
A GODLY AND LEARNED
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William Perkins

# 5:1-2

"*And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,*" etc. Matthew 5:1,2

In this chapter and the two next, is contained Christ's Sermon in the Mount, preached to His disciples, and others that were converted unto Him among the multitude. Hereof I have chosen to entreat, because it is a most divine and learned sermon, and may not unfitly be called the key to the whole Bible; for here Christ openeth the sum of the Old and New Testament.

I. Before we come to the parts of this sermon, three general points are to be scanned for the clearing of the doctrine following.

1. First, the *time* when this sermon was preached; to wit, the second year of Christ's ministry; upon this occasion: when Christ had wrought a miracle (Luke 6:7) in curing the man with the withered hand upon the Sabbath day, the scribes and Pharisees went about to kill Him, whereupon He departed from among them, and went into a mount, where He spent the whole night in prayer. And when it was day, he chose the twelve apostles; which done, He came down into a plain place near to the mount, where He wrought His many miracles, but because the people thronged about Him to touch Him (for there went virtue out of Him which cured them) therefore He withdrew Himself out of the throng into the mountain again, and there preached this sermon unto His disciples soon after their election; no doubt for this end, to teach them His will, and also to frame and instruct them so as they might become profitable teachers unto others.

2. The *scope* and *drift* of this large sermon; namely, to teach His disciples, with all that believe in Him, to lead a godly, an holy and a blessed life. Although this be evident in the text, yet the popish teachers have depraved this end and scope; saying that Christ herein propoundeth a new law, far more perfect than the law of Moses; and also delivereth new divine counsel to His disciples, which was not given in the law or in the prophets. But they

err and are deceived; for Christ's intent is to clear the true meaning of Moses and the prophets, which was corrupted by the false gloss of the Jewish teachers; and not to add any new law or counsel thereunto, as afterwards will plainly appear (5:17; 7:12). Again, there cannot be given unto man a more perfect rule than Moses' law, the sum and scope whereof is *to love God with all the heart, with all the soul and with all the strength* (Matt. 22:37); than which there cannot be greater perfection in a creature. We therefore upon the consideration of this worthy end, must labour to shew the greater care and conscience to learn and do the things propounded in this sermon.

3. Whether is this sermon the same with that which is set down by St Luke (Luke 6:20ff.)? This question is necessary; for if they be the same sermon, then will the one give great light unto the other. Men indeed differ in judgment touching this point; some say there are divers sermons; others say they are one and the same; and that opinion is most likely. For first, they have one beginning and one matter, the same order of preaching and the same conclusion, as comparing of them together will plainly declare. Secondly, this sermon recorded by them both, was made upon the election of Christ's twelve apostles, a little after the curing of the man with the withered hand. This is plain in St Luke and may well be gathered from the doctrine of this sermon recorded by Matthew wherein Christ instructeth His apostles particularly in their office and calling; which He would not have done, if He had not formerly called them thereunto. If it be said that St Matthew recordeth their election afterward in the tenth chapter, *Answer*: In the writings of the evangelists there be certain anticipations; that is, some things are set down after, which were done before; and some things are set down before, which were done after, as might easily be proved by sundry examples, and in the point in hand is evident; for the election of the apostles is set down by St Matthew in his tenth chapter upon occasion of his recording their commission to preach; so that this circumstance of the apostles' election doth notably prove these sermons to be one, St Matthew setting down the same more largely, and Luke more briefly.

Their reasons who hold them to be two distinct sermons, are of no moment. They say that the sermon recorded by St Luke was made on the plain; this of Matthew in the mountain; that of Luke was made by Christ standing, this

of Matthew as He sat down. *Answer*: But Luke saith not that it was made by Christ in a plain, or standing; only this he saith, that Christ coming from the mountain, stood in a plain place, and there wrought certain miracles, and then preached; now all this might be done, and yet Christ might preach this sermon in the mount, sitting, as St Matthew saith; for the order of the story is this: Christ being maligned of the Jews went into a mount, and there prayed; after long prayer, He chose twelve apostles, and then came down into a plain and wrought miracles; but by reason of the throng which pressed about Him to touch Him, He went into the mountain again, and there preached this sermon to His apostles and others that followed Him.

II. Thus much in general. Now we come to the sermon itself; which containeth three parts: a preface, the matter of the sermon, and the conclusion.

The preface or preparation is contained in the first two verses of this chapter, wherein are set down divers circumstances pertaining to the sermon:

1. As first and principally, the *author* of it, to wit, Jesus Christ the redeemer and mediator of mankind, who in the making of this sermon must be considered two ways, even as He is a prophet:

    1. First, as *the minister of circumcision for the truth of God* (Rom. 15:8), as the apostle speaketh, whereby thus much is signified, that Jesus Christ as He was man, born among the Jews, was unto them a prophet and minister in His own person, and with His own mouth was to teach them the will of His Father; which thing was requisite for the accomplishing of God's Word, who had promised before to His ancient people by Moses that He would raise up unto them *a prophet like unto Moses, whom they should hear in all things that He should speak unto them* (Acts 3:22); which prophecy was verified in this sermon; wherein He manifesteth Himself to be the minister of circumcision unto them.

    2. Secondly, here we must consider Christ as a prophet like unto Elijah and Elisha, who were as fathers and masters to the rest of the prophets; for herein He doth not only teach believers among the multitude, but His own disciples also, who were afterward to make disciples with

Christ, and to build up further them that did believe; yea, this instruction of His disciples is the chief scope of this sermon.

2. Secondly, here is noted the *place* where this sermon was made, to wit, a mountain in Galilee: *He went up into a mountain*. This place He chose for two reasons: first, to avoid the throng that pressed about Him while He stood on the plain, to see Him and to touch Him, because *there went virtue out of Him* (Luke 6:19). Secondly, that He might have a fit place, both for Himself to sit and teach, and for His disciples and the multitude attentively and orderly to hear and learn that wholesome doctrine which he delivered.

In this choice of the place: First, He sheweth great care and wisdom to maintain outward order in the dispensation of His Word; whereby He teacheth us that in all holy ministrations, outward order is to be kept, and convenient places chosen, where the Word of God may be reverently and profitably both spoken and heard. Secondly, herein He sheweth special care to dispense His Father's will when occasion was offered; yea, He declareth His diligence herein; so as it is true it was *meat and drink unto Him* (John 4:34), thus by teaching the people to *do His Father's will*. And this His practice must be a precedent and example to all God's ministers. They must not preach by constraint, but of a willing mind; yea, they must rejoice and be glad, when occasion is offered, that they may dispense the will of God unto His people. This Paul meant in his straight charge to Timothy, that he should *be instant, and teach in season and out of season* (2 Tim. 4:1,2); that is, take all occasions to teach the Word; following the example of Christ, who stayed not till He came to Jerusalem, or to some synagogue, but having good occasion offered, taught the multitude in this mountain.

3. Thirdly, here is noted that *bodily gesture* which Christ useth in this sermon; He taught them not standing, but sitting; *when He was set*; so when He preached in Nazareth, He stood up and read His text, and then sat down, and preached unto them (Luke 4:16,20) And when His father and mother sought Him at the feast, they found Him in the temple sitting among the doctors and asking them questions (Luke 2:46); and being apprehended, He said to the multitude, *I sat daily with you in the temple teaching* (Matt. 26:53). Now Christ used to preach sitting, because it was the manner and custom of that church so to do; *the scribes and Pharisees* (saith Christ) *sit*

*in Moses's chair* (Matt. 23:2); where He noteth their gesture in teaching and expounding the law. Whereby we are taught to be careful in observing all seemly, commendable and convenient gestures which are used in that church whereof we are members. If any shall ask whether we may not preach sitting, as Christ did, I answer, if it were the custom of our church, we might lawfully do it; for these gestures be indifferent in themselves; but we do it not, because our custom is otherwise. And so we may say of preaching with the head covered, which is the manner used by ministers in the French churches; but we use it not, because we have no such custom in our church.

4. Fourthly, here are noted the *parties* whom Christ taught, namely, His disciples; for though He spake in the audience of the multitude, yet herein He chiefly intended to instruct His disciples; that is, all those whom He had converted by His former ministry, and among them principally the twelve apostles, whom He had newly chosen to become teachers of others. This circumstance must be well observed, for as it helpeth to clear some points in the doctrine following; so it serveth notably to prove and justify the schools of the prophets, wherein some teach, and others hear and learn, for this end, to furnish themselves with gifts, that afterward they may become good and able teachers in God's church; for what is this but to follow the example of Christ, who in this place delivereth doctrine and instruction to His twelve apostles, the better to enable them to their faithful discharge of their holy ministry.

5. Lastly, in this preface is noted *Christ's manner of speaking*, in these words: *And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying*; which some so take to signify nothing else but a full and evident kind of speech; as if the Holy Ghost had said, *He spake with His mouth*; as we used to say in English, *I heard it with mine ears*. But this phrase hath a further meaning; for as Paul willing the *Ephesians to pray to God for him that a door of utterance may be given him, that he might open his mouth boldly to publish the secrets of the gospel* (Eph. 6:19), doth there make that *opening of his mouth*, a more special kind of speaking, and a far more weighty matter than his ordinary communication; and as Elihu saying, *I will open my lips, and will answer* (Job 32:20), doth thereby import that his speech should be upon due consideration and sound knowledge; so the evangelist saying, *Christ*

*opened His mouth*, doth thereby mean that upon serious meditation upon sundry points of heavenly doctrine, He began to speak with liberty and authority; and to deliver unto them deep matter of weight and great importance. That this is the meaning, may appear by the conclusion of this sermon, where it is said, the people wondered at His doctrine, because *He taught as one having authority* (Matt. 7:29).

