28, 'In nothing terrified by your adversaries, which to them is a token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.' It looketh like Christ's business; he speaketh of endeavours to propagate the faith of Christ, and to gain men to embrace the gospel.

Use. Let us see if we be found in the number of the faithful or unfaithful. A negligent ministry, a Gallio, a careless magistrate, an idle master of a family, a slothful Christian, is like the servant in the text. You have your use whether you be in a public or private station. Let us be faithful; if but one talent, the smallest gifts must not lie idle, but be seriously exercised for God's glory; if but one, your temptations are the less, private men are not exposed to such dangers as public persons. It will aggravate your negligence if, when less is required, you are found idle. Oh! therefore, shake off the ease of the flesh, that loathness to be troubled with the faithful discharge of your duty.

SERMON XIII

After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained besides them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents besides them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.—MAT. 25:19–23

WE now come to the third part of the parable.

The first we called the distribution; the second, the negotiation; and the third, the account. This account is—

1. Spoken in the general, ver. 19.
2. More particularly described and set forth. There we shall take notice—

First, Of the reckoning with the good servants.

Secondly, With the bad one. In the passages that concern the good servants, you may take notice of the servants' account and the master's approbation. The account of the first servant is in ver. 20; of the second, in ver. 22; the master's approbation in ver. 21 and 23. He

entertaineth both the servants with the same countenance and the same words.

First, I begin with the general intimation of the account, ver. 19; where the time—

1. When he cometh, after a long time.
2. His work; what he will do when he cometh; he reckoneth with his servants.

First, For the time.

Doct. 1. There is a good space of time between Christ's ascension and second coming.

Quest. But why is this last reckoning so long delayed?

Ans. Not from any unreadiness in Christ; he is ready to judge if we be ready to be judged, 1 Peter 4:5.

1. There is a reason on the part of the good; and that is, that the number of the elect may be gathered, who live in several ages and places; and it requireth some time and pains to work upon each soul of them; for 'not one of those must perish,' 2 Peter 3:9. And after they are converted, there must be some time allowed to exercise their diligence: they must have a day to work in, John 9:4, and to try their faith and patience in: Rev. 6:11, 'They should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.' A certain number are enrolled for sufferings, as well as for heaven, many of which had not obtained their crown: as the high priest tarried within the veil till his ministration ended. As long as there is need of Christ's intercession, he defers his second coming.

2. On the wicked's part; it is necessary they should have a time of improvement, that they may be left without excuse: Rom. 9:22, 'What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?' It is for the glory of God that he should take them when ripe. Then the 'angel thrusts in his sickle,' Rev. 14:15. Therefore they have longer time of prospering in their sinful ways.

[1.] Let us not make an ill use of this, either to deny or doubt of his coming, as those, 2 Peter 3:3, or of slackening or putting off your preparation, as the naughty servant, Mat. 24:48, 49. But let us 'wait with patience,' and 'hold out to the very last.' Saul held out till Samuel was even ready to come, and so forced himself to offer sacrifice, whereby he lost his kingdom, 1 Sam. 13:8, 9. If he had stayed a little longer, Samuel had come. So many grow weary of doing and suffering, and miscarry in the very haven. We wait in ordinary things: James 5:7, 8, 'Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.' His hastiness cannot alter the seasons; so we, in improving our interests and employing our talents, should not faint: Gal. 6:4, 'And be not weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.'

[2.] Let us shame ourselves that, having so much time, we have done so little work. Our master hath tarried long, and given us a large space of time wherein to employ ourselves; but what have we done for his glory? Alas! either we do nihil agere, or male agere, or aliud agere; either we do nothing, or nothing to the purpose, or that which is worse than nothing, which will undo us for ever. Oh! what thoughts will we have of a careless and misspent life when we come

to die! Many do not think of the end of their lives till their lives be ended; and then they moan and bewail themselves when they lie a-dying. Oh! rather think of your last end and great account betimes. It is lamentable to begin to live when we must die. Quidam tunc ineipiunt vivere cum desinendum est—they end their lives before they begin to live. Therefore if hitherto you have been pleasing the flesh, idling and wantoning away your precious time, say, 1 Peter 4:3, 'Let the time past suffice.' I have been long enough dishonouring God, and destroying my own soul: hath my master tarried so long, and shall I still abuse his patience? This is a holy and right use of this delay.

Secondly, His work, what he will do when he cometh: he 'reckoneth with his servants.'

Doct. 2. Those that have talents must look to reckon for them, for though he be long first, yet at length the Lord cometh.

1. Consider the certainty of this account; his wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth require it. His wisdom requireth it; for no wise man would put his goods to trust, and never look after them more; and shall we imagine that the wise God would send reasonable creatures into the world, and furnish them with excellent gifts and endowments, and never consider how they employ themselves? Is man God's servant? then certainly he is liable to an account. You had never come into the world but for this business, to serve and please God. For God maketh nothing in vain, but all things for himself, Prov. 16:4. And do you think that after you are made for this end you may live as you list, and never be called to a reckoning? So absurd a thought cannot enter into the heart of a reasonable man: Eccles. 9:9, 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the

sight of thine eyes: but know thou, for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.' Man would be but a sort of beast if he had no other end of his actions but to eat and drink and sleep, and no other account to give. Surely the most wise God would not have given us such excellent faculties in vain. He fitteth all creatures for their use: every workman fitteth his work for the end for which it serveth; so God hath made man for some end and use. And God's justice requireth it that it should be well with them that do well, and ill with them that do ill. In the world it is not so: his servants are very often abused while doing their work most faithfully, the world thinks them mad, hateth them. They that neglect their own work beat their fellow-servants; therefore the honour of his justice requireth they should be called to an account: 1 Peter 4:5, 'Who must give an account to him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead.' There is not a thought in wicked men's hearts, nor a word in their mouths, contrary to God and his people, but he taketh notice of it, and will exact an account thereof, a strict and impartial account of all their hard speeches. And the goodness of God requireth it. His goodness to the world in general; the world would be a wilderness, and men like ravenous beasts, if there were not some bridle and awe of a world to come upon them; but every one that had power would prey upon others, but that there is a higher judge. God hath appointed a supreme tribunal, where causes are judged over again; otherwise those that have power enough to do mischief would be under no restraint. But it is goodness to his people, whom he hath set a-work, and therefore hath appointed a day when he will give them their wages; his goodness will not permit that they should be any losers by God, their love and obedience to him that deny themselves, their own affections and interest, for his sake. Therefore certainly the great God of recompenses will come and call the world to an account, that the faithfulness of his servants may appear with praise and honour. This is a supreme truth: Heb. 11:6, 'That he that cometh to God must

believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' And his truth requireth it, it is laid at pledge in the word; that is the proper ground for faith to build upon. Now there we have not only God's word, but God's oath: Rom. 14:10, 11, 'For we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' There we have plentiful evidence.

2. It is a personal account: Rom. 14:12, 'So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.' We should not look to others what they be and do. As to ourselves, we must give an account of ourselves, our life, our heart, our own thoughts, words, and actions. It is personal, partly because every one must give his account apart; not every one shuffled together and in gross; but every servant apart and severally; first he that had five talents, then two, then one. And partly because every one unavoidably must answer for himself. Here we may have our attorney or advocate to appear for us in court; but there every one for himself, every man must in person, give an account of his own fidelity.

3. It is an impartial account, every one without exception: Rev. 20:12, 'I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God.' Small and great, king and peasant, they shall all one day be called to an account, whether faithful or no. None so high as to be exempted from this account; none so mean as to be neglected in it: he that received five talents and he that received one both gave an account. The poor beggar is not left out, nor the king excused.

4. It is a particular account. God will not take our accounts by the heap and lump, but there is a narrow search into all our hearts and ways. The great thing is, What we have done in that place and relation where God hath set us our stewardship? Luke 16:2, but that

is not all; we are to give an account of every action: Eccles. 12:14, 'For God shall bring every work into judgment.' Every idle word must be accounted for, Mat. 12:36. All the time we have spent, degrees of grace we received, what we have done, proportionable to our trust, five for five, two for two.

5. It is an exact account, that nothing is lost: Rev. 20:12, 'The books were produced;' the book of conscience, and the book of God's remembrance: one of these is in the sinner's keeping, and yet it cannot be blotted out nor defaced: but at the day of judgment, conscience shall be extended to the recognition of all our ways. Now these books of account that are kept between God and the creature are somewhat like the books of merchants, of debtor and creditor, what returned and what received. God's mercies to us are booked, so are our returns. That God's mercies are put upon the book and register appeareth by the expostulations used in scripture when God proceedeth to any particular judgment; as for instance, opportunities of grace, and instructions of the word; the word preached, εἰς μαρτυρίαν: Mat. 24:14, 'And the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.' God keepeth exact account: 'Behold, these three years came I seeking fruit,' Luke 13:7; 'This second epistle write I unto you,' 2 Peter 3:1. He taketh notice of a former. God remembereth the prophets' words when the prophets are dead and gone. Every pressing sermon, every notable help: 'This second miracle did Jesus in Cana of Galilee,' John 4:54. Christ's special works and manifestations of himself ought to be marked and kept in memory. God doth so for deliverances from danger: Isa. 11:11, 'The Lord shall arise the second time for the deliverance of his people.' He taketh notice that he has been once at it, and would be again. So what talents and gifts we have had, whether five, two, or one. Secondly, on the other side, all the good that we do; therefore the

apostle speaketh of 'fruit abounding to his account,' Phil. 4:17. The Lord taketh notice of our faithfulness in evil times: Mal. 3:15, 16, 'And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name;' 1 Kings 19:18; Acts 17:34. Kindness to his servants: Mat. 10:42, 'And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, he shall not lose his reward;' Eccles. 11:1, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days;' it is not lost. On the other side, injuries done to his people; he hath a bottle for their tears, and a book for their sorrows, Ps. 56:8. All the snares contrived: Deut. 32:34, 'Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?' Job 13:27, 'Thou lookest narrowly to all my paths, thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet.' Every action leaveth a track, every word, Mat. 12:36, every thought, 1 Cor. 4:5.

Use. Is our account ready against that great day of audit? Most neglect it, put off the thoughts of it. Take occasion hence to reckon with yourselves aforehand, and see what an account you can give to conscience. We should prepare more for this solemn day of reckoning, and therefore should take notice of what we do, and what we receive. We had need keep a register of every day's work, and every day's mercies. There are three questions in scripture; often put them to your hearts: Deut. 32:6, 'Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee and established thee?' Heb. 2:3, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' Isa. 5:4, 'What could I have done more for my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked for grapes, behold it brought forth wild grapes?' The profit of daily arraigning conscience is great.

1. It keepeth us sensible of our duty, maketh us often have recourse to grace, when we continually observe our sins, duties, afflictions, mercies, comforts, opportunities of receiving grace, and do but intermingle this thought, that one day for all these I must give an account.

2. It presseth us to be more earnest for pardoning mercy, and every day to make even. This is the great folly of men, that they put off sin when God doth not put it away. There is an expression often used in scripture, 'Their iniquities shall find them out;' this notion of accounts will help us to understand it. It was committed many years ago, never heard of it since, but at length they shall hear of it: God reckoneth with them. If men escape and prosper a month, or a year, or two, they think all is forgotten; but at length it findeth them out. Sins are called debts, and all debts lie upon account against us, till they be cancelled. Augustus bought his quilt of one who slept securely, when he owed an hundred thousand sesterces. We may wonder at the security of sinners, who sleep when their damnation sleepeth not; they run upon the score, and never think of a reckoning. Solomon adviseth a man in debt 'not to sleep till he be delivered like a roe from the hunter,' Prov. 6:4. 5. It is good advice to us, to get our spiritual debts discharged: Ps. 51:1, 'Blot out my transgressions.' Christ hath taught us to pray for daily pardon as well as daily bread. The thought of these records that are kept, and the account we must make, should quicken us to it. Oh! what a clamour will our sins make when God sets them all in order before us! Ps. 50:21. Thousands of vain thoughts, light words, and sinful actions, much mispense of time, abuse of mercies. We know not how soon God will put the bond in suit: other debts have a day of payment fixed, but this God hath reserved in his own breast, when he will call us to an account.

3. It presseth us to live always as those that are to give an account. Paul quickened himself to diligence upon this consideration, 2 Cor. 5:9, 10. If we were never to be called to an account, we should do God all the service that possibly we can, we are so much obliged to him; but he hath set a day wherein he will reckon with us. Oh! what watchfulness, what diligence and faithfulness, should this produce in us! James 2:12, 'So speak and so do as those that shall be judged by the law of liberty.' We read in the story of the Albigenses, when the president of St Juliers coming to Angrogne would have forced a man to re-baptize his child in the popish way, he prayed the president that he would give it in writing, and sign it with his own hand, that he would discharge him before God, and take the peril upon himself; this made him relent and profess his trouble. Conscience is startled at God's records. If a man should do nothing, and speak nothing but what is to be registered and proclaimed at the market-cross, how watchful would he be! All is recorded, the books will be opened; therefore, when we are about to do anything unworthy, say as he, Acts 19:40, 'We are in danger to be called to an account for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse;' so should you. We that are to give an account, how careful should we be how we use our time, health, strength, understanding, authority, wealth, and other blessings of God. The commonness of these notions maketh them to lose their life and influence; therefore we should especially act faith in believing, and urging the soul with this account.

Secondly, It is particularly described; and there—

1. Of the servants' allegation.
2. The master's approbation.

First, The servants' allegation, ver. 20 and 22. The two first servants came cheerfully to their account, as having discharged their duty faithfully, and with all diligence improved the talents received. Not that in the day of judgment good men shall make any narrations of what they have done; they need not, for Christ shall do it for them: they rather wonder that anything they have done is taken notice of, as in the 37th verse of this chapter; but all this is spoken after the manner of men, and to keep up the decorum of the parable. If it signifieth anything, it signifieth the confidence of a good conscience, and what comfort and boldness it breedeth in the day of our accounts.

Doct. That a faithful discharge of our duty will give us comfort and boldness when our Lord cometh to reckon with us.

1. There is a confidence and comfort that ariseth from a good conscience, or from sanctification as well as justification. In the inward court, conscience is one of the witnesses, as well as the Spirit of God, Rom. 8:16, and much comfort ariseth from its testimony: 2 Cor. 1:12, 'This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience.' A carnal man is ashamed of the grounds of his rejoicing, and what it is that keepeth his heart merry; but a godly man can own the causes of his joy, which are, in the first place, the blood of Christ: Rom. 5:11, 'We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement;' next, the testimony of his conscience concerning his sincere walking. But if a man can live with these comforts, can he die with them?

2. The review of a well-spent life is a great comfort in death. Our Lord Jesus, at the end of his days, when he was to go out of the world, John 17:4, saith, 'I have glorified thee upon earth, and finished the work thou gavest me to do.' Hezekiah, when that sad

message was brought to him, that he must die, and not live, Isa. 38:4, that comforted him upon his death-bed: 'Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done what is good in thy sight.' So the apostle Paul, when he drew nigh his end, 2 Tim. 4:7, 8, saith, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.' Oh! it is a blessed thing if we can have this comfort, when conscience puts off all disguises, and the everlasting estate is at hand, and we are immediately to appear before the Lord; to remember then that we have been careful to please and honour God, and done his work, how sweet is it!

3. In the day of judgment; their works follow them into the other world, Rev. 14:13. Their wealth doth not follow them, but the conscience of having done well abideth with them. Conscience is heaven or hell to us. In hell it maketh up a part of the worm that never dieth; so in heaven, it giveth us confidence, 1 John 2:28; and 1 John 4:17, 'That we may have boldness in the day of judgment.' Works are not meritorious, and have no causal influence upon our salvation, yet they have the full place of an evidence, and so may wonderfully comfort and embolden our hearts.

Use. Let us labour to get this evidence. The time of death is a time that will rifle all our false hopes. You are in your health and strength now, but how soon you may shoot the gulph, you know not; we are hastening into the other world apace. When you are immediately to appear before God, you will have other thoughts of the world to come, and the necessity of preparation for it, than you have now; that which will comfort you now, will not comfort you then. You must look that the devil will then be most busy to tempt and trouble you,

and as now he prejudiceth you against the precepts of the gospel, so then against the promises of it: all your worldly comforts then will fail, and have spent their allowance, and become to you as unsavoury as the white of an egg. Will this comfort you, that you have sported and gamed away your precious time? that you have fared of the best, and lived in pomp and honour? Oh, no! but this will comfort you: I have made it my business to glorify God, I have been faithful in my place, have gotten some evidence of the love of God. It is not riches or greatness, or any earthly advantage will do you good. Oh! it is a cutting thought to the careless and negligent: Now I must give an account of every day and hour I have spent in this world; the improvement of every opportunity will be called for. Then all your vanities and carnal pleasures will be smart upon you, and vex your souls with the grievous remembrance of them. Well, then, can you in any measure look back upon the discharge of your duty? There are two extremes:—

1. Some are presumptuous and confident, because, they are not gross sinners. But what have they done for God? The sluggish and unprofitable servant was cast into utter darkness; he did not mispend his talent, but yet he did not improve it. The tree that bringeth forth no fruit is hewn down, though it did not bring forth bad fruit. It is not a negative religion will comfort thee, but a positive and a fruitful one. You are no drunkard, no adulterer, no profane person; but have you been at work for God?

2. Others are pusillanimous and diffident, because they do not arrive at the eminency and perfection of the highest. David had other worthies besides the first three. There were two faithful servants; one brought five talents, the other two. Now the middle is of those that can see in themselves more zeal than formality, more grace than corruption, that, for the main, have made it their business to honour

God, though conscious to many weaknesses and defects, yet throughout grace gets the upper hand; according to the degrees of grace received they are faithful with God.

Secondly, The master's approbation, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.' The faithful servants are well accepted by Christ. First, he entertaineth them with praise, ver. 21, 23. Secondly, with preferment and advancement, 'Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many.' Thirdly, with joy, 'Enter into the joy of thy Lord.'

Doct. That at Christ's appearing, faithful servants shall not only be commended, but gloriously rewarded.

1 Peter 1:7, that your faith may be found unto praise, honour, and glory, at the appearing of Christ.

1. There is not only verbal commendation, but real remuneration; glory and honour put upon them, as well as praise ascribed to them. (1.) Praise, because he shall then commend their faith before men and angels: Rev. 3:5, 'I will confess his name before my Father and his angels.' (2.) There will be a solemn owning and honouring of them, when all the holy angels shall be present. Oh! what a favour is it to be commended of God! 2 Cor. 10:18, 'For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.' When they had finished the tabernacle, all was viewed and approved by Moses: Moses blessed them. Oh! what is it to be blessed and commended by the Son of God in that great assembly of the whole world!

2. Here is preferment and advancement to a higher place in the family. Christ will prefer them as men do their servants: Mat. 24:47, 'Make him ruler over all his goods.' These expressions are taken from

the greatest honours a man can do his faithful servants in the world, 1 Kings 12:20. As Jeroboam was made ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph; so will Christ advance his servants to high dignity, sometimes expressed by 'setting them upon thrones,' Rev. 3:21; 'giving them crowns,' 1 Peter 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:8. That antithesis is to be regarded; few things, and many things. All things are few in comparison of heaven, our works, our gifts, our sufferings; the reward is far above all these: Rom. 8:18, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us;' 2 Cor. 4:17, 'For our light afflictions, that are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' It is all little that we do or suffer; it is little that God hath done for us in this world, in comparison of what he will do for us there. Here is the earnest; that is but a small part of the whole sum.

3. The next expression is, 'Enter into the joy of thy Lord.' Here Christ slideth into the thing signified by the parable, as afterward in assigning punishment unto the unfaithful servant: ver. 30, 'Cast him into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' Here is joy, and 'the joy of the Lord;' and faithful servants are said to enter into it.

[1.] The estate of the blessed is a state of joy; which ariseth partly from the beatifical vision; partly from their own blessedness, and also the blessed company.

(1.) The beatifical vision, or the vision of God: Ps. 16:11, 'In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand pleasures for evermore.' There is a mighty complacency that we take now in seeing, knowing, loving, and being beloved of God. What can be found in the creature is but a drop to the ocean in comparison of

what a believer findeth in God himself. God is to them an overflowing fountain of all felicity. But there is *gaudium vice*, and *gaudium patriæ*. Here it admits of increase and decrease; but there the soul is so filled that it cannot receive any more: Ps. 17:15, 'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.' God maketh out himself in the utmost latitude. As to the wicked, he stirreth up all his wrath. Here he punisheth by the creature, and so doth not put forth all his power; as a giant striking with a straw cannot put forth his strength. In heaven the soul shall be filled with unspeakable joy and delight. What delight is to the sense, that joy is to the mind. Three things are necessary to delight—a faculty, or power of the soul capable of pleasure; and then the thing itself; which being brought to the mind, doth stir up delight. As in bodily things, colours, fruits, tastes, pleasure consists in the near union and conjunction of these things. The more noble the faculty, the more excellent the object; the nearer the conjunction, the greater the delight and pleasure. Now in heaven our faculties are perfected: God is the subject, and there is a near conjunction. Oh! what embraces between him and the soul!

(2.) In their own glorified estate: 1 Peter 4:13, 'Rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.' So Jude: 'Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.' The fulness of our joy is suspended till then, that we may long much for that day. It will be a glad day to all faithful ones. Joy is *quies animi in bono adepto*; there is an aggregation of all good for soul and body. If the hope of this blessed estate breedeth joy, what will enjoyment, what will fruition do? If a glimpse or taste be so sweet, what will the full enjoyment be? Rom. 5:2, In deep troubles, yet 'we rejoice in hope of the glory of God;' 1 Peter 1:8, 'Whom having not seen ye love; in

whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' Their hearts are now and then filled with such a joy as they can hardly contain and keep within doors, when they have but a well-grounded hope, or assurance of the full possession of it.

(3.) In the company of the blessed. It is comfortable to meet with the saints of God now, though it be but in a mourning duty; but the communion of saints there is quite another thing; they are our everlasting companions; they are free from all sin and weakness, Heb. 12:23. Especially it will be a delight to them whom we have been a means to bring home to God: 1 Thes. 2:19, 20, 'For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and joy;' and Phil. 2:16, 'That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not laboured in vain, nor run in vain.' The glory that shall be put upon gracious souls at the day of judgment will add to the glory and joy of those faithful ministers by whose labours they have been gained to God.

[2.] It is called the 'joy of the Lord;' that is, either provided by him—called 'my joy,' by Christ, John 15:11; this by way of purchase, allowance, and gift, dignified as one of those whom the Lord delighteth to honour, Esther 6:6—or such as he himself possesseth. Jesus Christ himself had his 'joy set before him,' Heb. 12:2, that happy and glorious estate that happened upon his sufferings: to this he inviteth us, into his own joy. Men are not wont to treat their servants so as to let them enter into their joy: Luke 17:7, 'Which of you having a servant ploughing, or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go, and sit down to meat?' No; but, Make ready. But Christ, Luke 12:37, 'will make them sit down to meat, and he will come forth and serve them.' In the civil

law, *Accubitus servi a domino invitati*, it was a token of manumission. Now Christ will bring us into his joy, Luke 22:30, 'That ye may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel;' John 17:24, 'Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be where I am, and behold my glory;' Rom. 8:17, 'If we suffer with him, we may also be glorified together;' 2 Tim. 2:12, 'If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.' We are sharers in all the happiness that he enjoyeth, and are partakers of the same glory, and the same kingdom, and the same joy.

[3.] We enter into it. It is a Hebraism such as that, Ps. 69:27, 'Let them not come into thy righteousness;' that is, be partakers of it. So Ps. 59:11, 'Not enter into my rest;' that is, partake of it. So the servant entereth into his Lord's joy, *ut possessor sit gaudii, non tantum spectator*. However, it noteth the highest and fullest participation; they enter into the blessed state of eternal joy, and it abideth for ever with them, in a full, constant, uninterrupted joy. We shall have as much as we can hold, and we shall hold more than now we do.

Use 1. It informeth us that it is good to be Christ's servants, and to be faithful in his work. See how ready the Lord is to reward our little sorry service. Come and receive the fruit of my bounty, and the reward of your fidelity. Who would not serve such a master?

2. Consider it, this doth make up all the shame and disgrace that can be in our trials. We have enough in hand for all the pains and shame that we suffer for his service; the inward peace that we have, and the sense of his approbation: but our great reward, when we and he meet together, should strike all discouragements dead, and be enough to allay all the sorrows of this life, and the censures of men.

3. To quicken us to diligence, let us often think of this. When God intended to give Canaan to Abraham, he biddeth him 'walk through the land, and view it,' Gen. 13:17. He hath promised to give the joys of heaven to us; we should often consider it; then encouragement is no encouragement if it be not regarded.

Lastly, The same words are used to both alike; the second servant is approved, his faithfulness commended and rewarded, as well as the first servant.

Doct. Whether our talents be few or many, yet if we be but sincere, we shall be put into everlasting happiness.

The essential happiness of the saints is the same, though the degrees differ; ten cities, and five cities, in Luke.

1. They may be alike in fidelity, though a difference in opportunity. Their industry will be alike. Though their gifts and opportunities be not alike, their zeal to God and love to souls will be alike.

2. The grounds of essential happiness are the same to all.

[1.] They have the same Redeemer and Mediator, Exod. 30:15. If they had a better Christ, another mediator to ransom their souls, they might expect another happiness; but all is brought about by the same Redeemer, Jesus Christ, theirs and ours, 1 Cor. 1:2, by his mediation, sacrifice, and meritorious righteousness.

[2.] The same covenant, which is the common charter of the saints: Acts 2:39, 'The promise is to you, and to your children, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.' A covenant which offereth the same benefits, and requireth the same duties. The same benefits, pardon and life. Pardon: Rom. 4:23, 24, 'Now it was not written for his sake

alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead.' Life is the common portion of all the saints: 1 Tim. 4:8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness; and not for me only, but for all those that love his appearing.' It requireth the same duties of all the saints, and they have the same rule to walk by, Gal. 6:16; 'This same gospel is the power of God unto the salvation of every one that believeth,' Rom. 1:16. Well, then, if all have no other charter from God to show for pardon and life, and all are bound to the same duties, surely all shall have the same happiness.

[3.] The same Spirit to be Christ's agent, to sanctify, and to prepare them for this glory. He is at work in all the saints: 1 Cor. 12:4, 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit;' 2 Cor. 4:13, 'We having the same Spirit of faith.' This is considerable, because the Spirit doth form us for this very thing; that is, prepare us for this very estate. If all have the same heavenly principle, all shall have the same heavenly happiness. We have the same almighty power within to destroy sin, to raise our dead and earthly hearts to God, to keep in us the same love to him, and prepare us for this blessed estate.

[4.] The same mercy of the same God distributeth the reward. The main grounds of the expectation of the best are the mercy of God and the merits of Christ; and we have the same mercy to trust unto: Rom. 10:12, 'For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.' As rich in mercy to you as to others, to pardon your failings, to wash off your stains, and finally to receive you into his blessed presence. They look for mercy, and we look for the same mercy, Jude 21. All that keep themselves in the love of God may do so.

3. The things which are absolutely requisite to this essential happiness are the same. As the vision and fruition of the same God, 1

Cor. 13:12, with John 17:24, 'All that believe in me through their word:' they have the same place, heaven; the same state, the same company; they all make one family, Eph. 3:15. Now some are in heaven and some on earth, but then they shall all make one heavenly society, called 'the city of God,' Heb. 12:22, 23; they shall all 'sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' They have the same work, which is, to love and laud God for evermore.