Doth Christ here open His mouth and utter weighty points of doctrine in this sermon? Then it standeth all churches and people in hand to open their ears and apply their hearts to hear, learn, receive, believe and obey the same; this is that prophet foretold by Moses, *who must be heard in all things that he shall speak*; yea, *whosoever will not hear His voice, may be cut off from among God's people* (Acts 3:22,23); and great reason, for *if the word spoken by angels stood steadfast, and every transgression received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation* preached unto us by Christ (Heb. 2:2,3)? Secondly, hereby all God's ministers are taught, by all godly diligence to seek to furnish themselves for their holy ministry, that they may bring serious and weighty matter before God's people, and deliver the same with that convenient boldness and authority which beseemeth God's Word. Thirdly, in Christ's addressing of Himself to speak, all persons must learn to make conscience both of silence and of speech; this we shall do, if by silence we close up our lips, till we have just matter to speak of, tending to the glory of God or the good of our brethren; and being so prepared upon fit occasion, and in due time, we may utter our mind; we must remember that Christ left Himself an example that we should follow in His steps; and also consider that *of every idle word that we shall speak, we must render account unto God* (Matt. 12:36). If this were known and believed, there would not be so many sins in words, by cursing, swearing, vain and idle speaking, as there be.

Thus much of the preface. Now we come to the matter of this sermon, beginning at the third verse of this chapter, and so continuing to the 28th verse of the seventh chapter. And it may be divided into twelve heads or places of doctrine: The first whereof concerneth true happiness or blessedness, from the 2nd verse of this chapter to the 13th, wherein are propounded sundry rules directing men to attain thereunto. The scope of them all must be considered, which in general is this: Our Saviour Christ

had now preached two years among the people, and thereby had won many to become His disciples; and among the rest, His twelve apostles; to all whom He promised happiness and life everlasting, if they would continue in the faith and obedience of His Word. Now though they believed in Him, yet they still remained in the same state for outward things, and became more subject to outward miseries than before; so as if they judged of happiness by their present outward estate, they might easily suspect the truth of Christ's doctrine, and think He had deceived them, because He promised them happiness, and yet for outward things, their case was far worse than before they knew Him. This our Saviour Christ, considering, doth here go about to remove this false conceit out of their minds; and for this purpose delivereth this doctrine unto them, in the first general head of His sermon; that *true happiness before God, is ever joined, yea, covered many times, with the cross in this world*. Whereby He strikes at the root of their carnal conceit, which placed true happiness in outward things, and looked for outward peace and prosperity upon the receiving of the gospel.

As this is the scope of the doctrine following, so it stands us in hand to learn the same, and to find experience hereof in our own hearts, that true comfort and felicity is accompanied with manifold miseries in this life. Indeed carnal wisdom deemeth them happy that enjoy outward peace, wealth and pleasure, but this conceit must be removed, and Christ's doctrine embraced, who joineth true happiness with the cross. Secondly, this serveth to teach us patience in affliction; for it is God's will to temper happiness and the cross together; now this puts life into an afflicted soul, to think that Christ will have His felicity enjoined and felt in outward misery. Thus much of this head of doctrine in general; now we come to the branches thereof.

# 5:3

"*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*." Matthew 5:3

Here is Christ's first rule concerning happiness; wherein observe two points: first, the parties blessed: *the poor in spirit*; secondly, wherein this blessedness consists: *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. Before we come to these parts severally, note in a word the form of speech here used. They that are led by human reason will rather say, *Blessed are the rich, for theirs are the kingdoms of the world*. But Christ here speaks the flat contrary; saying, *Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*, which is infinitely better than all the kingdoms of the world. Whereby we may see that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; and the ordinary conceit of man, flat opposite to the saving doctrine taught by Christ.

I. *Blessed are the poor in spirit*.

The word translated *poor*, doth properly signify a beggar, one that hath no outward necessities but by gift from others; but here it is more largely taken, not only betokening those that want outward riches (for St Luke opposeth these poor to the rich in this world (Luke 6:20,24)), but also those that are in any way miserable, wanting inward or outward comfort; and such an one was Lazarus, that lay begging at Dives gates (Luke 16:20,21). What is meant by poor in spirit is plainly expounded (Isa. 66:2), where the Lord saith, *I will look to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words*. Christ's meaning then is this: that those poor are blessed, who by means of their distress, through want of outward comforts, are brought to see their sins and their miseries thereby; so at finding no goodness in their hearts, they despair in themselves, and fly wholly to the mercy of God in Christ for grace and comfort, as Lazarus did to Dives gate for outward relief.

1. Seeing Christ doth thus set out the *person* that is truly blessed, let us see whether we be in the number of these poor ones. Indeed we have many poor

amongst us; some that by excess and riot have spent their substance, and others that through idleness increase their want; as the wandering beggars, a sinful and disordered people, who join themselves to no church. But none of these can by their poverty make just claim to true felicity. The blessed poor are poor in spirit; and this poverty we must find in our hearts, if we would know ourselves to be truly happy. But after trial, this will be found much wanting; for first, if men live outwardly civil, and keep themselves from gross sins, this thought of pride takes place in their hearts: that they are righteous, and they persuade themselves, with the young man in the gospel (Matt. 19:20), that they can keep God's commandments. Secondly, let worldly wants befall men, in body, goods, or name, and they are grieved; yea, their souls are full of sorrow; but for spiritual wants, as blindness of mind, hardness of heart, unbelief and disobedience, their hearts are never touched. Now whence comes this but from that pride of heart whereby they bless themselves in their estate, and think all is well with them in respect of their souls? So that true it is that poverty of spirit is hard to be found. We therefore must search ourselves, and labour to feel our spiritual wants; and look how Lazarus lay for his body at Dives' gates; so must we lie at God's mercy gate in Christ, for our souls; abandoning this pride of heart, and acknowledging that there is no goodness in us of ourselves; for the strait gate of heaven cannot receive a swelling heart that is puffed up with pride. And to induce us unto this good duty, let us consider the gracious promises made to them that be poor in spirit; they are called God's poor (Psa. 72:2); He thinketh upon them (Psa. 40:17); though heaven be God's throne and the earth His footstool, yet wil He look to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit (Isa. 66:2); yea, the Lord will dwell with him that is of a contrite and broken heart (Isa. 57:15); Christ came to preach the glad tidings of the gospel to the poor (Luke 4:18); yea, the Lord filleth the hungry (that is, the poor and hungry soul) with good things, but the rich he sends empty away (Luke 1:53). Let these and many such favours with God which they enjoy, provoke us to become poor in spirit.

2. Secondly, are the blessed those that be poor in spirit? Then here all poor and wretched persons in the world may learn to make good use of their wants and distresses. They must consider them as the hand of God upon them, and thereby be led to the view of their sins; and by the consideration of their sins, be brought to see their misery in themselves, the true ground

of this spiritual poverty. Now, when they are once poor in spirit, they are in a blessed state in the judgment of Christ. If a man bleed dangerously at the nose, the best way to save his life is to let him bleed elsewhere, and so turn the course of the blood another way; even so, when a man is oppressed with worldly calamities, he cannot find any comfort in them, for in themselves they are God's curses; yet if thereby he can be brought to see his spiritual poverty, then of curses they become blessings unto him; and therefore when we are in any distress, we must not only fix our eyes upon the outward cross, but by means of that, labour to see the poverty of our souls; and so will the cross lead us to happiness.

3. Thirdly, they that abound with worldly wealth, must hereby learn to become poor if they will be saved; poor, I say, not in goods, but in spirit. This indeed is hard to flesh and blood, for naturally every rich man blesseth himself in his outward estate, and persuades himself that God loves him, because He gives him wealth; but such conceits must he strive against, and learn of God to rejoice in this: *that he is made low* (James 1:10).

4. Fourthly, on this saying of Christ, that the poor are blessed, the popish teachers (observing the word translated *poor* to betoken outward poverty) go about to build their vow of voluntary poverty, whereby men renouncing their wealth and possessions of this world, do betake themselves to some monastery, there to live a poor solitary life. But their voluntary poverty will not agree with this text; for Christ's poor here pronounced blessed, are such, as by reason of their poverty, are miserable and wretched, wanting outward comforts, as we shewed out of Luke (Luke 6:20,24), where Christ opposeth them to the rich, who abound with all worldly delights. But to undergo the popish vow of voluntary poverty, is no estate of misery or distress; for who do live in greater ease, or enjoy more freedom from the crosses and vexations of this life, than their begging friars? Again, if their vowed poverty had any ground in this text, then Christ should pronounce such poor blessed, as made themselves poor; but that He doth not, for then in the next verse he should pronounce such mourners blessed as voluntarily cause themselves to mourn; for that verse dependeth on this as a more full explanation of this first rule. But no man will say that they that mourn without a cause are there called blessed; and therefore popish vowed poverty hath no ground on this place. And thus much of the persons.

II. Wherein the blessedness of these poor consists: namely, in having a right to the kingdom of heaven: *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. By *kingdom of heaven* (for the better conceiving of this blessedness) we must understand a state or condition of man, whereby he is in God's favour, and hath fellowship with God. The truth of this description is evident by the tenor of the New Testament. Now the estate of man is called a *kingdom*, because herein God rules as king, and man obeys as God's subject; for no man can be in God's favour, nor enjoy His fellowship unless God be his King, ruling in his heart by His Word and Spirit, and he God's subject resigning himself to be ruled by Him; for this happy estate consists in God's gracious ruling of man, and man's holy subjection unto God. Indeed few do see any great happiness in this estate; but the truth is, man's whole felicity stands herein; *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost* (Rom. 14:17). Here the apostle teacheth us three things: namely, that when God's Spirit rules in a man's heart, then first, he is justified, there is righteousness; secondly, he hath peace with God, even that peace of conscience which passeth all understanding; thirdly, the joy of the Holy Ghost, which is an unspeakable comfort, passing all worldly joy whatsoever. And these three do notably set out the state of a happy man; which will yet more plainly appear by their contraries in Judas, who being a wretched sinner, unrighteously betrayed his master, and thereupon fell into the misery of a guilty accusing conscience, which was the cause of his desperate death, and also that his body burst asunder and his bowels gushed out. Now if an evil conscience be so fearful, then how blessed an estate is the peace and joy of a good conscience, which a man then hath when God by His Word and Spirit ruleth in his heart? Again, this estate is called the *kingdom of heaven* because that man in whom Christ ruleth by His Word and Spirit, is already himself in heaven, though in body he be yet on earth; for heaven is like a city with two gates, through both which a man must pass before he can obtain the full joys thereof. Now as soon as God by His Word and Spirit rules in any man's heart, he is already entered the state of grace, which is the first gate; the other remains to be passed through at the time of death, which is the gate of glory, and then he is in full possession.

1. Doth true happiness consist in this estate where Christ ruleth and man obeys? Then here behold the error of all philosophers and wise men of this world touching happiness; for some have placed it in pleasure, some in

wealth, and others in civil virtues, and some in all of these. But the truth is, it stands in none of these. A natural man may have all of these and yet be condemned; for the civil virtues of the heathen were in them but glorious sins. Our Saviour Christ hath here revealed more unto us than all the wise men of the world did ever know; and hereby we have just occasion to magnify the books of Scripture far above all human writings, because they do fully set out unto us the nature and estate of true felicity, which no human work could ever do. We must therefore account of them, not as the word of man, but of the ever-living God; yea, this must persuade us to maintain the books of Scripture against all devilish atheists that deny the same to be the Word of God.

2. Secondly, hereby we are taught, from the bottom of our hearts, to make that petition for ourselves, which Christ teacheth in His holy prayer: namely, that He would *let His kingdom come* (Matt. 6:10), that is, not suffer sin, Satan or the world to reign in us, but by His Word and Spirit to rule in our hearts, giving us grace to be guided thereby in all our ways. We affect nothing more than happiness, and therefore we must oftentimes most seriously make this request to God, preferring this estate with God before all pleasures and happiness in this world, and use all good means to feel in our hearts the power of Christ's kingdom.

3. Thirdly, this should move us to hear God's Word with all fear and reverence; for by this means the kingdom of Christ is erected in us; when the Word of Christ takes place in our hearts by faith, and brings forth in our lives the fruits of righteousness and true repentance, then we may truly say, the kingdom of heaven is in us.

4. Lastly, Christ ascribing this happy title of His heavenly kingdom to them that be poor and of a contrite heart, doth herein minister a sovereign remedy against all temptations, from outward poverty and distress. Doubtless poverty is a grievous cross, not only in regards of the want of bodily comforts; but especially because of that contempt and reproach which in this world doth hang upon it; whereupon many do esteem their poverty as a sign of God's wrath against them, and thereby take occasion to despair, thinking the kingdom of darkness belongeth unto them. But here consider you poor, this sentence of Christ, where He plainly teacheth that if a man in

outward distress can be brought to feel his spiritual poverty, and the wretchedness of his soul, by reason of his sins; then he is so far from having just cause to despair of God's favour by reason of his poverty, that on the contrary, he may gather to his soul a most comfortable assurance, from the mouth of Him that cannot lie, that the kingdom of heaven belongs unto him.

# 5:4

"*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted*." Matthew 5:4

Here is Christ's second rule touching blessedness; wherein consider two points: first, the parties who are blessed, *they that mourn*; secondly, wherein their blessedness consists, namely, *in receiving comfort*.

I. For the first; by *mourners*, we must not understand every one that is in any way grieved, but such as have just and weighty causes of grief, and do therefore mourn; for the words import an exceeding measure of grief, such as is expressed by crying and weeping, as is plain by St Luke, who thus relateth Christ saying, *Blessed are ye that now weep*. And yet every one is not blessed that mourneth under grievous distress; for Cain, Saul, Ahithophel and Judas were all deeply affected in soul with their most woeful estates, though far from this blessedness. This rule then, must be understood: that *they are blessed who with their mourning for weighty causes of grief, do withal mourn for their sins*; for so was the former rule to be understood, of those that with the sense of their outward distress, had adjoined an inward feeling of their spiritual wants; and this verse is but a more full explication thereof, as if He should have said: They are blessed that are poor in spirit. Yea, put the case a man be distressed for most weighty causes of grief, so as he howl and cry under the burden of them; yet if withal, he can unfeignedly mourn and wail in heart for his sins, notwithstanding all his poverty and distress, he is truly blessed.

This blessed sentence upon them that mourn, serves sundry ways for a sovereign salve to the conscience of a Christian:

1. As first; put the case a man were distressed with grievous calamities, and withal were overtaken with some heinous sin, whereupon not only is his body afflicted, but his conscience also wounded, and so he is cast into the guise of desperation. Yea, say further, that by reason of the terror of his conscience, his flesh were withered, and his marrow consumed in his bones. Were not this a cause of exceeding mourning? Yet lo, our most blessed

physician Christ Jesus hath made a plaster for his sore; for if this man of distresses can withal truly mourn for offending God through his transgressions, he is undoubtedly blessed; for Christ hath said it, whose word shall never fail, though heaven and earth come to nothing. A blessed text, which being well applied, will not only support the heart in great distress, but recover the conscience from under deep despair.

2. Secondly, put the case a man were exceedingly sick, and that he felt the very pangs of death without all ease to seize upon him, so as both speech and sight, with all outward comforts begin to fail him. This state were lamentable; yet if in his soul he can truly mourn for his offences, even in this extremity, he is blessed.

3. Thirdly, put the case a man were taken of his enemies, and his wife and children slain before his face, having their brains dashed out upon the stones, afterwards himself put to a most woeful rack and torment. This were an estate more woeful than death; yet herein a man must not judge himself as a castaway, but with mourning for this misery, he must labour to be sorrowful for his sins, and then he need not fear what flesh can do unto him, for he is blessed. Christ's Word must stand, let thy distress be what it will, if under it thou mourn for thy sins, blessed art thou. We cannot conceive while we enjoy peace, of the worth of this rule in the evil day; neither do we know how near the time is wherein we shall have need thereof; and therefore we must now learn this never to be forgotten, to season all other mourning with godly sorrow for our sins.

II. *Wherein this blessedness consists*; namely, in that *their mourning shall have an end, and be turned into true comfort*. That this is true happiness will appear by the contrary; for the woe and sorrow that is here begun, and continued in the world to come, is the punishment of the damned spirits, and the portion of the reprobate, which is endless misery; and therefore unto them that mourn, it is true happiness that they shall receive comfort. This promise of comfort is accomplished four ways:

1. First, when God tempers and delays the sorrows and afflictions of them that mourn, according to the measure of their strength (1 Cor. 10:13), *God is faithful; and will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able to bear*. This was promised to David and his seed, that *if they did sin, He*

*would correct them with the rod of men; but not take His mercy quite from them* (2 Sam. 7:14,15).

2. Secondly, when God removes the grief with the causes thereof; thus he comforted Manasseh, who for his abominable idolatries and witchcrafts was *carried captive into Babylon, and there laid in prison, fettered in chains of iron* (2 Chr. 33:11); yet when he did mourn under that affliction, and withal *humbled himself unto God for his sins, the Lord comforted him, by bringing him out of that captivity and prison, to Jerusalem into his own kingdom*.

3. Thirdly, When God gives inward comfort to the heart and conscience, by His Word and Spirit. In this case Paul said, *We rejoice in afflictions, knowing that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given us* (Rom. 5:5); yea, when he was exceedingly afflicted above his strength, so as he received the sentence of death in himself, having no hope of life, yet even then he professeth that, *as the sufferings of Christ abounded toward him, so his consolations through Christ abounded in him* (2 Cor. 1:5).

4. Fourthly, when God by death puts an end to all their miseries, and brings their souls to eternal life. Thus was Lazarus comforted, as Abraham saith unto Dives (Luke 16:25), and thus doth Christ comfort the thief upon the cross (who with his bodily torment for his lewd life, was undoubtedly touched in conscience for his sins, and therefore desires Christ to remember him when he came into His kingdom) by telling him that that day he should be with Him in paradise (Luke 23:43).

Here then we have a notable remedy against the immoderate fear of death, whether natural or violent, and of any other judgments of God: for when death itself, or any other misery whatsoever shall befall us, if we can therewith bewail our transgressions, we need not fear, still holding fast His promise by faith in our hearts, that *we shall be comforted*. Secondly, this promise well observed, may teach us to avoid the peril of this false conceit; that true faith doth always minister present comfort. Many do herewith perplex themselves, measuring their estate towards God by that which they feel in themselves; so as if in time of trouble they find not present comfort, they judge themselves void of faith, and cast out of God's favour. But herein they greatly wrong themselves; for though the apprehension of

comfort, from God in distress, be a fruit and work of faith, yet a man may have true faith that wants this sense and feeling of present comfort. Doubtless none are blessed that want faith, yet many are blessed that want feeling; for here it is said, *they that mourn for sin are now blessed*; and yet it is not said, they are now comforted, but *they shall be comforted*; meaning afterward, in God's good time.

# 5:5

"*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*." Matthew 5:5

This is the third rule of Christ touching happiness; which as the former, containeth two parts: first, the parties blessed; secondly, wherein this blessedness consists.

I. For the first; the parties blessed are the *meek*. That we may know aright who are meek, I will somewhat lay open the virtue of meekness, and briefly handle these four points: first, what meekness is; secondly, what are the fruits thereof; thirdly, wherein it must be shewed; fourthly, the cause and ground thereof.

1. Meekness is a gift of God's Spirit, whereby a man doth moderate his affection of anger, and bridle himself in impatience, hatred and desire of revenge.

2. The fruits of meekness are principally two:

1. First, it makes a man with a quiet and patient heart to bear God's judgments; which is a worthy grace of God, and the greatest fruit of meekness (Lev. 10:3). When Aaron's two sons Nadab and Abihu were burned with fire from heaven, which was a grievous judgment, he went to Moses to know the cause thereof, who told him that God would be glorified in all that came near Him; which when Aaron heard, *he held his peace*, and was not moved with grudging or impatience. So David being in great distress through the hand of God upon him, doth notably shew forth this grace, saying, *I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because Lord, thou didest it* (Psa. 39:9).