Use 1. To persuade us to be contented with the meanest estate, till God's providence call us to a higher. Every one must glorify God in the place where he hath set him; as in a choir of voices, it is not who sings the bass or who the treble, but who well discharges his own part, bass or treble. So in our account, it is not what part we have acted, so much as how we have acted it, whether glorified God in the work which he hath given us to do, John 17:4. If thou hast doubled thy talents, though but two, Christ will welcome thee into the 'joy of thy Lord.' It is not who hath undergone the greatest bodily labour in religion, or passed the severest sufferings, or gone through the eminentest offices and employments, but who hath most honoured God in his place, got most holiness in his heart, been most humble and contented with his condition.

Use 2. Is for the encouragement of poor weak Christians, who have the essentials of godliness, though they be weak, and have not attained to the eminency of many others. These should not be dismayed; there are persons of all sizes, and several degrees in heaven, and they are all possessed with the same common happiness: 2 Peter 1:2, 'To them that have obtained like precious faith with us.' Mean believers in some sense have like precious faith with an apostle, as to the great ends of the covenant; the same jewel. *Complectitur et puerulus, complectitur et gigas*; one holds with a strong, the other with a trembling hand; the jewel is of the same

value. The same sacrifice for sin; we all depend upon the infinite mercies of the same God; the same physician of souls hath us in cure who hath cured all others; the same captain that hath saved others who are more eminent is conducting us to salvation, and is preparing us for the same estate which they hope to enjoy. They have no greater nor better high priest and mediator with God than we have; they are going to the same place that we are, and we that they are; only they have gotten the start a great way before us. But whilst we strive to overtake them, and make as much haste as we can, though we bewail our imperfections, yet we should not lose the comfort of our sincerity.

Doct. 2. Though the essential happiness of the saints be the same, yet there are degrees in glory.

Luke 19:16–19. We read there of having authority over ten cities and five cities. More is required of the first servant and more is given him; and more is required of the first servant than the second; as we expect a horseman should come sooner than a footman. But more particularly to prove that there are degrees of glory. First, from scripture: 2 Cor. 9:6, 'He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully. As there is a difference in the kind of the crop, according to the kind of the seed, Gal. 6:6, 7, so according to the degree. Some do well, others do better; so some fare well, others fare better, are more bountifully rewarded; for God will deal more liberally with them who shall accordingly with greater fidelity acquit themselves in well-doing. There is a proportion observed. Again, the common happiness of the saints is to shine as the stars, Mat. 13 and Dan. 12:3; yet the apostle telleth us, that 'one star differeth from another in glory; so shall it be in the resurrection from the dead,' 1 Cor. 15:41; namely, that their glory shall be according to their inequality in zeal, service, and

faithfulness to God. Another place shall be that, 1 Cor. 3:8, 'Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour;' that is, according to the degree; for he speaketh there of degrees of serviceableness in the church. Every man hath a labour of his own, that is, such a measure and degree of service appropriately his; and so by consequence hath his own reward, somewhat which doth exactly answer his labour. Some have thought no, that the saints in heaven, their reward is exactly equal. It is true all shall have enough, but some more than others: so Eph. 6:8, 'Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free;' that is, shall be punctually and particularly considered by God for it; he shall receive the same, not for kind, but quantity and proportion; they shall have in their reward a particular and appropriate consideration; a bondman a bondman's reward, a freeman a freeman's reward; every degree of goodness shall be considered by God: so there seemeth to be a distinction between a prophet's reward, and a righteous man's reward, and a disciple's reward, Mat. 10:41, 42. Add that concerning Zebedee's children, Mat. 20:21, 22. She cometh to Christ, and prayeth that her two sons might sit one at his right hand and the other at his left in his kingdom. Christ doth not deny but that something there is which may be signified by his right hand and his left; yea, rather asserts it; for he saith, 'It shall be given to those for whom it is prepared of my Father.' There are some chiefest and highest places of glory and preferment in his kingdom, and he hath prepared these places for persons of the greatest worth and eminency in his service; for these the greatest honours of the world to come are reserved.

Reasons of the point.

1. From the nature of that glory and blessedness we expect. It standeth in communion with God, and conformity to him, or the

vision and full fruition of God, Ps. 17:15; 1 John 3:2. Now the more holy the more suited to this happiness, and therefore have larger measures of it: Mat. 5:8, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;' Heb. 12:14, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' We 'behold his face in righteousness.' Now we are more capacitated, vessels of a larger bore. It is unreasonable to imagine that clarified souls have no more fruition of God than those that only have grace enough to make a hard shift to get to heaven: *Sicut se habet simpliciter ad simpliciter, ita magis ad magis.* Holiness singly fits to see God, and without it we cannot see him. So a little holiness fits us to take in a little of God; the more holiness the more of God.

2. From the pleasure God taketh in his own image. So much of the image of God as his creature hath, so far more amiable in the sight of God: 'The Lord delighteth in the upright,' Prov. 11:20. If God delighteth in them, he delighteth more in one that is more holy and upright. Thus from God's holiness we may argue he doth not delight in the impure: Ps. 5:4, 'Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness.' He cannot so fully delight in the less pure: Ps. 18:25, 26, 'With the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright, with the pure thou wilt show thyself pure.'

3. From the justice of God, and the quality of that happiness which we expect. Though it be an act of free grace and bounty in God to bestow it on us, yet it is a reward; and reward is considerable with respect to the work. The reward is not of merit, but grace; but yet God's merciful justice respecteth the degree of our service: Heb. 6:10, 'God is not unrighteous, to forget your work of faith and labour of love.' It is an act of remunerative justice, according to the new covenant. The higher service hath an ordinability to the greatest reward.

4. God doth in this world give the greatest blessings to those that do most eminently glorify him; therefore signal faithfulness is eminently rewarded in the world to come; as God promiseth to make a covenant with Phinehas, because he was zealous for God, to make an atonement for the people, Num. 25:13. This the rather holdeth good, because the rewards of the Old Testament were a kind of figure of eternity.

5. In the punishment there are degrees, therefore in the reward God will punish men differently, more or less according to the rate of their sins. We read of ἀνεκτότερον, more tolerable. So he will reward men more or less according to the different degrees of their faithfulness: so Mat. 11:21, 22, 'It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.' So Luke 12:47, 48, we read of many stripes and few stripes. It is true the reward is not of debt; yet there is an equity observed in his bounty.

6. The glorified state of the saints in all probability suiteth with all the rest of the creation. There is a difference and disparity in everything else. Among men in the world, in wisdom and rank, and quality and riches; in the church some have meaner, some larger gifts. There are degrees among the devils. We read of Beelzebub the prince of the devils. Among angels there are archangels, principalities, powers, thrones, dominions. So it is likely among the saints.

7. The profit: it encourageth to godliness: this inequality of rewards giving greater things to those that do more, and be more faithful, than to imagine that they who sow more sparingly shall reap as plentifully as those that sow liberally. It is a great damp to all worthy dealing and signal excellency, that all shall fare alike; but it

quickeneth us to our utmost activity to remember that as our work is our reward will be.

Use. Is to quicken us to be more faithful to God for these considerations:—

1. Heaven being the perfection of holiness, if you do not desire more degrees of holiness, you do not desire heaven itself: 1 John 3:2, 3, 'Behold now ye are the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself as he is pure.'

2. It is gross self-love to go as near the brink of hell and destruction without falling into it, and to beat down the price of salvation as low as we can; and he that will do nothing more than what is simply necessary to salvation will never be faithful with God. To save the stake of their souls they will serve God as little as they can.

SERMON XIV

Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sowed, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.—MAT. 25:24, 25

WE have seen the account and reception of the faithful servants; we now come to the master's reckoning with the unfaithful one. The order is observable: first he rewardeth the faithful servants, and then

punisheth the careless and negligent. His own nature inclines him to reward; he doth good and showeth mercy out of his own self-inclination; but our sins force him to punish. And mark, he that had received one talent is called to an account as well as he that had received more, that no man may think to be excused for the meanness of his gifts and place. It is true he giveth an account for no more than he hath, but for so much as he hath he must give account. Christians that have five or two talents must give an account for five or two; but heathens, that have but one talent, the light of nature, give an account for one. The apostle telleth us, 'That as many as have sinned without the law, shall perish without the law, but as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law,' Rom. 2:12; every one according to the dispensation they have lived under. The apostle intimateth a distinction of two sorts that are to be judged: 2 Thes. 1:8, 'In flaming fire, take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Those that have great parts and great opportunities will not be accepted with the same improvement that others are that have fewer; neither from the same person will God accept a like service when sick as when well; but according to their abilities and opportunities he doth expect. Well, but let us see what account he bringeth that had but one talent. The parable offereth—

First, The servant's allegation or excuse.

Secondly, The master's answer or reply.

We are now upon the former; and there—

1. The remote cause of his neglect; his prejudice against his master, 'Lord, I knew thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sowed, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.'

2. The effect of this prejudice; and so the next and immediate cause of this neglect, 'I was afraid.'

3. His negligence and unfaithfulness itself, in bringing his talent without improvement, 'I went and hid thy talent in the earth: Lo, there thou hast what is thine.'

[1.] In the prejudice, Christ impersonateth our natural thoughts and the secret workings of our minds; we dare not say so, but many think so: as if God were a hard and morose master, whom it is impossible to please. The servant in the parable had as little cause for his pretence as we have for our hard thoughts of God: he knew the contrary. If he would consult his own experience, he might have found his master to be good and kind, who had taken him into his family, intrusted him with a talent, waited long for his improvement. But this is the nature of man; self-love will rather blame God than acknowledge our own fault and sin, tax his severity than confess its own negligence.

[2.] In the servant's being afraid, Christ would teach us that ill opinions of God beget pusillanimity and slavish fear.

[3.] In his non-improvement, but rendering the talent as he received it, that pusillanimity or slavish fear and sloth go together, or those that are afraid of God will never do him hearty service.

I cannot handle all the points that will arise from this paragraph, yet I shall discuss one, that will take in the substance and effect of all. And that is—

Doct. That slavish fear is a great hindrance to the faithful discharge of our duty to God.

First, Let me observe to you that there is a twofold fear—filial and servile, childlike and slavish. The one is a lawful and necessary fear, such as quickeneth us to duty, Phil. 2:12, and is either the fear of reverence, or the fear of caution. The fear of reverence is nothing else but that awe we are to have of the divine majesty as creatures, or our humble sense of the condition, place, and duty of a creature towards the Creator. The fear of caution is a due sense of the importance and validity of the business we are engaged in, in order to salvation: certainly none can consider the danger we are to escape, and the blessedness we aim at, but will see a need to be serious. And therefore this fear is good and holy.

1. But there is, besides this, a slavish fear, which doth not further, but extremely hinder our work; for though we are to fear God, yet we are not to be afraid of God. This is that which the apostle calleth, πνεῦμα δουλείας, opposite to the 'spirit of adoption,' Rom. 8:15, and a cowardly fearful spirit, opposite to that spirit of power and love and of a sound mind, which is the principle of all faithful service to God. They that are under the spirit of bondage serve not God as children serve a father, but as slaves serve a hard and cruel master. Fear is the inseparable companion of this spirit, which must needs be a great hindrance to our duty, because it begets hatred to God, and the torment it bringeth to ourselves. As it breedeth hatred to God: oderunt quem metuunt, quem odimus periisse cupimus. When we only dread God for his vengeance, we keep off from him, as a dissolute servant hateth that master who would scourge him for his debaucheries. The nature of this fear is to drive us from God: Gen. 3:7–10, 'I was afraid.' So because of the torment it bringeth to us, Eph. 4:18, for the legal spirit, it is called a 'spirit of bondage' Rom. 8:15; it hath fear and torment in it, and is an enemy to us, for it banisheth all those sweet principles which should enliven our service; as love to God, and delight in our work, which doth enliven

and inspire everything that we do with an earnest spirit. But where love is wanting, and all the comfort that should accompany our duties, it is lost; either a man doth nothing, or all that he doth is in a compulsory manner, by mere force; and so our hands must needs be weakened in God's service, if we be not totally discouraged; for often it endeth in a despair of pleasing, or being accepted with God. There is a lazy sottish despair, as well as a raging tormenting despair: Jer. 18:12, 'There is no hope; we will walk in the imagination of our own hearts.' Cast off all care of the soul's welfare. This was the fear of the slothful servant in the text; and such a fear have many others in the bosom of their hearts, by which they can never do anything effectually in the business of religion, by reason of their strong prejudices, occasioned by their own tormenting fear.