2. Secondly, meekness causeth one with a quiet mind to bear the injuries men do unto him; yea, to forgive and forget them; and to requite good for evil, referring all revenge to God that judgeth righteously. When David's enemies *laid snares for his life, uttered sorrows, and imagined*

*deceit against him continually* (Psa. 38:12); yet by this virtue he suffered all patiently, being *as a deaf man that heareth not, and as the dumb which openeth not his mouth* (Psa. 38:13); so far was he from private revenge. And our Saviour Christ set forth Himself a pattern of this virtue, saying. *Learn of me, that I am meek and lowly in heart* (Matt. 11:29). Herein He left Himself an example that we should follow in His steps, who *when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He was buffeted, He threatened not, but referred all to the judgment of Him that judgeth righteously* (1 Pet. 2:23); yea, he prayed for them that crucified Him. So did Stephen (Acts 7:60), *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*. So Zachariah the son of Jehoiada, being stoned, said only this: *The Lord will see and require it at your hands* (2 Chr. 24:22).

3. Wherein must this meekness be shewed? *Answer*: Not in the matters of God, when His glory is impeached; for therein we must have zeal as hot as fire; but in the wrongs and injuries that concern ourselves. Moses was the meekest man upon the earth in his time (Num. 12:3), and yet when the Israelites has made a golden calf, in zeal to God's glory (Exod. 32:19,27), he brake the two tables of stone, and put to the sword that same day three thousand men, of them that had so dishonoured God. David also that held his tongue at his own wrongs, did consume away with zeal against his enemies that forgat God's Word (Psa. 119:139). And our Saviour Christ, who as *a lamb before the shearer, opened not his mouth* (Isa. 53:7) for the wrongs done unto Himself; did yet in rescue of His Father's glory, make a whip of cords and drove the buyers out of the temple, who made His Father's house a den of thieves (Matt. 21:12,13).

4. The cause and ground of this meekness is affliction and poverty of spirit, as the order of these rules declareth; where it is placed after *poverty of spirit*, and *mourning*; and therefore Psa. 37:11, whence these words are borrowed, the meek person is called by a name that signifieth *one afflicted*; to teach us that he that is meek indeed, is one who by affliction and distress, hath been brought to mourn for his offences; for hardly can he be meek and patient in spirit, that hath not been acquainted with the cross (Lam. 3:27-29). The church commendeth this bearing of the cross in youth, because *it*

*maketh a man to sit quietly alone, to put his mouth into the dust, and to give his cheek unto the nippers*.

Doth blessedness belong to meek persons? Hereby then we are admonished to labour for the moderation of all our affections, especially of anger, hatred and revenge; and to beware of all hindrances to this blessed virtue, as choler, hastiness, grudging, impatience under wrongs, with all railing, reviling, chiding and brawling, and all such threatening speeches, which come too oft in practice, that we may forgive, but we will never forget. Yea, in action we must avoid all quarrelling, fighting, contending, and going to law on every light occasion; for true meekness admits none of all these to take place with God's children. And to induce us hereunto, consider first Christ's precept and example, bidding us, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly*. Again, consider God's own dealing with us, we daily wrong Him by our offences, and yet He bears with us; shall we then be unlike our heavenly Father, that we will straight revenge the wrongs that others do unto us? (Col. 3:12,13) *As the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on the bowels of mercy, gentleness, lowliness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forebearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against another; even as God for Christ's sake forgave you, so do ye*. Lastly, the fruition and practice of this grace hath the promise of blessedness belonging to it; and therefore as we would be happy, so we must get the spirit of meekness into our hearts, and express the virtue and power thereof in our lives.

*Objection 1*. Here some will say, If I put up all injuries, I shall be counted a dastard and a fool. *Answer*: In this case learn of Paul, to pass little for man's judgment (1 Cor. 4:3); but be careful to get and practice this grace of meekness, and then Christ will pronounce thee blessed, which ought more to prevail with thee than all men's estimation in the world; and so it will, unless thou love the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:43).

*Objection 2*. Again, it will be said, The more I use to put up wrongs, the more shall I have still done unto me. *Answer*: That is only so with wicked men; for *who else will wrong thee, if thou follow that which is good* (1 Pet. 3:13)? Yet say they do, *thy patient suffering is praiseworthy with God* (1

Pet. 2:19); and, *he will take the matter into his hand*; yea, Christ Jesus, who judgeth not by the sight of the eye, He will *rebuke aright for all the meek of the earth* (Isa. 11:4).

*Objection 3*. But yet thou sayest, This is the way to lose all that a man hath, and to be thrust out of house and harbour. *Answer*: Nothing less; for Christ here saith, *the meek shall inherit the earth*. Doubt not but Christ will make good His word; and therefore if thou respect these outward things, labour to get and exercise the spirit of meekness.

II. *Wherein doth this blessedness of the meek consist*? Namely, *in their inheriting of the earth*. And this is a great happiness, for a man to be lord of the whole earth. But how can this be true, sith many of God's dearest servants have been strangers on this earth (Heb. 11:13), thrust out of house and land, and constrained to wander in mountains and deserts, afflicted and miserable, yea, destitute of convenient food and raiment (Heb. 11:37,38)? *Answer*: The meek are here called inheritors of the earth, not for that they always have the possession thereof; but: First, because God gives a meet and convenient portion of the earth, either to them, or to their posterity; thus He dealt with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they had sufficient for themselves, and a promise of great possessions, which their posterity did enjoy. Secondly, if it fall out that meek persons died in want, or banishment; yet God gives them contentment, which is fully answerable to the inheritance of the earth; so Paul saith to himself, and other apostles (2 Cor. 6:10), they were as men *having nothing, and yet possessing all things*; meaning through contentment, with the peace of a good conscience. Thirdly, the meek have this inheritance in regard of right, being the members of Christ, who is Lord of all. Hence Paul saith to the believing Corinthians (1 Cor. 3:21,22), *All things are yours, whether it be Paul, or Cephas, or the world, things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye Christ's*. Fourthly, the meek are made kings by Christ, and after the last judgment, they shall *rule and reign with Him for evermore* ( Rev. 5:10). And in these two last respects, the meek are more properly said to be the inheritors of the earth.

*Objection*: Yet here it will be said again, that wicked and carnal men are oftentimes the greatest lords of the earth; as Nimrod in his time, and the Turk at this day. *Answer*: The right unto the earth is twofold: civil and

spiritual. Civil right is that which stands good before men by their laws and customs; and in regards thereof, men are called lords of such lands as they have right unto the courts of men; and so the Turk at this day is a mighty lord of a great part of the whole world. Spiritual right is that which is warrantable and approved with God Himself, and such right and title had Adam to all the world, before his fall, which he lost by his sin, both from himself, and all his posterity; but yet in Christ, the same is recovered to all the elect. And of this right Christ here speaketh, when he calleth the meek *inheritors of the earth*; in regard whereof, the Turk and all unbelievers and ungodly persons are usurpers of those things, which otherwise civilly they do lawfully possess.

Here then is an excellent privilege of all the true members of Christ, that in Him they are lords of the earth; whereby:

1. First, we may see how far most men do overshoot themselves in seeking earthly possessions; for the matter is, without all regard of Christ, to hunt after the world. But this is a preposterous course, these man set the cart before the horses; for seeing all our right to the earth was lost by Adam, and is only recovered by Christ, doubtless till we have part in Christ, we cannot with the comfort of a good conscience, either purchase or possess any inheritance upon earth. In regard of certainty, men desire to hold their lands *in capite*, that is, in the prince, as being the best tenure; but if we would have a sure title, and hold a right *in capite*, we must labour to become true members of Christ, and hold our right in Him, for He is the *prince of the kings of the earth* (Rev. 1:5), and Lord of all the world; and till we be in Christ, we shall never have an holy and sanctified right to any worldly possessions.

2. Secondly, this serves for a bridle against all immoderate cares for the world; for if we be members of Christ, and meek persons, then the inheritance of the earth is ours; what need have we then to care so much for worldly pelf [*wealth*], as most men do, who never think they have enough?

3. Thirdly, this serves for a just rebuke of all those that seek to enrich themselves by cruelty, lying, fraud and oppression; for if thou be in Christ, thou hast right to the whole world; what need then hast thou to use unlawful means to get that which is thine own? But sure it is, thou hast no part in

Christ, while thou givest thyself to these courses; for if thou hadst, thou wouldest be content with whatsoever God sends in the use of lawful means (Phil. 4:11).

4. Lastly, hence all God's children may learn to comfort their hearts against the fear of any punishment for the name of Christ; for keep Christ sure, and whithersoever thou art sent, thou art upon thine own ground; for the whole earth is thine, and in Christ one day thou shalt possess it, when all tyrants shall be banished into hell. Now being on thine own ground, what need hast thou to fear?

# 5:6

"*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled*." Matthew 5:6

Here is the fourth rule touching blessedness, which is also mentioned by St Luke, yet something different from this of Matthew, for according to Luke, Christ directeth His speech to His disciples, and speaks of bodily hunger, saying, *Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be satisfied*; as if He should say, You my disciples do now suffer hunger and thirst, but this shall not prejudice your happy estate, for hereafter you shall be satisfied. Now Matthew goes a degree further, and layeth down a cause and reason why they being hungry are blessed; not simply, for that they were pinched with bodily hunger, but became withal, they did further spiritually in their souls hunger after righteousness. Thus then the two evangelists do agree; St Luke lays down this rule generally, but Matthew propounds therein the reason of this blessedness.

This rule, as the former, contains two parts; first, who are blessed; secondly, wherein this blessedness doth consist.

I. For the first, the parties blessed are such as *hunger and thirst after righteousness*. The exposition of these words is diverse. Some give this sense: Blessed are those that are grieved with the injuries that abound in the world, and withal do in heart and soul long for the amendment and reformation thereof. Others expound the words thus: Blessed are those that by wrongs and injuries are deprived of their right in this world, and so are constrained to hunger and thirst after that which is their own, hoping by patience to obtain the same. But there is a third exposition which doth more fully open to us the meaning of Christ; to wit, by *righteousness* we may well understand in the first place, *the righteousness of faith*, whereby a sinner is justified through grace in Christ, and so stands righteous before God, having the pardon of all his sins. Besides this, we may understand *inward righteousness*, whereby a man is sanctified and made holy, having God's image renewed in him by the spirit of grace, which was lost by the

fall of our first parents. And that this imputed and renewed righteousness may here be understood, will appear by these reasons: First, in such places of Scripture where like sentences are repeated, we must understand not civil righteousness, but justification, sanctification, regeneration; as (Isa. 55:1) *Ho everyone that thirsteth, come to the waters, and buy without silver*; and (John 7:37) *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink*; and (Rev. 21:6) *I will give to him that is athirst, to drink of the waters of life freely*; all which places are one in substance; for by *waters* we must understand *righteousness*, which is that spiritual grace of God, the fountain of all blessings, whereby sinners are justified and sanctified. Secondly, that which is most of all to be desired, must needs be the most excellent righteousness; but this righteousness here mentioned is most to be desired; for Christ saith men shall hunger and thirst after it, thereby expressing a most earnest and vehement desire; and therefore by *righteousness*, we must understand God's grace and mercy in Christ, absolving a sinner from the guilt and punishment of his sins, with sanctification the fruit thereof, whereby he is purged from corruption. Secondly, by *hungering and thirsting*, we must understand two things: First, a sorrow and grief of heart in regard of a man's own sins and unrighteousness; secondly, an earnest and constant desire of the righteousness of God, that is, of justification and sanctification in Christ. Answerable to these two things which are in bodily hunger and thirst, to wit, first a pain in the bottom of the stomach for want of meat and drink; secondly, an earnest desire and appetite after meat and drink, to be satisfied therewith. And blessed is he that is so grieved for his own unrighteousness, and withal hath an earnest desire after reconciliation with God in Christ, and after true regeneration and sanctification by the Holy Ghost; for this is true spiritual hunger and thirst, whereto belongs this gracious promise: that in due time he shall be satisfied and filled with plenty of God's mercy and grace, wherein this happiness doth consist, which is the second branch of this rule. This I take to be the true and proper meaning of these words, whereupon the two former expositions depend; for he that is thus spiritually an hungred, is oft deprived of his own right among men, and so is said to hunger and thirst after that which is his own in this world. Again, such a man doth unfeignedly grieve at the iniquities that be in the world, and withal, his heart doth most earnestly desire reformation thereof, both in himself and others.

II.

1. First, this sentence must be remembered as a storehouse of true comfort in all grievous temptations, but especially against these three: the want of faith, the smallness of sanctification, and despair.

1. For the first, many in God's church have a true care to please God in all things, and to live in no sin against their conscience; and yet they find in themselves much distrust and despair of God's mercy, they feel more doubting than faith; whereupon they are brought to doubt of their election and state of grace before God. Now how may such be relieved, and be well persuaded of their good estate? *Answer*: The way is laid down by our Saviour Christ in this rule: *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness*. For here He teacheth that those are blessed who are displeased with their own doubting and unbelief, if they have a true earnest desire to be purged from the distrust, and to believe in God through Christ. Indeed this desire of faith and to believe, is not true faith in nature, but in God's acceptance; for God respects them for this true desire, as if they had faith. And they are blessed, because they shall have plenty of faith, and assurance of grace and favour with God in Christ; for it is mercy and grace with God, to hunger after grace and mercy, when the heart feels the want thereof. But yet such persons must be admonished, that they shew the truth of the desire by a constant endeavouring in the means which God hath sanctified for the obtaining of a true and lively faith in Christ, wherewith they may be satisfied.

2. The second temptation is from the smallness of sanctification. Many there be that endeavour to please God, making conscience of all sin, and yet they find in themselves an exceeding measure of rebellious corruption, much ignorance in their minds, perverseness in their wills, and forwardness in their affections; yea, a continual proneness unto all manner of sin; and on the contrary, they can perceive but small fruits of sanctification; the old man they feel rushing in them like a mighty giant, but the new man so weak and feeble, that they can hardly discern any spiritual life. And hereupon they are sore troubled with temptations, yea, oftentimes driven to doubt whether they have any

true grace at all. This cannot but be an heavy case, and yet here is true comfort for them; for Christ calleth them blessed (not that are filled with righteousness, but) who hunger and thirst after it; that is, who feeling the want of righteousness in themselves, do earnestly desire it in their souls. These persons therefore, that feel in themselves a sea of corruption, and scarce a drop of sanctification, must truly examine their own hearts, how they stand affected to these things; for if they be truly grieved for their corruption and rebellion, and withal do earnestly desire grace and sanctification, using the means constantly, whereby they may be freed from the one and endued with the other; then they have wherewith they may comfort their hearts, for Christ calls them blessed; and so they are, for in due time they shall be satisfied; and in the meantime, their will and desire is accepted of God in Christ for the deed itself.

3. The third temptation is to despair; when a man after the breach of conscience by some grievous sin, is plunged into this gulf, that he thinks verily hell is prepared for him, and he must needs be damned; what remedy now in such a case? *Answer*: Some think the only way is to propound unto him the grounds of universal grace; as that, because he is a man, Christ died for him, for Christ died for all; but this is a slender comfort, for the despairing conscience will thus reply, God indeed hath done His part, but I refused God's grace when it was offered. Therefore another way of comfort must be sought; which is, by proving unto him out of God's Word that he is within the Covenant, and that the promises of grace and life do belong unto him. For the effecting whereof, one main ground is here propounded; to wit, that though a man want all righteousness, yet if he truly hunger after it, he is blessed; and the right applying of this ground is this: search must be made whether the party thus despairing, hath in him any spark of true grace or no; and this will be known by these two demands: first, whether he dislike his sins because they are sins? Secondly, whether he truly desires to be reconciled unto God, to repent and believe in Christ? Now if his conscience tells him that these things be in him indeed, then he is brought within the compass of this blessedness here pronounced by Christ, and hath title to this promise, that he shall be satisfied; for he that is grieved for his sin, because thereby he hath

offended God, and withal hath an earnest desire of mercy and grace to repent and believe, is truly blessed. And therefore it may be said unto him: Seeing thou findest in thy heart this grief for sin and desire of grace, thou art blessed, and shall be satisfied. Thus may the distressed soul receive comfort. But as for them that live in sin, here is no comfort, for they have no true dislike of sin, no purpose or desire to repent thereof.

2. Secondly, as this rule of Christ ministereth comfort to some, so it declareth the miserable estate of others; to wit, of all those that want this spiritual hunger after righteousness, for they have no title to the promise of heavenly satisfaction by God's mercy in Christ. And yet generally this is the estate of men everywhere; for after riches, pleasures, honours and preferments, men hunger and thirst, as the drought in summer doth after rain; but rare it is to find a man that savourest the things of God, and thirsteth after His righteousness, and yet such only are blessed.

3. Thirdly, this rule of Christ serves for sure direction, whereby we may know our estate before God in regard of true happiness. If we hunger and thirst after righteousness, we are surely blessed; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Now this spiritual hunger is known by two things: First, by an unfeigned hearty sorrow and grief for sins past; where this is wanting, true spiritual hunger and thirst is not. Secondly, by an earnest desire of God's mercy in Christ for the pardon of sin and for sanctification, testified by a constant endeavour in the use of means to come thereby. He that hath these things in him may assure himself that he is blessed, for these be the motions of God's Spirit, and the true pledges of His grace. Hereby then we must try our estate, if these things be in us, we have wherein we may rejoice; but if our hearts be dead, and hard, so as we have no touch for our sins, no hungering after the blood of Christ, nor desire of sanctification; then are we void of grace, and so most miserable; for the smallest measure of true grace that can be, is to hunger after grace in the want thereof.

4. Lastly, this rule of blessedness must admonish us, as we tender our salvation, so to labour for this spiritual hunger in our souls, after reconciliation with God in Christ for all our sins past, and for the sanctification of our hearts and lives by His Word and Spirit. We may hear,

read and talk of God's Word, and yet all to no end, unless we be in heaviness for our own unrighteousness, and from our hearts do send forth sighs and groans after mercy and grace in Christ. For what availeth it to have wit and learning, honour and riches, if the soul be void of mercy and grace in Christ? Which doubtless it is, while this spiritual hunger is wanting in the heart. And to move us to labour for this hunger, the reason annexed is very effectual, namely, the Lord's promise that they shall be filled, which also shews wherein this blessedness doth consist. Now they that thus hunger are filled, partly in this life, by receiving the testimony of the Spirit touching reconciliation with God in Christ, and some fruits of sanctification whereby the old man is mortified and the new man is renewed in them; but principally at the end of this life, when they shall be fully justified and sanctified, and have God's image perfectly renewed in them.

# 5:7

"*Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy*." Matthew 5:7

This verse containeth the fifth rule or precept of our Saviour Christ touching true happiness, in which observe two points: first, who be blessed; secondly, wherein this blessedness consists.

I. For the first, the parties blessed are *the merciful*. And that we may the better know them, shewing what mercy is; then, what be the chief duties thereof.

1. First, *mercy is an holy compassion of heart, whereby a man is moved to help another in his misery*.

1. First, I call it a compassion of heart, because it makes one man to put on the person of another, and to be grieved for the miseries of another, as if they were his own; and therefore it is called the *bowels of compassion* (1 John 3:17), because when a man's heart is touched therewith, his very liver and entrails do stir in his body and are roused within him (Hos. 11:8) as the prophet speaketh; and he is affected, as though the bowels of him that is in misery were in his body.