2. That this fear is begotten in us by a false opinion of God, that rendereth him dreadful, rigorous, and terrible to the soul. The servant in the text doth not only say, 'I was afraid,' but giveth a reason of it, 'I knew that thou wert an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sowed, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.' A parabolical speech to set forth a cruel tyrant, that doth exact upon those that are under him without mercy and reason. Our affections follow our apprehensions, and we either love or fear according to the inward notions that we have of God in our minds: 'They that know thy name will trust in thee,' Ps. 9:10. If we had righter notions of God, we would love him more and trust him more; but when we conceive amiss of him, accordingly we are affected to him. And therefore we should take heed what picture we draw of God in our minds; for if we have only such apprehensions as render him grievous and burdensome to us, these thoughts will leaven our hearts, and make us either neglect his service, or do it by constraint, in a very awkward and uncomfortable manner. If the devil can bring you to have a base opinion of God, us cruel and tyrannical, and once

possess you with sour thoughts and fretful jealousies, or harsh surmises of his government, it will turn all your love and obedience into hatred and slavish fear. Therefore those that consider that love is the great principle of obedience should also consider that there is nothing so necessary to breed love as good thoughts of God, and a due sense of his goodness in Christ. Come to this once, and then all that he requireth and doth will be acceptable to us. His laws will not be grievous, nor his providences seem burdensome to you, nor his judgments intolerable. How can you love him till you represent him as an object of love, one upon whom you may cheerfully depend for life and defence, and from whom you may comfortably expect the rewards of obedience? Therefore take heed of painting out God in your thoughts as a hard master. The apostle telleth us, Heb. 11:6, 'He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' As soon as we apprehend his being, we should also pitch upon his bounty and goodness. First that he is, and then that he is a rewarder. There is in all men some impression of a godhead, which is clearly understood and seen 'by the things that are made,' Rom. 1:20. This apprehension of God calleth for worship; for next that God is, we must believe he must be worshipped, John 4:24. These two notions live and die together; they are clear and blotted out together. As the apprehension of God is clear, and more deeply engraven upon the soul, so is this notion of man's duty of worshipping God clear, and imprinted upon the soul also. The one impression cannot be worn out without the other. But now, want of a true knowledge of God breedeth slavish fear, fearing God in excess, rather than loving him in any tolerable measure, because a man naturally looketh upon God with the same eye that a malefactor doth upon his judge. Fear is more natural to carnal men, because a bad conscience is very suspicious, and our sense of God's benefits is not so great as the sense of our bad deservings is quick and lively. Therefore naturally we have no other notions of God than as a rigid

lawgiver and severe avenger. The heathens, who in all their worship discovered the natural sentiments of religion that are in the hearts of men, observed this in their straits, *Ut prius placarent iratos deos, &c.* Wrath and anger were the first thoughts they had of a divine power; and it is as true among Christians. Guilty nature is more presageous of evil than of good, when it is serious. It is true, wicked men cry out, God is merciful, and that is generally the cause of their laziness and slightness in religion; but it is when they do not mind what they say: these are but sugared words in their tongues; when they are serious they have other thoughts. Bondage is more natural than liberty, fear than hope, because of the covenant we are under, which is a covenant of works, a ministry of death and condemnation, and so begetteth fear, and representeth God as terrible: yea, it is found in those that are more serious, and have some beginnings of a good work upon their hearts; they are too apt to entertain ill thoughts of God, and looking upon him in the glass of their guilty fears, represent him as harsh and inexorable. All their terrors and troubles are raised by false apprehensions of God; and therefore the course of their obedience groweth the more uncomfortable. This is a truth, that the law and grace contendeth for the mastery in every heart that entertains thoughts of religion; not only corruption and grace, but the law and grace: and as their law notions prevail, so their slavish fear increaseth; but as the gospel apprehensions prevail, so their love of God increaseth, and their comfortableness in religion. Therefore still the caution is bound upon us, to take heed what notions we have of God, and that we have not any diminishing extenuating thoughts of his goodness and mercifulness; that we do not look upon him as one that lieth upon the catch, to spy out advantages against us; for that thought will mightily weaken our hands in the Lord's work. Do not think of him as one that delights in the creatures' misery. No; rather in showing mercy and goodness, and as ready to give out grace to the humble that lie at his feet, however he dealeth with the

stubborn and obstinate refusers of his grace. And therefore, if I may digress into application, while I am yet in some doctrinal considerations, I would advise—

[1.] That to preserve the sense of religion in the general, men would consider how much God standeth upon the credit of his goodness, and that he giveth them no cause of discouragement as from him: Micah 6:3, 'O my people, what have I done unto you, wherein have I wearied you?' That his commands are not grievous, Mat. 11:29; 1 John 3:5; that the trials sent by him are not above measure, 1 Cor. 10:13, nor his punishments above deservings, Neh. 11:9–13; that he is not hard to be pleased, nor inexorable upon our infirmities, Mal. 3:17. These things should be constantly in our minds, for the vindication and justification of God from our natural jealousies and evil surmises that we have of his conduct and government.

[2.] I would advise poor trembling souls that are alarmed by their own fears, which represent God as an enemy, and standing at a distance from them, that they would study the name of God; for surely things are known by their names, and poor disconsolate souls are bidden, Isa. 50:10, 'To trust in the name of the Lord,' &c. Now what is the name of God? Even that which he proclaimed: Exod. 34:5–7, 'I am the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.' Therefore take all his name, and meditate upon it. Satan laboureth to represent God by halves, only as a consuming fire, as clothed with justice and vengeance. Oh, no! It is true he will not suffer his mercy to be abused by contemptuous sinners; he will not clear the guilty, though he waiteth long on them before he destroyeth them; but the main of his name is 'his mercy and goodness.' Take it as God proclaimeth it, and see if you have any reason to have hard thoughts of God. You will

find, that though he be a high and holy one, yet he is willing to be treated with; that he is great, but yet good, ready to receive returning sinners: if thou hast sin and misery, Christ hath compassion and pity; he is the 'Father of mercies,' 2 Cor. 1:3. *Misericors est, cui alterius miseria cordi est*—mercy hath its name from misery, and is no other thing than laying another's misery to heart, not to despise it, nor to add to it, but to help it. And therefore, if thou be miserable, and knowest it indeed, his nature giveth a strong inclination to succour the miserable. Ay! but saith the convinced soul, there is nothing in me to be regarded. The Lord telleth, 'I am gracious;' and grace doth all freely, and from a self-inclination; it giveth all the qualifications he requireth. But I have been long a presumptuous sinner. Why, God telleth you his name is 'long-suffering.' He that gave not the angels one hour's space for repentance, hath long delayed the execution of our sentence, and calleth us to himself, that we may escape the condemnation of angels. But I am exceeding perverse and wicked. The Lord telleth you he is 'abundant in goodness.' I am full of fears and doubtings. Still he is 'abundant in goodness and truth.' I have abused much mercy, and can mercy pity me? The Lord telleth you, he 'keepeth mercy for thousands, and can forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin.' His treasure of mercy is not soon spent and exhausted: no sin can exclude a willing soul; mercy will pardon thy abuse of mercy, if thou repentest of it.

[3.] To the people of God, who having a clearer sense of their duty, and a larger heart towards God than others have, and so are the more troubled for the poverty of their graces, and weakness and imperfection of their services than others are, which may breed bondage and uncomfortableness. I would have them consider that humility and meekness doth still become them, but not dejection and despondency of mind, that they should ever be complaining, fearful, and disconsolate. We have not a hard master; he hath made joy a

part of our work, Phil. 4:4; he gave his Son, Luke 1:74, 75, 'That being delivered from our enemies, we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness.' We should consider that he is ready to bear with failings where there is an upright heart; that God accepteth what we can through grace well and comfortably perform. It is a general maxim of the gospel, though spoken upon a particular occasion, 2 Cor. 8:12, 'That if there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, not according to that he hath not:' that the God whom they serve in the spirit can put a finger on the scar: 'Ye have heard of the patience of Job,' James 5:11. Ay! and we have heard of his impatience too, his cursing the day of his birth, and his bold expostulations with God; but this is passed over in silence, and his patience commended. Nothing should be a discouragement from serving cheerfully so good and gracious a God, who is so ready to accept and assist us, 1 Peter 3:6, compared with Gen. 18:12. He will own a pearl on a dunghill, the least act of sincere obedience, though there be many failings. But I must return.

3. The usual ill thoughts of God are these three—(1.) That he is rigorous in his commands; (2.) Niggardly and tenacious in his gifts and helps of grace; (3.) And as to acceptance, that he is hard to please and easy to offend. All these may be gathered out of the words of the unfaithful servant, and all these lie deep in the hearts of men against God's sovereignty.

[1.] Hypocrites accuse God of tyranny in his laws, as if he dealt hardly with his creatures, to leave them with such affections in the midst of the snares and temptations of the present life, and requiring such duty from them. Certainly, all that God hath required of us is holy, just, and good, conducing not only to his glory, but to the rectitude and perfection of our natures. Man would not be man if such things were not required of him; so that if we were in our right wits, and

were left to our own option and choice, we would prefer subjection to such laws before exemption and freedom, Micah 6:8. Are justice, temperance, chastity, piety, patience gyves and fetters to human nature? We cannot be without these and preserve the nobleness of our being and the good of human societies. It is true this lower world furnisheth us with many temptations to the contrary, but these temptations work not by constraining efficacy, but only by enticing persuasion; and have we not more earnest persuasions to love God and please God? Are not God and Christ and heaven more lovely objects than all the pleasures and profits and honours of the world? These things do not force the will, but draw your consent; and surely God hath propounded more lovely things in his covenant to draw this consent from them. The great fault is in our lust, 2 Peter 1:4; as the poison is not in the flower, but in the spider.

[2.] He accuseth God as backward to give grace and help our impotency, and as if he did require more than he giveth. This is obvious and express in the words of the naughty servant: 'Reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.' But this also is an unjust charge; for God requireth nothing but according to the talents received. Now he needeth not take anything from the creatures, for he giveth all; he had one talent, and God expected the improvement but of one. Let men try to the utmost, and see if they have cause to make this complaint; they will find, that 'the way of the Lord is strength to the upright,' Prov. 10:29, and that all these jealousies are but a slander against God's government. Why do you complain that he would reap where he hath not sown? Is it because you would have God force you to be good whether you would or no, and by an absolute constraining power drive you out of your flesh-pleasing course? Consider how unbeseeming it is the wisdom of God that men should be holy and good by necessity, and not by choice. Virtue would then be no virtue,

not a moral, but a natural property, as burning is to fire; and it were no more praiseworthy to mind heavenly things than it is for a stone to move downward. It is true God must make us willing, but willing we must be. Now there is no such thing on your parts, when you wilfully refuse the hopes God offereth: Acts 13:46, 'Since ye put away the word of God from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.' At least you do not apply your hearts to work with God, or frame your doings to turn to him, as it is in the prophet; you do not improve means, and mercies, and providences, and helps vouchsafed. And will you, after all this, think God a Pharaoh, that requireth brick and giveth no straw? Here it is verified, Prov. 19:3, 'The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord.' We usually ruin ourselves, and then complain that God giveth no more grace. But do not we justify this conceit of wicked men, when we say, God requireth duty of the fallen creatures, who have no power to perform it? I answer—

(1.) We must so maintain God's goodness as still to keep up his sovereignty and right of dominion. Man had power, which was lost by his own default; but God doth not lose his right, though man hath lost his power: their impotency doth not dissolve their obligation. A drunken servant is bound to the duty of a servant still. It is against all reason the master should lose his right to command by the servant's default. A prodigal debtor, that hath nothing to pay, yet is liable to be sued for the debt without injustice. God contracted with us in Adam, and his obedience was not only due by covenant, but by law and immutable right; not by positive law only, or contract; and therefore he hath a right to demand obedience, as the fruit of original righteousness.

(2.) It is harsh, men think, to answer for Adam's fault, to which they were not conscious and consenting. But every man will find an Adam

in his own heart: the old man is there wasting away the relics of natural light and strength; and shall not God challenge the debt of obedience from a proud prodigal debtor? We are found naked, yet we think ourselves clothed; poor, yet we think ourselves rich, and to have need of nothing: therefore God may admonish us of our duty, demand his right to convince us of our impotency, and that we may not pretend we were not called upon for what we owe him. Man is prodigal; we spend what is left, lose those relics of conscience and moral inclinations which escaped out of the ruins of the fall.

(3.) God requireth it that we may acknowledge the debt and confess our impotency, being practically convinced thereof, and so humbly implore his grace.

(4.) God is still offering recovering mercy, and never forsaketh any but those that forsake him first: 1 Chron. 28:9, 'If thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever;' 2 Chron. 15:2, 'If you forsake him, he will forsake you.' Did you improve yourselves, and beg God's grace, and carry on the common work as far as you can, then it were another matter. He that useth God's means as well as he can, he lieth nearer to the blessing of them than the wilful despiser and neglecter of them. Unsanctified men may do less evil and more good than they do: therefore if they neglect the means, they are left inexcusable; not only as originally disabled, but as wilfully graceless: so that no such prejudice can lie against God; he offereth grace and power, and men will not have it.

[3.] The third prejudice is, that he is hard to please, and easily offended; as if he did watch advantages to ruin and destroy the creature. Oh, no! This cannot be thought of God. He that rewarded the picture and shadow of duty, as in Ahab, 1 Kings 21:29, the first offers of it in his servants, Isa. 32:5; that regarded the returning

prodigal, Luke 15:20; Isa. 65:24; whose bowels relent presently; who hath promised to reward a cup of cold water given for Christ's sake, Mat. 10:42, and that our slender services should receive so great a reward; that beareth with his people's weakness; that 'spareth them as a man spareth his only son,' by their failing, surely he is not harsh and severe.

[4.] These prejudices are very natural to us, and therefore should be regarded by all. This appeareth partly by the first fall of man. Prejudice against God was the fiery dart that wounded our first parents to death. The first battery that Satan made was against the persuasion of God's goodness and kindness to man; he endeavoured to make them doubt of it by casting jealousies into their minds, as if God were harsh, severe, and envious in restraining them from the tree of knowledge, and the fruit that was so fair to see to, Gen. 3. If once he could bring them to question God's goodness, he knew other things would succeed more easily; for the sense of the Creator's goodness was the strongest bond by which the heart was kept to God. And partly because still the devil seeketh to possess us with this conceit, that God is harsh and severe, and delighteth in our ruin; and casteth jealousies into our heads, as if God did infringe our just liberties by the restraints of his law. And we have the same impatience of restraints which they had; and the flesh being importunate to be pleased, we are apt to find out excuses; and as the naughty servant condemneth his master when he should beg pardon, so such is the perverse disposition of man, when we should confess our fault, we will abuse God himself; as Adam, Gen. 3:12, 'The woman thou gavest me, gave me, and I did eat.' This monstrous conceit of God we further by observing his injuries (as we count them), rather than his benefits. We take notice of afflictions, but not of daily mercies. David had much ado to hold his principle: Ps. 73:1, 2, 'Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart:

but as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped.' These thoughts are very incident to us.