2. Secondly, I call it an (holy) compassion, to distinguish it from foolish pity, whereby a man doth unlawfully tender him that is in deserved misery; such was Ahab's mercy to Benhadad (1 Kin. 20:30ff.), and Saul's in sparing Agag (1 Sam. 15:9), whereas the express commandment of God was to the contrary. But such mercy and compassion as God approveth, is a fruit of His Spirit, and a virtue commended and commanded in the Word of God.

3. Thirdly, this virtue of mercy stirreth and moveth the heart to help another that is in misery; for help in misery is a notable fruit of true compassion. Neither can these be severed; for in the compassion of the heart, and in the act of relief, stands true mercy; and therefore John

saith (1 John 3:17), *He that seeeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him*? Whereby also we may see that no work of mercy is shewed to any man in misery, but that which cometh from compassion, and thus we see what mercy is.

2. Secondly, the duties of mercy are answerable to man's misery. Now man's misery is either in his soul or in his body. The greater miseries of man are in his soul; as ignorance, impenitence, and trouble of conscience. Man's bodily miseries are sickness, thirst, nakedness etc. and to these works of mercy are answerable. Some therefore concern the soul, and some the body. Mercy towards the soul is when a man is careful for the salvation of another, using means to bring a man from spiritual darkness unto light, from the power of Satan unto God, from the state of sin and the danger of hell fire, to the state of grace in true faith and repentance, and so to life eternal. And look how far the soul is more excellent than the body, so far doth this work exceed any work of mercy that concerns the body. Mercy towards the body is called *alms* or *relief*, whereby a man's outward necessity, for food, raiment or such like, is supplied. That this is a work of mercy is manifest (Isa. 58:10) where *the relieving of the hungry is the pouring out of the soul unto him*; and St John maketh the not relieving of our brother in need, to be *the shutting of the door of compassion from him* (1 John 3:17).

Now by this which hath been said concerning mercy and the work thereof, we may see who is a merciful man; namely, *such an one as hath his heart touched with compassion towards the misery of another, and thereby is moved to help and relieve him in soul and body, according to his estate*; and such a man is blessed by the testimony of Christ Himself, howsoever in the world he may be despised.

1. First, here we have to consider, what a number of miserable and cursed persons do live even in the bosom of God's church; for if this rule of Christ be true, then unmerciful men are accursed. Now such are common among us. The richer sort which abound in outward blessings, think themselves happy; but if they be unmerciful, they are wretched. And such are all those that for the maintenance of their outward pomp and bravery, spoil the poor that live under them, by enclosing of commons, racking of rents,

unreasonable fines, etc.; or for the satisfying of their vain pleasure and delight, bestow more upon hawks and hounds than on the poor. Such a wretched person also is the cornmonger, who hath his barns full, and his garners full, and yet suffereth the poor to want bread, waiting still for a dearer time. Such also are our common usurers, engrossers and forestallers of needful commodities whatsoever; all these seek themselves, and have no mercy on them that are in misery. Yea, such likewise are those householders who spend their time and wealth in some disordered course, as whoring, gaming, drinking, or such like, and so neglect their family; these deny the faith, and are worse than Jews and Turks (1 Tim. 5:8), nay, than brute beasts, for they are merciful towards their own. It were an easy thing thus to shew through all estates, the great multitude of miserable persons; for now the common proverb is become the common practice: *Every man for himself, and God for us all*.

2. Secondly, seeing that *the merciful man is blessed*, we must learn to put on tender mercy, or the bowels of compassion towards those that be in misery. And to move us hereunto, let us mark these things:

1. First, the state of the merciful is here pronounced blessed of Christ.

2. Secondly, mercy is a gift of the Spirit, and the grace of God's elect (Col. 3:12), which always accompanieth the happy estate of those that be in Christ; for the power of grace doth change their carnal nature (Isa. 11:6,7).

3. Thirdly, hereby we become like unto God our heavenly Father, who is *the father of mercies* (2 Cor. 1:3).

4. Fourthly, hereby we are made instruments of God's mercy to them that be in misery; for God conveys His blessings unto His poor creatures ordinarily by means. We count it an high honour and a great favour to be the king's almoner [*official distributor of alms*]. Oh then, how great is this dignity, to be the almoner to the God of heaven, to disperse His goodness and mercies among the children of men? And hereto we are advanced, if we help the poor that be in misery.

5. Fifthly, the exercise of mercy commendeth our religion, not only before men, but unto God, for (Jam. 1:27) *pure religion and undefiled is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their distress*; and (Hos. 6:6) *God will have mercy and not sacrifice*; therefore the apostle bids (Heb. 13:16) *to do good, and to distribute, forget not; for with such sacrifice God is pleased*. (Isa. 58:6,7) *This is the fast which God requires, to loose the bands of wickedness, to take off the heavy burden, and to let the oppressed go free, to take off every yoke*; and on the other side, *to bread thy bread unto the hungry, to bring the poor that wanders into thine house, and to cover the naked*, etc.

And because this duty is so necessary and excellent, I will propound certain rules to be observed for furtherance herein.

1. First, we must exercise three of our senses: seeing, hearing and feeling, in other men's miseries:

1. For seeing (Deut 15:3), we must be very wary it grieves us not to look upon our poor brother, but we must see and behold his misery and distress, whether it be in soul or body. This is the Lord's practice. Israel is oppressed in Egypt, and the Lord saith (Exod. 3:7,9), *I have surely seen the trouble of my people, and the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them*. And we must be followers of God, as dear children, and learn to visit them that be in misery, either through sickness, imprisonment, poverty or such like; for sight will stir up in a man a sense and compassion of others' miseries. Hence it is said (Matt. 14:14) that, *when Jesus saw a great multitude, He was moved with compassion towards them*. And who can see a poor distressed person to lie in straw, or on the ground, without needful relief, as many a one would not suffer his dog to lie, and not to be moved with compassion?

2. Secondly, if we cannot come to see a man's misery, then we must be content to hear of it, and give heed and credit to the true reports that others make thereof unto us. Thus did Nehemiah, hearing of the affliction of the residue of the captivity (Neh. 1:3,4; 2:3), *he wept and mourned, fasted and prayed, and sought for relief for them at the king's hands*.

3. Thirdly, for feeling, if the Lord shall afflict our bodies with sickness, or our souls with temptations, we must be willing to suffer the same patiently, that thereby we may be fitted to take more compassion upon others in like case, and to comfort them the better. Paul saith of himself and Timothy (2 Cor. 1:8) that *in Asia, they were pressed with affliction above measure, passing strength, so as they altogether doubted of life*; and yet (he saith, v.4) *the Lord deals mercifully with them; that they might be able to comfort others which were in any affliction, with the same comfort wherewith God had comforted them*.

2. Secondly, we must make our particular callings wherein we live, the instruments of mercy, and in doing the duties thereof, shew forth compassion towards others. This rule is of great use, and therefore it will not be amiss to shew the practice of it in particular. The magistrate must rule and govern in mercy; and the minister must preach in mercy; every sermon must be a work of compassion towards the people, not only for the matter which it containeth, but for the manner of his delivery, and in the scope and drift which he aimeth at. He which preacheth otherwise, doth bar himself of all mercy, even then, when he entreats of mercy unto others. There is a carnal and human kind of preaching which nowadays takes place, wherein nothing is so much regarded as the vaunting of wit, memory and learning, by fine contrived sentences, multiplicity of quotations, variety of allegations of Fathers, Schoolmen, and other learning; but herein is no mercy nor compassion to the poor soul. It is said indeed that none condemn this kind of preaching, but they that cannot attain unto it; but the truth is that God will have His Word delivered (1 Cor. 2:4) *not in the enticing speech of man's wisdom, but in the plain evidence of the spirit and of power*; and therefore a man cannot with good conscience apply himself to such kind of preaching, else no doubt a man of mean gifts might find it more easy to attain unto, than to the true preaching of Christ crucified.

3. Thirdly, every private man must make the duties of his calling, works of mercy; the rich man must know himself to be, not a lord, but a steward of God's blessings, and therefore must employ and dispense the same in mercy, by giving and lending unto the poor freely, as God

shall minister unto him just occasion. The tradesman must buy and sell in mercy, dealing justly with the rich, and shewing liberality to the poor. The master must only in mercy use the labour of his servant; and the servant thus in mercy do service to his master, for conscience towards God. And happy were it with all estates, if this rule of mercy were observed; the want whereof, is the bane of all societies.

4. Fourthly, for the more cheerful practice of mercy, we must lay aside some part of our goods for the relief of them that be in misery. The Jews were commanded to set apart the firstfruits of their corn and cattle for the Lord's altar; but in the New Testament the altar is ceased, and the poor come instead thereof; and therefore we must now bequeath something for their relief. Many are given to great excess in fare and in attire; but they may do well to abate some part thereof and bestow it on the poor, for hereby will the rest be sanctified to their more free and comfortable use; nay, in case of necessity, we ought to sequester some part of our own necessaries for the refreshing of the poor; so did the church of Macedonia, even beyond their power, give to the relief of the afflicted brethren (2 Cor. 8:3). Men are exceeding cold in charity, and one main cause thereof is want of observing this rule, in setting apart some thing, according as God shall bless us in our callings, for the relief of the poor.

II. The second point to be considered in this rule is, wherein this blessedness doth consist; namely, *in the obtaining of mercy*. He that shews mercy, shall find mercy, both with God and man. Where:

1. First, we may see the error of the church of Rome in their doctrine of merits; for they make a special part of human satisfaction to consist in alms-deeds and relieving of the poor, teaching that a man may hereby inherit eternal life. But they err grossly; for then Christ would not have said, *blessed are the merciful, for they shall find mercy*; but rather thus: *they shall find justice*; for that which comes of merit, is due by right.

2. Secondly, hereby we may see what to think of our church and nation, in respect of the true title to God's mercy; for only the merciful shall find mercy. Now it were easy to go through all orders and conditions of men among us, and therein to shew abundance of unmercifulness and cruelty; so

as we may justly be called a cruel people, and therefore cannot look for mercy at God's hand; for *to the merciful shall be judgment without mercy* (Jam. 2:13). This is evident by the Lord's dealing with His people; for all their sacrifices and duties of religion were abomination unto the Lord, because *their hands were full of blood* (Isa. 1:11,12,15); and because they had no mercy, therefore they were led into captivity, as we may see at large, Jer. 5:28; Ezek. 9:9,10; and Zech. 9:12. Now we being in the same case with them for unmercifulness and cruelty, have no doubt deserved long since the same punishment; even that the enemy should deprive us both of gospel and peace, and of all our prosperity and wealth. What then shall we do? Surely we must humble ourselves by prayer and fasting unto the Lord, if not publicly, yet privately; every man and every family apart, even for this one sin of unmercifulness; and withal in this humiliation, begin to practice mercy by bestowing that upon the poor, which we spare from our bodies in the day of our fast.

# 5:8

"*Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God*." Matthew 5:8

These words contain the sixth rule of Christ touching true happiness; wherein, as in the former, observe two points: the person blessed, and wherein their blessedness consists.

I. The persons blessed are thus qualified: they are *pure in heart*. This is diversely expounded. By *pure in heart*, some understand those that are chaste, those that are simple hearted, void of guile and deceit. But the words will bear a more general sense, and betoken such as are holy in heart, having their hearts purged from the defilement of their sins, and be in part renewed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost; and that they are so to be taken may appear (Psa. 24:4), whence these words are borrowed; where also the prophet expoundeth the pure in heart to be such as have not lifted up their minds to vain things (Psa. 2:1). To which purpose the author to the Hebrews saith, *Follow peace with all men, without which no man can see God* (Heb. 12:14). Again, the intent of our Saviour Christ in this place, was no doubt to cross the Pharisaical conceit of those times, whereby men did content themselves with outward holiness, as sufficient to true happiness; and therefore He saith, *blessed are the pure*, not outwardly, but inwardly *in heart*. Further, by *heart*, we are to understand the soul, with the parts and faculties thereof; that is, the mind, the conscience, the will and the affections. And that we may yet conceive more clearly of this point, we are to search out two things: first, in what manner, then in what measure the heart is made pure.

1. For the first, the purifying of the heart is by a twofold action of the Holy Ghost:

    1. First, by creating in the mind a saving faith, which unites a man unto Christ, and as an hand applieth Christ's purity, that is, His obedience to the heart; so Peter speaketh of the Gentiles in the council at Jerusalem, that *by faith the Lord purified their hearts* (Acts 15:9).

2. Secondly, when a man is in Christ, the Holy Ghost purgeth and sanctifieth the heart inwardly, by mortifying all the corruptions in the mind, will and affections, and by putting into it inward holiness, whereby the image of Christ is renewed therein. And this our Saviour Christ expresseth (John 15:2), when He saith that *the Father purgeth everyone that bringeth forth fruit in him*. Now unto these the Holy Ghost addeth an excellent grace of *Christian resolution*, whereby a man hath a constant purpose not to sin against God any way, either in thought, word or deed; but in all things to please God continually; so as if at any time he sin, it is against his holy resolution.

2. Now for the measure of this purification, it is only in part in this life; for the grace of sanctification is not perfect till death, as the apostle saith, *We receive but the first-fruits of the Spirit* (Rom. 8:23); that is, not the tenths, but as an handful of corn to a whole field; the soul is freed from the punishment and guilt of sin, and in some sort purged from corruption, but not wholly. This we must observe the more diligently, because the papists teach otherwise; to wit, that after baptism and regeneration, sin is so taken away, that there is in man nothing that God can hate; but experience in every child of God shews this to be false. The chief ground of their opinion is this: that if sin properly called, should remain in the regenerate, then God should repute a man to be just, which is a sinner. But we answer that God never reputeth an impenitent sinner just, but only the repentant and regenerate, which are by faith in Christ, and so in effect are no sinners, because though corruption remain in them in part, yet it is not imputed to their persons. Besides, in the act of their conversion, corruption hath received that deadly wound whereof it shall never recover, but daily die till it be quite abolished, and therefore doth it not reign in them. And thus we see in what manner and measure the heart is purified, whereby the pure in heart may be thus described: *They are such as believe the pardon of their sins in Christ, and be in part renewed in their souls by the Holy Ghost, having their natural corruptions mortified and abolished in some measure, and the graces of God's image repaired in them, and a godly resolution wrought in their hearts, not to sin against God in anything*.

Considering that the pure in heart be blessed, we must search ourselves and see whether our hearts be qualified with this grace. As in former times, so at

this day inward purity is much neglected. The ancient Jews stood upon their legal purity and righteousness, and the Pharisees after them, relied upon their outward holiness; and the Holy Ghost foretold (2 Tim. 3:1,5) that *in the latter days shall come perilous times*, by reason of sundry sins, whereof this is one, that *men should content themselves with a shadow and shew of godliness, and in truth deny the power thereof*. And doth not experience shew this to be true among us? For the pure heart is so little regarded, that the seeking after it is turned to a by-word and a matter of reproach. Who are so much branded with vile terms of Puritans and Precisionists as those that most endeavour to get and keep the purity of heart in a good conscience? Again, the general ignorance that everywhere abounds, doth plainly argue the want of this grace; for what can be in the heart but impurity and iniquity, where there is no knowledge of the will of God in the mind? And for such as have more knowledge than the rest, generally they are not answerable unto it in practice; for take a view of all the markets in the land, and you shall hardly find a man that is to sell his grain that will be brought to abate one jot of the highest price, no not to the poor that stand in extreme need; which as it argueth a bloody and cruel heart, so it sheweth our times to be evil days, wherein men profess much, and do nought; which sin will draw God's judgment upon us, and cause the gospel to be removed and given to a nation that with profession will join the power of godliness in heart and life. What befell the fig tree (Matt. 21:19), whereon Christ sought fruit, and found nothing but leaves? Was it not accursed? And how shall we think to escape, if we be like unto it? *For the earth that drinketh in the rain that falleth upon it, and yet bringeth forth briers and thorns, is very near unto cursing, whose end is to be burned* (Heb. 6:7,8).

Secondly, if the pure in heart be blessed, then we must labour to practice the counsel of the prophet (Isa. 1:16), *Wash you, make you clean*, and (8:13) *sanctify the Lord in your hearts*; yea, as the apostle saith (2 Cor. 7:1) *Let us purge ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.* Indeed, it is the work of God to purify the heart (Acts 15:9); man of himself can do no more than a blackamoor [*negro*] can change his skin; but yet everyone that would feel in himself this work of God, must use the means wherein the Spirit doth purge the heart. First, therefore, we must humble ourselves unfeignedly for all the sins and corruptions of our life already past, and for the time to come, grow to a resolute purpose not to sin against God in

anything; which we must testify by a godly endeavour to obey Him in all things; for a pure heart, and a purpose to live in any one sin, cannot stand together; but this constant purpose not to sin, is a notable grace, and an infallible token of a renewed and sanctified heart.

II. The second point in this rule is, wherein this blessedness consists; namely in this: that *they shall see God*; for the understanding hereof, two points must be handled. First, how God may be seen; secondly, how the seeing of God is true happiness.

1. For the first, the apostle saith (1 John 4:12), *No man can see God at any time*; yea, farther, Paul calleth Him (1 Tim. 6:15,16) *King of kings, whom never man saw, neither can see*. We must therefore know that there is a twofold sight in man, the sight of the eye, and of the mind.

1. By the sight of the eye no man can see God in His essence and substance, which is most spiritual and so invisible; for the eye seeth nothing but things corporal and visible; a man by his eye cannot see his own soul, and much less the substance of God.

*Objection 1*: But Abraham (Gen. 17:1) and Moses (Exod. 33:11) saw God, for He appeared unto them. *Answer*: They saw Him not in His nature and substance, but in certain created images and similitudes wherein God for that time did testify His presence unto them. Some indeed say that though a man cannot see God in this life, yet in the life to come, he shall see Him with his bodily eyes. But this opinion is not true; for though the body shall then be perfectly sanctified, and the eye sanctified, yea glorified, yet still it remains a true body and a true eye, and therefore cannot see the essence of God, which is invisible to the eye of flesh.

*Objection 2*. *I shall see God in my flesh* (saith Job) *and mine eyes shall behold Him* (Job 19:26,27). *Answer*: He speaketh there of God his Redeemer, who is not God simply, but God incarnate; for the word translated *Redeemer*, signifieth one allied to us in blood. Now no man doubteth but God in Christ may be seen (John 14:9), *He that hath seen me, hath seen my Father*.

*Objection 3*. (1 Cor. 13:12) *We shall see Him face to face*. *Answer*: God hath no face, and therefore that cannot be understood literally; but thereby is signified that we shall have plentiful knowledge of God, as we have of Him when we see face to face.

*Objection 4*. If we shall not see God with our eyes, then they serve to no use in heaven. *Answer*: God forbid; for besides the glorious company of all the saints, we shall therewith behold our Lord Jesus Christ, who redeemed us by His blood, and made us kings and priests unto our God, to whom we shall sing praise, and honour, and glory for evermore (Rev. 5:12).

2. The second kind of sight is of the *mind*, which is nothing but the knowledge or understanding of the mind, and that is twofold; imperfect in this life, and perfect in the life to come. In this life the mind knows not God's essence or substance, by only by the effects; as by His Word and sacraments; and by His creatures; and indeed the special sight we have of God in this life, is by these His affects to conceive in our minds how God is effected to us; as that God is our Father, and Christ our Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost our Sanctifier. The perfect vision of God is reserved to the life to come, where God's elect shall see Him in regard of His substance; for *we shall see Him as He is* (1 John 3:2). Yet that we be not deceived herein, we must know that perfect sight is twofold: simple and comprehensive. Simple perfect sight is when man sees a thing wholly as it is in itself; and thus God is not seen by the mind of man. Comprehensive sight is when the creature seeth God, so far forth as it is capable of his knowledge; and thus shall men see God in the world to come perfectly, and be filled therewith, though they know Him not wholly, as He is in Himself; even as a vessel cast into the sea may be perfectly full of water, though it receive not all the water in the sea.