Use. Oh! then, when we set our hearts to religion, let us take heed of slavish fear; and if so, take heed with what thoughts of God you are leavened, and that you do not draw a monstrous and horrid picture of him in your minds. Oh! look upon him as full of grace and mercy, ten thousand times more inclined to do good than any friend you have in the world. The devil governeth the dark parts of the world by slavish fear, but God governeth by love. To this end consider—

1. That in his word God representeth himself by mercy and goodness rather than any other attribute. Mercy is natural to him; he is 'the father of mercies,' 2 Cor. 1:3. God is not merciful by accident, but by nature. The sun doth not more naturally shine, nor the fire more naturally burn, nor water more naturally flow, than God doth naturally show mercy. It is pleasing to him, Micah 7:18; James 2:13, 'Mercy rejoiceth over judgment.' Punitive acts are forced from him, but gracious acts drop from him of their own accord, like life-honey. Nay, God is mercy itself: 1 John 4:8, 'God is love.' It cannot be said of a man that he is learning and wisdom, though learned and wise. But God is not only loving, but love, an infinite sea of love, without banks and bounds. It was well observed of Æcolampadius, that men were taught amiss to know the nature of God by vulgar pictures and representations (for their fashion was then to picture God in some fair and beautiful form, and the devil in some foul ugly shape). *Puerorum major pars nescit quid sit Deus, quid sit Sathan.* But he adviseth parents, if they would teach their children to know what God is, they would first teach them to know what goodness is and justice is, what mercy is, what bounty and loving-kindness is; *per illas enim proprie quid Deus sit discimus.* Again, if they would know what kind of creature the devil is, they should first know what malice

is and filthiness, and what villany and treachery is; for Satan is a compound of all these. The best picture that could be taken of the devil would be by the characters of malice, falsehood, and envy. But God is justice itself, goodness itself, mercy itself, as it is expressed in scripture.

2. In Christ, who is the 'express image of his person,' Heb. 1:3. Now, Christ disdained not the company of sinners, went about healing sicknesses and diseases, and doing good. His miracles were acts of relief, not done for pomp and ostentation.

3. In his providence: Acts 14:17, 'He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.'

SERMON XV

His lord said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reaped where I sowed not, and gathered where I have not strawed; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.—MAT. 25:26, 27

HERE is the master's reply to the servant's allegation. In the words we have two things:—

1. An exprobration of his naughtiness and sloth.

2. A retortion of his vain excuse upon his own head, 'If thou knewest,' &c. Not as if the lord did grant it to be true that the slothful servant had alleged; but his own opinions and conceits were enough to convict him.

[1.] Here is a συγχώρησις, a concession; for dispute's sake, be it as thou hast said.

[2.] The inference, 'Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, that at my coming I might have received my own with usury.' The argument is returned upon himself. The bankers and usury here mentioned are only by way of comparison, and can no more be urged to justify the putting money to use than, 'Behold, I come as a thief,' can justify theft; or that parable Luke 16 should justify fraud and injustice; the unjust steward did wisely, non servi fraudem, sed prudentiam, &c. Parables are not taken from those things that De jure ought to be done, but de facto are done. Therefore I shall not interpose any judgment of mine upon this occasion as to that case, whether any putting money to use be lawful, yea or no: only observe, that Christ will have his own with usury; some improvement he expects when he cometh.

First, I begin with the exprobration. It was a sharp but well deserved reproof; if the bad servant had feared this aforehand, it might have been better with him; shame is the fear of a just reproof. Mark the different entertainment of the good and bad servant: there it is, Good and faithful servant; here, Thou wicked and slothful servant: Christ will upbraid the unfaithful at the day of judgment. He is called a wicked, evil servant, because unfaithful; slothful, because negligent.

Doct. 1. A slothful servant is a wicked servant.

These two terms are here coupled. There is a twofold sloth:—

First, Common, in the ordinary affairs of this life: 2 Thes. 3:10, 'We commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should they eat;' 1 Tim. 5:8, 'He that provideth not for his own is worse than an infidel;' ver. 13, 'And withal, they learn to be idle.'

Secondly, Spiritual, called ἀκηδία, and torpor spiritualis, one of the seven deadly sins among the papists; a remiss will in divine and heavenly matters, or a negligence in the duties of holiness, because of the labour and trouble that accompanieth them: Rom. 12:11, 'Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;' Heb. 6:12, 'That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience have inherited the promises.' There are in these scriptures two words, ὀκνηρὸι and νωθρὸι, dull, stupid, backward. They are both bad; but this latter is worst, because of the matter about which it is conversant. The one in our particular, the other in our general calling. To be negligent in our ordinary callings is bad; but much more in the great affairs of our souls. It is not only an evil thing, but an evil sin. Of this principally.

1. Because total omissions, against knowledge and conscience, especially of necessary duties, are very great sins. That omissions are sins as well as sins of commission, appeareth from the nature of the law, which consists of a precept and prohibition. It enforceth good, as well as forbiddeth what is evil: Ps. 34:14, 'Depart from evil, and do good.' In the government of man, the law useth both these, the bridle and the spur, inciting him to that which is good, and restraining him from that which is evil. You deny God his due when you withhold from him that service, love, and worship which he requireth; which is a great evil in his creatures, which are made by him, and fed and maintained by him. You wrong him when you deprive him of your service for whose use you were made. Therefore sins of omission are sins. Now, of all omissions, omissions of the most necessary duties are most culpable; want of love to God, fear of God, faith in God, are greater evils than not praying at such a time, hearing of the word, or labouring in our callings at such a time. The life of religion lieth in the one more than in the other; and they are more indispensably required. The scripture pronounceth a heavy doom upon these kind

of defects: 1 Cor. 16:22, 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.' Among these, sins contra remedium are more baneful than peccata contra officium: Heb. 2:3, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' Especially when total. To omit an act of love to God, or to fail in point of faith in a particular case or exigence, is a great evil; but to be wholly careless and mindless of the favour of God, or to seek after it in a very overly slight manner, is worst of all: Rom. 3:11, 'There is none that understandeth, that seeketh after God.' They do not make it their business to remember God, or their duty to him, or their study to please him; they think of him seldom, or very neglectfully worship him, or make mention of him very coldly, serve him carelessly, or by the by. This showeth that men are naughty, wicked, and in a cursed estate; especially when they are convinced of better, that God deserveth more serious regard at their hands, and Christ to be more dear and precious to them, and their converses with him more delightful. The religion they profess doth plainly call for more at their hands; and their consciences are clamorous, and the Spirit of God importunate with them. To omit a duty against knowledge is as great a sin as to commit evil against knowledge: James 4:17, 'Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' The closer the application by serious convictions, strong motions, and impulses to do better, the greater their sin; for this argueth a flat disobedience and contempt of God, and a grieving of his Spirit, Eph. 4:30, to give him the repulse when he would fain enter and take possession of our hearts. Now, put all these things together, and you will soon find that a slothful servant is a very wicked, naughty servant. Satis est mali ipsum nihil fecisse boni. They are not only evil servants that teach falsities, but they also that do not promote the kingdom of Christ to their power; not only they that do no hurt, but they that do no good: Mat. 3:10, 'Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.' Not only the poisonous, but the barren tree.

2. The motives that draw us to this idleness and sloth are paltry, base, and such as offer great wrong to God. Alas! what have we to hinder us in God's service, but a little worldly profit, pleasure, or honour? Now, what a gross sin is it to love the world above God, or to neglect Christ that died for thee, merely to please the flesh, and to seek its ease and contentment! *Probatio unius sine contumelia alterius procedere non potest*: Heb. 12:15, 'Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.' If there were some better or more considerable thing in the case, the fault were the less, and our negligence might the more be excused; but this is a gross sin, to despise God for poor contemptible vanities. The world counts profaneness by another measure than the scripture. You count adulterers and drunkards and swearers profane; but the scripture counteth them profane that have not an esteem of spiritual privileges. There are *peccata majoris infamiæ*, and *peccata majoris reatus*. Some sins in the eye of the world have more filthiness and turpitude in them, and some sins in the eye of God have more guilt, as when we despise the favour of God, and do not think it worthy our most serious and lively diligence; the smallness of the temptation aggravateth the negligence. The service of God is of everlasting consequence, but the things of the world are of short continuance; all this dust is gone with the spurn of a foot; one turn of the hand of God separateth thy neglected soul from thy pampered body, and then 'whose are all these things?' Luke 12:20; 2 Cor. 4:18.

3. Negligent unfruitfulness is a breach of trust, to which we are bound by covenant, and so a disappointment of God's expectation. To fortify this consideration, I need not repeat that all God's gifts to us imply a trust; the very scope of this parable showeth it, and it may be further confirmed by Isa. 43:21–24, 'This people I have formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise. But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel: thou

hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt-offerings, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense; thou hast bought me no sweet-cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thy iniquities.' That where God hath given a people advantages, he expecteth answerable service and improvement; and that we are bound to this by the covenant of grace, wherein we give up ourselves to the Lord for his use and service; and that God reckoneth upon this: Gen. 18:19, 'I know my servant Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him;' and Luke 13:7, 'Then said he to the dresser of the vineyard, Behold, these three years have I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree;' and Isa. 63:8, 'For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie.' Only now I press that unfruitfulness and breach of trust is a great crime, and a disappointing the righteous expectation of God, a very provoking thing; and therefore the slothful servant, that doth not answer the ends of his trust, nor fulfil his covenant vow, must needs be highly culpable, though he should not break out into acts of gross excess, and apparent enmity against God.

4. He that ceaseth to do good, evil must needs ensue; and the unprofitable servant hath his blots and blemishes, which render him odious unto God. *Homines nihil agendo, male agere discunt*, saith Cato. Standing pools are apt to putrify; and the Psalmist saith, Ps. 14:2, 'They are all become filthy and abominable, for there is none that seeketh God.' When the gardener holdeth his hand, the ground is soon overgrown with weeds. Sins of omission will make way for sins of commission; and those that neglect improvement lose all reverence and awe of God every day more and more, and so are given up to a hatred of his people, and many brutish lusts. As a carcase not

embalmed is more noisome every day: Job 15:4, 'Thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God.

Use 1. Let us all be ashamed of our sloth. There is more evil in it than we are aware of.

1. Consider the necessity of diligence. There is nothing in religion can be gotten, kept, increased, or maintained, without great diligence. No comfort without it: 2 Peter 1:10, 'Wherefore the rather, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure;' 2 Peter 3:14, 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of him in peace.' No grace without it: 2 Peter 1:5, 'And besides this, give all diligence to add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge.' No hope of coming to heaven without it: Heb. 6:11, 'And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end.' Illi falsi sunt, saith Sallust, qui diversissimas res expectant, ignaviœ voluptatem, et præmia virtutis. It is in vain to think that a loitering profession will ever bring any glory to God, comfort, or increase of grace to ourselves, or breed in us any comfortable hope and expectation of blessedness to come. All excellent things are hard to come by; it is true in earthly matters, it is much more true in spiritual.

2. Consider the evil of sloth. A slothful man and a profane man differ very little: Prov. 18:9, 'He that is slothful in work is brother to him that is a great waster.' The one getteth nothing, and the other spendeth all. Thou wilt say, thou art no drunkard, no whoremonger. But thou art idle and negligent, so that you and they are brothers; all the difference is as between a consumption and an apoplexy; the one destroyeth in an instant, the other consumeth by degrees; the one is like splitting a ship, that goes down to the bottom presently, the other like a leaky ship that sinketh by degrees. Though you do not

run into the same excess of riot with others, yet you are idle in the Lord's work: it cometh much to the same effect; the heart groweth poorer and poorer, till at length it ends in final hardness. Nay, in some sense negligence is worse than gross profaneness. Many from great sinners have turned great saints, but few from a lukewarm careless profession have come to anything. Therefore these are 'spewed out of God's mouth,' Rev. 3:16. There is more hope of a sinner than of a lukewarm careless person, for he doth not think himself evil, and so is more liable to security. God may give grace to the one, but taketh away the talent from the other.

3. Consider the rewards of diligence. This labour will turn to a good effect: 1 Cor. 15:58, 'Your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.' If there were nothing in chase, or not so great a reward, we had more excuse; but when the reward is so full and so sure, shall not we labour for it? We labour and toil, and use all diligence to obtain the things of this world; and shall we think to go to heaven with our hands in our bosom, or lying upon a bed of ease? To see men under the power of a lust may shame us, Ps. 127:2. Men rise early and go to bed late to gain the world; men labour, sweat, and travail, and spare no cost to go to hell. The devil gets more servants than God with all his promises, threatenings, and mercies. Shall they be so diligent that have such bad work, worse wages, and the worst master, and shall not we bestir ourselves?

4. The whole course of nature inviteth us to labour and diligence, in order to our future estate. The sun is unwearied in his motion, that he may go up and down, preaching God to the world: Prov. 6:6, 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.' There is a great deal of morality hidden in the bosom of nature, if we had the skill to find it out. What can the ant do? 'She provideth her meat in summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.' These little creatures

are not able to endure the cold of winter, therefore work themselves deep into the earth, but they carry their food along with them; and should not we have as great a sense of futurity? We cannot endure the day of the Lord unless we make provision: Prov. 10:5, 'He that gathereth in summer is a wise son, but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.' Now is our season to work, that in the day of our accounts we may not be unprovided.

The means against sloth are faith, patience, and love. Faith and patience we have in one place: Heb. 6:12, 'That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' They inherited the promises, that is, the things promised. If we propound to ourselves such a divine and noble end as those great and glorious things that are offered in the promises, we must use the means. They had faith, so must we have; they had patience, and we must be patient.

[1.] By faith we are not to understand confidence and reliance upon God's promises; a probable human faith and hope will not be sufficient; but a firm adherence to God's word: whatever falleth out we are sure to have enough in the promise. We must have faith, because the things promised are invisible, rare, and excellent, far above the power of the creature to give. The promise is a firm and immutable foundation of our hope; we should rejoice in it as much as if the thing promised were in hand: 'In God I will rejoice, in the Lord I will praise his word;' or praise his word till the thing promised cometh to be enjoyed: 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for.'

[2.] For patience: Heb. 10:36, 'For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise.' And we must have patience, because the things hoped for are to come, and at a great distance: Rom. 8:25, 'But if we hope for that we see

not, then do we with patience wait for it.' Besides, we shall meet with many difficulties, oppositions, and trials, all which must be overcome: many things must be done, many things must be suffered, and we must make our way through the midst of dreadful enemies before we can attain our end. Further, our desires are vehement, and we long for enjoyment, which is yet to come; therefore we must be patient, that we may quietly wait God's leisure: Rom. 2:7, 'To them who by patient continuing in well-doing, seek for glory, honour and immortality, eternal life.'

[3.] The next grace is love. Where there is love there will be labour, Heb. 6:10, 'For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love;' 1 Thes. 1:3, 'Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope;' Rev. 2:3, 4, 'And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted: nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.' And love is said 'to endure all things,' 1 Cor. 13:7. It was love made Christ to suffer hunger and weariness, and to forbear to refresh himself for the good of souls; it was love made him endure the bitter agonies of the cross. Love puts strength and life into the soul, addeth wings and feet to the body, spareth no pains nor cost. Keep up this grace, and you have an overruling bent upon your hearts.

Use 2. If spiritual sloth be so great an evil, let the children of God take heed of it when first it beginneth to creep upon their spirits; as when they begin to pray without affection or fervour of spirit, to meditate of divine things without any sense, affection, or fruit; when they find it difficult to withdraw from carnal company or vain discourse, and are hardly persuaded to return unto themselves, and to consider their ways, and can freely let loose their thoughts and words to all manner of vanity, and their comfort is rather sought in

the creature than in God; they can rarely speak of others, but it is in reflecting upon them rather than themselves; when reproofs grow burdensome, and are not entertained as a help but as an injury; when they give up themselves to carnal sports, and take a license for vain recreations, and so fly from the labours that are profitable and necessary for their soul's health; their zeal languisheth, their duties are not so frequent, nor the means of grace used with life, vigour, and affection, but they are more coldly affected towards them; a satiety and fulness creepeth upon them; they do not so solicitously avoid the causes of sin, begin to indulge the body, or the bodily life, to have more admiring thoughts of the honours and pleasures and profits of the world; either neglect or quench the motions of the Spirit: all these are the effects of a remiss will, or a fainting heart, that beginneth to tire in the ways of God.

Use 3. It serves to justify God in his judgments upon the careless and negligent, though they be not grossly dissolute and profane. There is more contempt of God in neglecters than you can at first be sensible of. Hypocrites complain of the severity of God, the rigour of his law, the grievousness of his judgments; they should rather complain of the naughtiness of their own hearts. They are convinced of more duty than they are willing to perform, and they are not willing, because they follow after a few paltry vanities, which is a great dishonour to God. It was not the austerity and rigidness of the master in requiring improvement that hindered the increase of his talent, but his own baseness, being wedded to sensual delights. They say, 'The ways of the Lord are not equal;' but their hearts are not right with God.

Secondly, I come now to the retortion of his vain excuse upon himself. The damned can have no just complaint against God; they are apt to murmur, and lay their defects upon the rigidness of God's government or God's providence; but in the issue the blame will light

upon themselves, even the things they allege make against them. He was convinced the master expected increase, therefore he should have done what he could: Luke 19:22, 'Out of thy own mouth I will condemn thee.' So it is here; men's consciences convince them they ought not to live in idleness, and if they have a master, the thought of their account should enforce them, if not their own inclination, especially if a severe master. Grant the sinner's supposition, it bindeth the duty upon him, and so he cuts his throat with his own sword; as they said of Job, chap. 15:6, 'Thine own mouth condemneth thee; thine own lips testify against thee.'

Doct. No excuse shall serve the unfaithful and slothful servant at the day of judgment.

Let a man deceive himself now, and please himself with these pretences as he will, all his excuses shall be retorted upon him, and made matter of his condemnation; for the judge is impartial, and omniscient, his eyes cannot be blinded; nay, he can open your own consciences, and so overwhelm you with the evidence and conviction of your sins, that you shall have nothing to say. As in the 22d of Matthew, 'The man was speechless' when arraigned. But because the excusing humour is very rife, and many things serve the turn now which will not bear weight then, I shall a little handle this matter of excusing. In the general, an excuse is an apology or vain defence, whereby the sinner seeketh to palliate his negligence in God's service. To undeceive you—

First, Take these general considerations.

1. That carnal men are ill versed in the art of excusing evil, when they have a right principle to go upon, and that which they think maketh for them usually maketh against them. Solomon telleth us, Prov. 26:9, 'That a parable in a fool's mouth is like a thorn in the hand of a

drunkard.' The thorn was their instrument of sewing, as the needle with us. Now, a drunkard woundeth and goreth himself, because of his uneven touch, when his spirits are disturbed with excess of drink. Do but observe how contrarily and perversely wicked men will reason, and what inferences and conclusions they will draw from those very principles the godly make a good use of. As in 1 Cor. 15:32, 'Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die.' Now, compare this with 1 Cor. 7:29, 30, 'But this I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth, that both 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 the world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away;' 2 Kings 6:33, 'And while he yet talked with them, behold the messenger came down unto him; and he said, Behold, this evil is of the Lord; why should I wait for the Lord any longer?' Compare this with 1 Sam. 3:18, 'And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him; and he said, It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.' So Haggai 1:2, 'Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, The people say, the time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.' Compare this scripture with 2 Sam. 7:2, 'And the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.' When David dwelt in a stately house, his heart was set upon building a house for the Lord. So Rom. 2:4, 'Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?' with Titus 2:11, 12, 'For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;' Jude 4, 'Ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.'

2. Sometimes carnal men pretend certain causes and excuses, when their conscience knoweth it is otherwise; and then the things alleged are not the real opinions and inward sentiments of their own minds, but something said or taken up to justify their sloth: 1 Cor. 6:9, 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,' &c. As hopes of impunity, though they live a godless and sinful course of life. If they were serious, conscience would tell them men may be deceived with these things, but God cannot. Ye may stifle conscience for a while with these allegations, but it will speak, and then these sorry fig-leaves will not serve the turn to hide your nakedness.

3. Sometimes these excuses are the fruit of blindness, sottishness, ignorance, and infatuation; and the sluggard hath a high conceit of his own allegations: Prov. 26:16, 'The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.' He thinketh others are mopish, giddy, and crack-brained people, that make more ado with religion than needeth, are too nice and scrupulous; take it to be good prudence to keep out of harm's way: his very foolish thoughts he thinketh are wise reasons; that religion is a merry thing: Prov. 15:19, 'The way of a slothful man is a hedge of thorns, but the way of the righteous man is made plain.' He imagineth difficulties and intolerable hardships in a course of godliness. It is our cowardice and pusillanimous ignorance maketh the ways of God seem hard. All things are comfortable, plain, and easy to the pure and upright heart. Thus he bloweth hot and cold, speaketh contrary things, according as he looketh upon them with a slight or pusillanimous heart.

4. Excuses argue an ill spirit and an unwilling heart. When they should do something for God, there is something still in the way,

some danger, or some difficulty, which they are loath to encounter withal: Prov. 26:13, 'The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way.' They are fruits of the quarrel between conviction and corruption, and are usually found in us when we first begin to understand the way of the Lord, but are loath to come up to the terms. Certainly it is better be doing than excusing. Doing is safe, but excuses are, but a patch upon a sore place. If we have done a fault, it is better confess, and seek a pardon, than to excuse and extenuate.

5. Consider the invalidity of all things that are usually alleged by sinners; and to help you, consider—

[1.] Nothing can be pleaded as reason which God's word disproveth. The scriptures were purposely penned to refute the vain sophisms that are in the hearts of men: Heb. 4:12, 'To divide between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart;' to discover the affections of a sensual heart, however palliated with the pretences of a crafty understanding, to hide the evil from themselves and others. You must not lift up your private conceits against the wisdom of God.

[2.] Nothing can be pleaded as reason which your consciences are not satisfied with as reason. That is the reason there are so many appeals to conscience in scripture. Do not your consciences tell you you ought to be better, to mind God more? That if these things be true, 2 Peter 3:11, 'That all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?'

[3.] Nothing can be pleaded by way of excuse which reflects upon God, as if he had made a hard law. We are apt to plead so: 'The way of the Lord is not equal;' 'The woman thou gavest me, she gave me,

and I did eat.' Will you excuse your idleness and sin by the severity of your master, and cast your brat at his doors?

[4.] There can be no excuse for a total omission of necessary duties. In a partial omission, the law itself alloweth a dispensation; as in case of sickness we are taken off from some work which God requireth at other times. But some things are indispensably required: John 3:5, 'Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;' Heb. 12:14, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' Here is *necessitas precepti et medii*.

[5.] You should harden yourselves with no excuse or reason but what you dare plead when you stand before the bar of Christ; for then will the weight of all pleas be considered. Now, God hath left all creatures without excuse, Rom. 1:20. There is some witness of God to them, that convinceth them of more duty than they are willing to perform.

Secondly, And more particularly, the usual excuses are these:—

Object. 1. I have no time to mind soul-affairs; my distractions in the world are so great, and my course of life is such, I have no leisure.

Ans. 1. Whatever your business be, you have a time to eat and drink and sleep; and have you no time to be saved? Better encroach upon other things than that religion should be cast to the walls, or jostled out of your thoughts. David was a king, and he had more distracting affairs than most of us have, or can have; yet, Ps. 119:147, 148, he saith, 'I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried;' and 'Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I might meditate on thy word.'

2. Do you spend no time in idleness, vain talking, or carnal sports? And might not this be better employed about heavenly things? Eph. 5:16, 'Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.'

3. Much of religion is transacted in the mind. A Christian is always serving God; his, second-table duties are first-table duties. As carnal men go about heavenly things with a carnal mind, so the Christian goeth about carnal things with a heavenly mind.

4. God would be sure to have a portion of time, therefore the Lord's day was appointed: Isa. 58:13, 'If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words,' &c. That it may be dear to us in the flesh, and in the Lord, when we have God's command, and the laws of the land too.

5. All your time is lost that is not spent in God's service.

Object. 2. But I have no power nor strength to do good; and what will you have us do?

Ans. You can do more than you do, but you will not make trial. God may be more ready with the assistances of his grace than you can imagine. The tired may complain of the length of the way, but not the lazy that will not stir a foot. If you did make trial, you would not complain of God, but yourselves; and beg grace more feelingly. You are not able because you are not willing. Your impotency is contracted by evil habits and long custom in sin; that is an aggravation of your sin.

Object. 3. It is dangerous and troublesome to own God and religion heartily.

Ans. Did not you resolve to serve God whatever it cost you? And is God harsh and severe because he trieth whether you will be as good

as your word, and will not let you go to heaven with a vain complaint in your mouths? Will this comfort you in hell, and for the loss of everlasting happiness? In hell will you say, I came hither to save myself a labour, and to be exempt from the diligence of the holy life, and sufferings incident to it? Will you stop a journey for your lives because the wind bloweth on you, and there is dirt in the way? Nothing can take off a minister from seeking the conversion and salvation of souls, Acts 20:23, 24; and can anything be an excuse to you? Should your souls be dearer to us than you? It is necessary for our trial that we should meet with scorns and oppositions. Should a weak blast drive us from God? Rev. 2:13, 14, 'I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith; even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.' It is exceeding commendable to be zealous in such a place, or in such a time, when religion is hazardous and dangerous. Christ suffered more for you than you can for him, and God hath greater terrors than man can present.

Object. 4. I am of a slow wit, have a weak understanding, know not to which party I should cleave and join myself.

Ans. Certainly not to that which is most pleasing to corrupt affections. But divisions in the church are to try the approved, who is chaff, and who is good grain: 1 Cor. 11:19, 'For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.' The scripture is not dark, but we want eyes. You may know the mind of God: Ps. 119:18, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.' And John 17:17, 'Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth.'

Object. 5. I have so many temptations and enticements, I hope God will consider my weakness.

Ans. You are as earnestly persuaded upon better motives if persuasion will do it. What is a little worldly glory to eternal glory, brutish pleasures to pure delights?

Use 1. Since sloth is so great an evil, let the children of God take heed of it.

And so, first, of sloth and idleness in their particular calling. This was one of Sodom's sins: Ezek. 16:49, 'Pride and fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness.' This is sensuality, as well as other sins that are more noted in the world, as being an indulgence to the flesh, as well as other things, which are commonly decried, because they betray us to more shame in the world.

1. Every creature is God's servant, and hath his work to do wherein to glorify God; some in one calling, some in another: Neither rich nor poor are exempted; for a lawful calling is not a matter of necessity, but duty, enforced by a commandment. What our callings should be is determined by providence giving gifts and education, and obtruding us upon such a course of life. But it is a mistake to think that bare necessity maketh a calling; no, it is obedience. And if we be without such necessity, we may live idly, without any calling. No; every man and woman hath their labour and service; for God made no man or woman in vain. Would the wise and almighty God make so noble a thing as a rational human creature only to eat, and drink, and sleep, and rise and dress themselves, that they may show themselves to company, and impertinently chat away their hours and precious time? No; he hath ordained them for some service, which at length they are to give an account of; as the Mediator did of his work:

John 17:4, 'I have glorified thee on earth, and have finished the work thou gavest me to do.'

2. This work is not of one sort. Some are called to a higher, some to a lower employment, some noble, some citizens, some fathers of families, others matrons or mothers of families, some are magistrates, some ministers; but every one must do their duty in their place. Christianity falleth in with natural relations: 1 Cor. 7:20, 'Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.' God gives every man his work: Mark 13:34, 'The Son of man is like a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work.'

3. The work of our callings must be constantly and diligently attended upon. A rich man cannot say, I have no need; therefore I will attend upon my calling at my pleasure. You must not consider your present need, but your future account. The baseness of a man's calling must not be a discouragement to a poor man, seeing God counteth himself honoured in the lowest service as well as in the highest, and hath promised the reward of the inheritance to servants as well as nobles: Col. 3:24, 'Knowing that ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ.'

4. Every one that feeleth any tediousness growing upon him in his work should often rouse up himself by considering—

[1.] The active nature of man was never made to be idle; and shall we cross the law of our creation? When the beasts lie down in their dens, 'Man goeth forth to his labour and work till the evening,' Ps. 104:23.

[2.] The preciousness of time, which is too good to be loitered away upon mere nothing. We should buy it at any price, not waste it: Eph.

5:16, 'Redeem the time.' We shall wish we had done so when it is too late.

[3.] The eye of God, who observeth every man in his station, how he acquitteth himself with good fidelity. Eye-service, with respect to man, maketh us unfaithful: Eph. 6:6; but eye-service with respect to God is the great ground of diligence, Col. 3:22, 23.

[4.] The near approach of death. Would we be found eating, drinking, playing, sporting away our precious time, or diligently employing ourselves in our callings, at that day? Luke 12:43, 'Blessed is that servant whom when his lord cometh he shall find so doing.'

[5.] Our accounts, which mainly concerneth—(1.) Our particular calling, and that course of living wherein we were set to glorify God. The unprofitable servant will be cast into utter darkness, Mat. 25:30. God will judge all according to what they have done in their places; and then what will become of the idle and the slothful? (2.) In our general calling, as Christians. Take heed of being naughty and slothful servants.

First, Let us inquire who may be characterised with this brand.

1. Who? Those who complain for want of strength, yet do not diligently use the means whereby they may be quickened and strengthened: they are idle, and lie upon the bed of ease, and complain that God doth not give grace; languish for comfort, rather than set about the work of obedience. Christ telleth his disciples; John 14:21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and manifest myself to him.'

2. That content themselves with a loitering profession, when their hearts swarm with noisome lusts, and are unfurnished of faith and love, and other necessary graces; and yet think a lazy profession will serve the turn: Mat. 7:22, 'Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works: and then will I profess, I never knew them.' Because they pray, and hear, and receive sacraments, they think all is well, and they have no more to care for. Is this 'working out our salvation with fear and trembling'? Phil. 2:12; 'Serving God instantly day and night'? Acts 26:7; 'Labouring for the meat that perisheth not'? John 6:27; 'Denying ourselves'? Luke 14:26.

3. That snuff at a little mock-service as if an intolerable burden: Mal. 1:13, 'What a weariness is it!'

4. The children of God may feel this temper coming upon them, when though they do not cast off prayer altogether, yet they cut off or abate and diminish their prayers, either in fervour, or frequency, or continuance and perseverance in prayer; pray without sense, affection, or life; or do not pray so often, or do not continue instant in prayer.

This cutting short of duties in time tendeth to a quitting of them altogether. Man is ready to cast off what he thinketh to be a burden. So when they are backward to meditation, or to withdraw from the delights of the flesh, and the distraction of ordinary employments. In all such cases we should rouse up ourselves. Time is short; our account sure and near; we are labouring for heaven and salvation: shall we tire and faint? 'Be not weary of well-doing.' It is spoken with respect to the duties of piety, Heb. 12:12; duties of mercy, Gal. 6:9; duties of our calling, 2 Thes. 3:13. Oh! then, let us rouse up ourselves.

SERMON XVI

Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.—MAT. 25:28, 29

WE have seen the arraignment of the evil servant; now followeth the sentence, which intimateth a double punishment—privative and positive, loss and pain. The former is in these two verses; wherein you may observe three things:—

1. The taking the talent from the evil servant.
2. The disposition of the talent so taken from him.
3. The reason of both.

Let me explain these branches, and then draw one point from the whole.

First, The taking the talent from the evil servant, 'Take therefore the talent from him.' Naughty servants either lose the gifts themselves, or the benefit, comfort, and reward of them. Here, in time, they lose their gifts; when time is no more (which is the case in our parable), they lose their reward.

Secondly, The disposition of the talent so taken from him, 'And give it to him that hath ten talents;' that is, five by trust, and five more by gain and improvement. The giving of the talent to the first servant was thought unequal by some, because he had such plenty already; as appeareth, Luke 19:25, 'They say unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.' But the Lord adhereth to his sentence: 'For I say unto you,

Unto every one that hath shall be given,' &c. He giveth most to those that have done most diligent and faithful service, and delighteth to enrich them more and more with the rewards of grace.

Object. But how can we receive other men's talents? Shall the elect receive benefit from the reprobate, and their loss be our gain?

Ans. 1. It is spoken after the manner of men. Nothing more usual among men than to take that from the unfaithful which was committed to them, and to give it to the faithful. It is such another expression as Rev. 3:11, 'Hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown;' as if that crown which we had lost were taken and worn by others. So Num. 11:17, 25, God took of the Spirit that was upon Moses, and gave it to the seventy elders; as if what were given to his assistance were taken from him, and his abilities were lessened with his work; whereas it is only meant of the communication of the same graces.

2. The meaning is, he that useth his gifts well shall be amply rewarded; so amply, as if the happiness which others expect should accrue to them, and be put on their account.

Thirdly, The reason of both, in the 29th verse, 'For unto every one that hath shall be given.' That these expressions are proverbial is out of question with the learned. *Habenti dabitur* is an expression verified in all ages and in all countries. The rich have many friends, and he that hath much shall have more; every one will be presenting them: and they have great advantages of laying out themselves, and improving themselves more than others have. So, on the contrary side, by the neglect of others, and their own incapacity to improve themselves, poor men commonly grow poorer. Upon this occasion were the words first used, which our Saviour is pleased to translate and apply to his own purpose. The sense of the words, as they lie

here, will be known by taking this copulate axiom and proposition apart. The first branch speaketh of gain, the second of loss.

First branch. 'Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance.' The word ἔχειν doth not only signify the possession of a thing, but the use, which is the end of possession: and so he that hath is he that hath to purpose, that occupieth and trafficketh with his grace or gift received, with that care and diligence that belongeth to so great a treasure and trust: 'To him shall be given;' he shall increase his stock, and accordingly the comfort, benefit, and reward that belongeth to it. Yea, it follows, 'He shall have abundance,' περισσευθήσεται; not a single abundance, but a continual increase, even unto perfection; an increase of gifts, graces, and rewards. The sum is, to him that useth and improveth God's grace shall by degrees be given so much as that at last he shall have all abundance.

The second branch of this copulate axiom is, 'From him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath.' As he that had one talent, but had it not for his master's use, is counted and reckoned as though he had none. We have not what we have if we use it not well; as we say of a covetous man, *avaro tam deest quod habet, quam quod non habet*. It is as if we had it not: idle gifts and habits lie dead and useless. In Luke it is, chap. 8:18, 'And from whomsoever hath not, shall be taken that which he seemeth to have.' He maketh no use of his gifts, but lets them lie idle, as if he had not had them. Of grace and righteousness the proposition holdeth most true; of reprobates their grace and righteousness is but a pretension: of other gifts which they have, they have them not for use, for the Lord's service; and so, in effect, they have them not: therefore, they shall be taken from them; that is, they lose their reward: Ezek. 33:13, 'If he trust in his righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be

remembered;' 2 John 8, 'Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward;' Gal. 3:4, 'Have you suffered so many things in vain? If it be yet in vain.' Men may suffer many things for the truth who afterward make foul defection from it; but all is vain, lost, and to no purpose, as to anything that can be expected from God. The Nazarite was to begin again if he had defiled himself in the days of his separation, Num. 6:12. Thus for their putative righteousness; for other common gifts which they really have, they shall be deprived of all the real benefit which otherwise they might have had, if they had laid them out for the glory of God, their own salvation, and the good of their neighbours.

Doct. That all the good gifts which God hath bestowed upon men increase by good use, but wither and are lost by negligence.

For this is the sum of Christ's sentence and reason.

Now, that I may speak distinctly of the point, I must say something as to the increase, and something as to the loss.

First, For the increase, 'To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly, 'I shall deliver my sense of it in these propositions:—

1. That diligence is the means, and God's blessing is the cause, of all increase; and both must be regarded, or else we profit nothing. We cannot expect God's blessing while we sit idle; and it is a wrong to grace to trust merely to endeavours, or without looking up to God. It is said in Prov. 10:4, 'He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand; but the diligent hand maketh rich;' that is, that is the means; for ver. 22, it is said, 'The blessing of the Lord maketh rich;' that is, the blessing of the Lord upon the use of means. God hath ordered it

so in his providence, that diligence should be always fruitful and profitable, both in a way of nature and grace; that the joy of the harvest should recompense the pains and patience of the diligent husbandman, and that the field of the sluggard should be overgrown with thorns. Iron by handling weareth brighter and brighter, but by standing still, or being let alone, it contracteth rust, by which it is darkened and eaten out. Take away use and exercise, and wisdom turneth into folly, and learning into ignorance, health into sickness, riches into poverty. Strength of body and mind are both gotten by use; he that useth his talent with fidelity and sedulity shall increase in it, but such as are idle and negligent shall grow worse and worse. God doth plentifully recompense the diligence and fidelity of his servants; he that maketh use of any degree of grace and knowledge shall have more given him; by exercising what he hath he doth still increase it. Whereas, on the contrary, remiss acts weaken habits, as well as contrary acts; this is a common truth, evident by daily experience; but then God's blessing must not be excluded. God would have us labour, rather to keep us doing, than that he needeth our help. He that made the world without us can preserve it without us, as he that planted the garden of Eden could have preserved it without man's dressing, yet we read that when he had furnished the garden of Eden with all delights, God took the man and put him into it, 'to dress it and to keep it,' Gen. 2:15; that is, to use husbandry about it, that by sowing, setting, pruning, and watering, he might preserve those fruits wherewith God had furnished that pleasant garden, and to bestow his pains upon that whereof he was to receive the benefit, and that by busying himself about the creatures, he might the better observe God in his various works in and by them. And indeed nothing was such a means to convince him of his dependence upon God as this labour of dressing and keeping the garden which God put him into; for he could produce no new plant, but only manure and cherish those which God had planted there

already, and all his keeping and planting was nothing without dews and showers and influence from heaven, and the continual interposing of God's providence. And still in every calling he that is sedulous in it seeth more need of God's concurrence than those that are idle; for those that have done their utmost by experience find that the success of all their endeavours dependeth upon his power and goodness, or the effect followeth not. I am sure it holdeth good in the work of grace: none are so practically convinced of the necessity of divine assistance as they that do their utmost; for they see plainly all will not do if God withhold his blessing; and their often disappointments when they lean upon their own strength teacheth them this lesson, that all is of God.

2. That this increase must be understood of the same talent, not in another kind. It holdeth not, that he that useth the talent in one kind shall thrive in another, for what a man soweth that shall he reap. No; the meaning is, the thing used is still increased. It is not intended that by employing his talent in riches he should increase in learning, that by improving his learning he should grow in strength and beauty of body. No; it holdeth good in eodem genere, in the same kind. Use common helps well, and you increase as far as common helps will carry you; use moral virtue well, and you increase in moral virtue; use that measure of saving grace you have well, and you shall have a great measure given you by God; set a-work thy knowledge, faith, zeal, and love, and all these graces will increase in you: 'Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart,' Ps. 27:14; and Ps. 31:24, and Isa. 58:13, 14, 'If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places

of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.' So Ps. 91:1, 'He that dwelleth in the secret places of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' God, that punisheth sin with sin, doth reward grace with grace: they that abuse the light of nature are given up to a reprobate sense; they that improve the grace they have shall have more; every act maketh an increase of the habit, and whosoever employeth that spiritual wealth that he hath shall have an addition from God, be more strong in faith and love, and more rich in knowledge.

Object. But may not we enlarge this a little further? Arminius gathereth from hence that the works of the unregenerate, done by the mere strength of nature, are so accepted with God that by them he is moved and induced to give them supernatural grace. And many others, that will not speak so grossly, think that if we improve the gifts of nature, we shall have common grace, and if we improve common grace, we shall have special and saving grace. And ought we not, and can we not, use these common gifts and graces to this end and purpose, that we may obtain conversion and faith in Christ; such as the use of reason, the freeing of the mind from brutish passions and affections, good education, the examples of others, the powerful preaching of the gospel, and common illumination, and the knowledge of the truth gained thereby?

Ans. 1. Those that have common grace ought and are bound to use it for the obtaining of more grace; there is no doubt of that, for therefore they are accused that 'They have ears and hear not, eyes and see not;' and God findeth fault with his people that 'they will not frame their doings to turn to the Lord,' Hosea 5:4. So much as put themselves in a posture; they are threatened that 'it shall, be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for them;' and that 'the

Ninevites shall rise in judgment against them, and condemn them.' They are reprov'd for being 'idle and slothful servants, and hiding their talents in a napkin.' Certainly they that are lifted up to heaven in ordinances, that receive so much grace from God, and yet turn it into wantonness, and do not know, nor worship, nor seek after God, they aggravate their own condemnation; their destruction is of themselves; they shut themselves out of the kingdom of God, reject the counsels of God against themselves. In short, they put away the word of God from them, and judge themselves unworthy of eternal life. The scripture everywhere speaketh at this rate concerning the folly and negligence of men.

Ans. 2. But if it be asked, whether they that have received common grace not only ought, but also can, use it for the acquiring and getting the special grace of conversion? this question concerneth the manner how the will of God and the will of man meet together in the work of conversion. And here we must use great care in answering, to avoid inconveniences on all hands. Certainly merit they cannot, neither *de congruo*, nor *de condigno*, nor by any covenant oblige God to give them the grace of regeneration; neither can Christ be said to have acquired and purchased this grace for them to whom he is not given as a Mediator; nor by any promise is God bound to give us grace for the good use of our natural abilities. No; the distribution of converting grace is not promised or bound to any works of righteousness that we have or can do, but is reserved and referred to the free disposition, good-will, and pleasure of God: Rom. 9:16, 'Not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.' So Titus 3:5. 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.' The first grace is given by God as a sovereign Lord, according to the counsel of his own will. But since the question is propounded, whether a man can by common grace obtain special? the answer must be prudent and

cautelous, that of the one side we may not prejudice the truth, nor of the other side give scandal and offence to the weak. For—

[1.] If you answer that an unregenerate man may by the use of common grace acquire and obtain the special grace of regeneration, and that the whole business lies in the good use of his will, you seem to dash upon the eternal purpose and decrees of God, by which he hath determined not to give all men, but only the elect, this special grace; and upon the intention of Christ's dying, which was not to sanctify himself for all, but for those whom the Father had given to him; and you seem to put the whole business upon man, as if he did make himself to differ, and that the good use of common grace doth all; and then the Pelagian axiom will be true, *facienti quod in se est*—that he that doth what he can, God is bound to give him what he cannot; which will run little lower than the merit of congruity. Then we cannot say, God hath made himself a debtor; some would seem to have given him first. All which are against the scripture; and therefore we are justly afraid to enlarge and extend the liberty and power of man in this business.

[2.] If you answer that a man cannot use that common grace which he hath received so as to obtain the grace of regeneration, and that the thing dependeth no way upon his will and choice, or that there is no hope or possibility of doing otherwise than they do, or that, do their duty or do it not, still condemnation rests upon them, then no less difficulties will offer themselves. Flesh and blood will then complain that God is harsh and austere, 'Reaping where he hath not sowed, and gathering where he hath not strawed;' and that he requireth what we cannot do; and when we do it not, doth severely punish us. What shall we answer to the question, whether it be in the power of the creature to acquire the special grace of regeneration by the good use of common grace? The best answer that we can give is,

that the question is curious, and needeth no answer. The business is not whether God will or not, but what I am bound to do. The great rule in all such cases is, God may do what he pleaseth, but I must do what he commandeth. He that is deadly sick doth not refuse physic till he be made certain that it will recover him; but useth it, and committeth the event to God. He that is to plough, and commit his precious seed to the ground, doth not stand to have assurance that the next year will prove fruitful and the seasons kindly, but ventures, because usually God's blessing concurreth with man's industry. So in the business of salvation, we should not dispute of our power, nor the event of our endeavours: it is enough to acknowledge the debt of obedience, to try our power, to endeavour to do what we ought to do, and then leave the event to God. There is no need to dispute of our power; it is much safer to confess our impotency, to humble ourselves before God, and to seek his blessing and grace in the means he hath instituted to that end; but not at all to doubt the counsel and will of God. And the intention of Christ, whatever it be, will be no impediment to us in doing our duty. And it is as certain that no man doth all that he can, but by divers offences and abuse of the gifts received giveth God just cause to be angry and withdraw his help. And it is also out of doubt that it is not for want of God's help, but for their own folly and negligence that they perish. Therefore let us do what we are commanded to do, and leave the event to God, confessing when we have done all that we can that God is not our debtor, but that we remain debtors to God, guilty of eternal condemnation, as long as we are not partakers of regeneration and justification by Christ. If we could learn to suppress our cavils and curiosity by this humble submission, the business of our salvation would soon come to an issue, and we should find God better to us than we could imagine.

3. The next consideration is, that this increase is given in by degrees: we have not all at first, nor all at once; but as our capacities are enlarged, so is God's hand: Ps. 81:10, 'Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.' The more we improve the grace received, the more are we strengthened for God's service, and our desires and expectations, which are as the mouth of the soul, are more raised. It is exercise maketh us see the necessity and worth of grace, and so desire more as necessary to bear our burdens, perform our duties, and resist temptations. And the more grace we have, and the more we are acquainted with God, the more hopes have we towards him. By hope and desire the soul is more widened and fitted to receive: as Moses, 'Tell me thy name;' and then, 'Show me thy glory.' None see the want of learning so much as they that have most of it. So for grace, the desire and sense of want increaseth with enjoyment; so doth God's bounty to us. The desires and endeavours of believers after grace are not easily satisfied.

4. This gradual increase is continued, till at length all be full and perfect. The apostle prayeth for the saints, Eph. 4:19, that they 'might be filled with all the fulness of God.' God keepeth filling still, till grace, begun here, be fully completed in glory hereafter; and in heaven they are filled up with God, as far as finite creatures are capable of enjoying that which is infinite. The reason is, because the riches of God's goodness are inexhaustible. God is never weary of well-doing; where he hath given, he will give; and delighteth to crown his own gifts. Some gifts of God leave some obligation upon him to give more. Deus donando debet. Christ's reasoning implieth so much: Mat. 6:25, 'Is not life more than meat, and the body than raiment?' That is an argument, as long as God will use us for his glory he will provide for us: Zech. 3:2, 'Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?' The argument is from a brand almost consumed. Would God so eminently appear for them, not to destroy them?

Certainly he will still take care of them. This holdeth universally true in point of grace; for it is given as an earnest; not as donum, a gift, as men give a shilling to a beggar; nor as pignus, a pledge, to be taken away; but as arrha, an earnest of a greater sum, of which that is a part. So that he that hath shall have more, and so abundance in all perfection in heaven.

Secondly, Now I must speak to the loss. Talents may be said to be lost, or taken away, two ways—in this world or in the next. These proverbial speeches are made use of by Christ upon a twofold occasion—after the parable of the sower, Mat. 13:12, and here after the parable of the talents: the one relateth to losing in this world, and the other in the world to come. They that rejected the gospel, and would not hear, or heard it carelessly, or would not come under the power and obedience of it, all their external privileges, glittering profession, common gifts of illumination, fasts, partial practice, all will be lost. Only the good and honest heart, that receiveth the good seed so as to keep it, so as to be a principle of life to them, to these shall be given. And then here is the other occasion when Christ speaks this. The taking away of the talents is after the lord had been reckoning with his servants, after he had been a long time absent, and in a far country. Therefore this taking away the talent is not meant of the gift itself, as of the comfort, benefit, and reward of it; for all trading then is at an end; that is the time of recompense, and the talent is lost. It will do us no good to have had estates, and to have lived in pomp and splendour in the world, if we have not made use of it for God. Our fall will be the greater because of our height. It will do us no good to have borne office in the church if we have not been faithful: Mat. 7:22, 'Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name.' Such as have taken up office and employment in the church, and made no conscience of doing the duty that belongeth thereto, these will not have, but lose their

reward: these are 'idle shepherds,' Zech. 11:17; their unfaithfulness and idleness in their trust will cost them dear. So for the ordinances and means of grace: Luke 13:26, 'Then shall they begin to say, We have ate and drank in thy presence.' It will be no plea that you have been at God's board; nay, you will have the greater judgment: Mat. 11:23, 'And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell.' A place that enjoyeth the gospel is near heaven, it is the suburbs of heaven; but where not improved, these privileges plunge a man deeper in the state of condemnation. Sins against the law do not weigh so deep in his balance as slighting and neglecting the gospel; that brings on heavy wrath. So for common gifts, good affections, partial reformation; it is all lost, as to any reward, Ezek. 33:13. Yea, it is worse: 2 Peter 2:20, 21, 'For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning; for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment.' The wrath against them that return back to their sins is much greater than if they had never been so enlightened and reformed. Those that have had more light, and some taste of the sweetness of heaven's way, if they fall away, it is hard to renew them to repentance. This is the principal sense intended in this place; yet because the words are so contrived that they comprehend also the loss we may sustain in this world while we are trading for God, I shall show you how God punisheth naughty and slothful servants in this world with the loss of their talents.

1. Sometimes God taketh from them opportunities and liberty of doing good. Nothing is so soon lost as this: Gal. 6:10, 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men.' There are some fit opportunities offered us by the providence of God for doing our duty

in this kind, as are soon gone; and being past and gone, it is hard to say whether ever we may enjoy the like. As when we are specially fitted, and there is a concurring harmony of all circumstances. Therefore, we should take hold of them without delay or fore-slowing. Opportunities are not always as long as life: Eccles. 11:1, 2, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, and give a portion to seven and to eight; for thou knowest not what evil there may be upon earth.' Embrace the present opportunity; thou canst not foresee how soon thou mayest be deprived of it. Thou mayest die, and leave thy wealth to those that will shut up their bowels. Thou mayest be in want; God may disable thee: therefore, make use of the season for liberality, for doing good, while you have it. So office, authority, respect in the church, is an opportunity. God may cast us out of the vineyard by the malice of men, or as unsavoury salt, Mat. 13: Mal. 2:9, 'Therefore, I have made you contemptible and base before the people;' though all that are cast out are not so. Mat. 21:35, the husbandmen took 'his servants, and beat one and killed another.' However, it will be a discomfort if we have been negligent.

2. Ordinances; means of improvement may be lost: Gen. 6:3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man;' that is, by the ministry of Noah. And God threateneth to take away the hedge of his vineyard when all his cost is lost: Isa. 5:5, 6, 'What could I have done more for my vineyard?' So Luke 13:7, 'And he said to the dresser of the vineyard, Lo, these three years came I seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?'

3. Common gifts; God justly taketh them away from those that abuse, or make no good use of them. Many that excelled in gifts, that seemed to have great parts, are pitifully blasted afterwards. It is no hard matter to discern a maim and decay of gifts in them that use them not, as if the Spirit were departed from them: Zech. 11:17, 'The

idol-shepherd's arm shall be dried up, and his eye darkened;' that is, his gifts shall be taken away, at least, the power and life of them. Many lose the freshness of their gifts of prayer, the liveliness of their knowledge.

4. Initial grace, Heb. 6. Saving gifts and graces are ἀμεταμέλητα, without repentance, Rom. 11:29. Where there is life begun, it is not quenched; but where there are some hopeful inclinations, they begin to draw off their hearts from the world to God; though they had 'escaped the pollutions of the world, their latter end may be worse than their beginning,' 2 Peter 2:20.

5. *Dona sanctificantia* ought still to be improved, that the grace of God be not 'received in vain,' 1 Cor. 15:10. Grace in some measure may suffer loss by our negligence: 1 Thes. 5:19, 'Quench not the Spirit; despise not prophesying.' Fire is quenched by pouring on water or withdrawing fuel; so the Spirit is quenched by living in sin, which is like pouring on water; or not improving our gifts and grace, which is like withdrawing the fuel. *Gradus remittitur, actus intermittitur, habitus non amittitur.* Though the habit be secured by God's covenant, yet such portions and degrees of grace may be lost as may not easily be recovered again.

Use is to commend to us diligence and industry, especially in the work of our heavenly calling. A man's life is divided between waking and sleeping, so is his waking time divided between labour and rest; for human nature cannot endure continual exercise without intermission. Therefore a spiritual wise man should so govern his life that his labour may answer his great work and trust, and his rest may not infringe his labour, but help it. Our first care should be of labour; for man in this world is born to labour. Here is not the place of his rest and recompense, but of his exercise and trial. Rest is but for

labour; therefore doth he rest that he may be refreshed for his labour. Six days are given in the law to labour, but one to rest; and that rest is not carnal, but holy, and to be improved for our main duties. Adam in innocency was not made for idleness. Moses telleth us that God put him into the garden to dress it. That happiness we partook of then was consistent enough with our work. He that looketh upon the beauty of the sun may easily collect that God lighted not such a bright torch for man to sleep by, or to pass over his days in ease and idleness. The law that was given man to labour remained after sin; yea, sin brought grievousness and burden to it: so what was a law before, is turned into a punishment now; for God told Adam that 'in the sweat of his brow he should eat his bread.' In the whole course of nature nothing is idle; the sun and stars do perpetually move and roll up and down; the earth bringeth forth fruit; the seas have their ebbings and flowings, and the rivers their courses; the angels are described with wings, as ready to fulfil God's commandment, and run to do his pleasure. It were an unworthy thing, among so many examples and patterns of diligence, for man alone to be idle. In the least creatures God hath taught us; as by the ant or pismire: Prov. 6:6, 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard.' Now, as all men must labour, so chiefly a Christian. The scripture compareth our life to a journey, which is a constant motion till it be accomplished; to threshing, which is the painfulllest part of husbandry; yea, to a warfare, when the enemy is at hand ready to fight. We are always to watch and pray. If our enemy did not alarm us, yet our Master will call us to an account for what we have done.

And consider the danger of negligence. It befalleth to the idle and negligent, as those that came after the camp in the wilderness. Amalek smote the weak and the feeble in the rear. Yea, God himself will be angry with us. The idle and slothful servant is cast into utter darkness, the foolish virgins are shut out. If God, by his prophets,

curseth them whom he employeth to execute his judgments—'Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently,'—what will become of them that are negligent in working out their own salvation? Horses grow resty if they be not used, and impatient of a burden; so all goes to wreck in the soul if we are idle. We should profit when we look on the field of the sluggard, Prov. 23:30, 31, 34. So will my soul be, if I let it alone. Oh! then, shake off your sloth; be not always resolving, never beginning the heavenly course. Nothing can be gotten, nothing kept, nothing to be enjoyed, without industry. The saints in heaven are not idle; but are always lauding, and praising, and glorifying of God for evermore.

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