But some will ask, How shall the mind see God? *Answer*: The manner is such as neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither can any man tell, but they only that have fruition of it in heaven; yet certainly such it is as shall give full contentment to everyone that doth enjoy it. But it shall be far better for us to seek for a pure heart, whereby we may be assured of this blessed sight of God, than curiously to search out how we shall see Him; for to

them that be of a pure heart, God will reveal Himself perfectly, to their joy unspeakable and glorious.

2. The second point is, how this seeing of God can be true happiness. *Answer*: A man that hath been blind will count himself happy when he receives his sight; and he that hath long lien in a dark dungeon will count it a blessed thing to be brought out to see the light of the sun. Now if this bodily light be so comfortable, how endless is the joy of that heavenly light which cometh from God Himself? The Queen of Sheba (1 Kin. 10:8) counted those servants blessed that stood before Solomon to hear his wisdom; then doubtless the sons of God must needs be happy, that stand before the Lord, hearing His wisdom and beholding His glory; for *in His presence is fulness of joy, and at His right hand are pleasures for evermore* (Psa. 16:11). Moses is renowned with all posterity for this prerogative, that God vouchsafed to *let him see His back parts* (Exod. 33:23); and Christ's disciples were so ravished with a glimpse of God's glory in His transfiguration, that they would needs abide there still (Matt. 17:4). Oh then, what glory is it to see Him as He is? Doubtless this sight of God is true happiness.

But then (will some man say) the devils shall be happy, for they shall see Him at the last day. *Answer*: Their sight shall be their sorrow, for they shall see Him as a terrible judge, not as a Saviour, with apprehension and approbation of His love and mercy, which is the sight here meant; as the apostle saith (1 Cor 13:12), *We shall see face to face, and know as we are known*. So then the meaning of these words is this: they shall see God by His effects in this life, and perfectly in the world to come, with approbation of His love and mercy.

This gracious promise must be observed as a ground of special comfort to all God's children; for they that endeavour after purity of heart, shall suffer much contempt and reproach in the world; but they must not be dismayed, for God will look upon them, and shew Himself favourably unto them. *He will appear to their joy, and their adversaries shall be ashamed* (Isa. 66:5). Therefore they may say with David (Psa. 118:6), *I will not fear what man can do unto me*.

Secondly, is it true happiness to see God? Then in this world we must strive to come as near unto God as possible we can; for the nearer we come unto Him, the more we see Him, and the nearer we are to our perfect happiness. Now that we may come near unto God, we must set God always before our eyes; that is, wheresoever we are, and whatsoever we do, we must persuade our hearts that we are in His presence. This was David's practice (Psa. 16:8), *I have set the Lord always before me*. This persuasion will make us to walk with God, as Enoch did, who for this is said to *please God* (Heb. 11:5).

Thirdly, this must allure our hearts towards all those means wherein God shews Himself unto His children. The Lord revealed Himself in His sanctuary unto His people, and hereupon David was ravished with desire to God's courts (Psa. 27:4; Psa. 48:1,2). And the like affection must we have to God's Word and sacraments. Therein He shews His beauty, as in His sanctuary; and therefore we must labour therein to see the goodness and mercy of God toward us, using them as pledges of His grace and love in Christ; yea, we must endeavour to see Him in all His creatures, as His wisdom, power and goodness to usward; this is a notable step to our perfect bliss.

# 5:9

"*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God*." Matthew 5:9

Here is the seventh rule and precept of Christ touching true happiness; wherein observe, first, who are blessed; secondly, wherein this blessedness consists.

I. The parties blessed are *peacemakers*. By *peace* we must understand concord and agreement between man and man. Now peace is twofold: good or evil. Good peace is that which stands with good conscience and true religion. This was among the converts in the primitive church (Acts 4:32), who *lived together, and were all of one heart, and one soul*. Evil peace is an agreement and concord in evil, as in the practice of any sin against God's commandments. In a word, evil peace is such as cannot stand with true religion and good conscience. Hence Christ spake (Matt. 10:34), saying, *I came not to send peace, but a sword*; that is, division by means of the doctrine of the gospel. Now in this place, good peace is the quality of those parties that be blessed. Further, by *peacemakers*, two sorts of men are to be understood: First, all such as have care, so much as in them lieth, to have peace with all men, good and bad. Secondly, such as not only themselves be at peace with others, but also do labour to reconcile parties at variance, and to make peace between man and man. Both these sorts are blessed, that is, they are in a happy state and condition, because this gift of peacemaking is a grace of God's Spirit in them alone who are blessed; for where God's Spirit worketh peace of conscience towards God in Christ, there the same Spirit doth move the party to seek peace with all men; as also to make peace between those that are at variance, so far forth as it may stand with religion and a good conscience. Yet here are certain questions to be scanned touching peace, which will give great light to the better understanding of this rule:

*Question 1*. Seeing peacemakers are blessed, why should they be blamed which seek to make peace between papists and Protestants, by reconciling

these two religions? *Answer*: Because this is not good peace, for there is no more concord between these two religions than is between light and darkness. Whereas it is said, they differ not in substance but in circumstances, both having the same Word, the same creed and sacraments; we must know that notwithstanding all this, yet by necessary consequence of their doctrine and religion, they do quite overturn the foundation of the Bible, of the creed and sacraments; as in the points of justification by works, of human satisfaction, of worshipping saints and images, and their massing sacrifice and priesthood, may soon appear. But they have the same baptism with us? *Answer*: Baptism severed from the preaching of the Word is no sufficient note of a true church; for the Samaritans had circumcision, and yet the Lord saith (Hos. 1:9), they were not His people. Again, they hold the outward form of baptism, but they overturn the inward power by denying justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ. Thirdly, baptism is preserved in the church of Rome, not for their sakes, but for the hid church which God hath kept to Himself, even in the midst of all popery; so that if they return to us, we shall accord; otherwise we may not go to them, lest we forsake the Lord.

*Question 2*. If peacemakers be blessed, how can any nation with good conscience make war? *Answer*: The Lord's commandment to have peace with all men, doth not bind men simply, but with this condition (Rom. 12:18), *if it be possible, as much as in us lieth*. But when there is no hope of maintaining peace, then the Lord alloweth a lawful war, such as is for just defence, or claim of our needful due and right; for herein the case standeth with the body politick as it doth with the natural body; while there is hope of health and safety, the physician useth gentle means; but when the case is desperate, then he useth desperate means, and sometimes gives rank poison, to try if by any means life may be saved. And so may the safety of a state be sought by war, when motions of peace will not take place.

*Question 3*. How can suits in law be maintained with good conscience, seeing it can hardly stand with this blessed peace? *Answer*: So long as means of agreement other ways may be had between man and man, suits in law should not be taken up; for Paul blameth the Corinthians, not only (1 Cor. 6:6) for going to law under heathen judges, but because they lawed for light matters upon small occasions (v.7), *why rather* (saith he) *sustain ye*

*not harm*? But if by private means we cannot get or hold our right, we may use the help of law.

*Question 4*. How far forth may one man, or one people, be at peace with another? *Answer*: League or society between man and man, people and people, is twofold: either of concord, or of amity. The league of concord is when men bind themselves in peace one with another; and this may be had between all men, believers or unbelievers, good or bad (Rom. 12:18), *Have peace with all men*, saith the apostle. League of amity is when men or people bind themselves one to another in special love, besides their outward concord; and this kind of peace ought only to be had with true believers. Good king Jehosaphat is greatly blamed of the Lord for making this special league with wicked Ahab; *Wouldest thou help the wicked* (saith the prophet), *and love them that hate the Lord? For this thing the Lord's wrath is upon thee* (2 Chr. 19:2).

1. Whereas peacemakers are blessed, we are to be admonished, if it be possible to have peace with all men, as much as in us lieth; and within the compass of our callings, to avoid all occasions of contention and strife. St Paul's exhortation must here take place (Eph. 4:3), we must *hold the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. To the effecting whereof, three virtues are there propounded for our practice: humility, meekness and longsuffering.

1. Humility is a virtue whereby one man thinks better of another than of himself; for this makes a man think basely of himself, in regard of his own sins and corruptions, whereupon he is content to give place unto others, and to yield of his own right, for the maintaining of peace; when as on the other side, pride causeth men to seek for more than their due; and so causeth contention; as Solomon saith (Prov. 13:10), *only by pride doth man make contention*.

2. Meekness is a virtue whereby a man is gentle in behaviour towards every person, good or bad; this causeth a man to put up injuries, and to forbear wrongs, when occasion of revenge is given him.

3. Longsuffering is a virtue whereby a man doth bear with other men's wants, as moroseness and hastiness, and in bearing yields of his own right, for the maintenance of peace; thus dealt Abraham with Lot,

> when the herdmen were at variance, though he were the superior both for age and place; yet for peace' sake (Gen. 13:8,9), he put Lot to choose the place of his abode, whether on the right hand or on the left.

Besides these, there are many other virtues propounded in the writings of the apostles for the maintaining of peace; to wit, humanity, when a man can so carry himself towards all others, that he can take well all indifferent sayings and doings, and construe them to the best part, if it be possible. This is a most needful virtue for Christian peace, which we must follow, and hereunto frame our nature and affections, which are crooked and rebellious of themselves, that so far as is possible, we may have peace with all men; for peace is the bond of every society, of families, towns and commonwealths, without which no state can endure; and Christian religion commends the same unto us (Jam. 3:17), *The wisdom which is from above, is pure, gentle, peaceable, full of mercy and good fruits*.

2. Secondly, if peacemakers between man and man be blessed, then much more happy are they who make peace between God and man; and these are the faithful ministers of the gospel, which set themselves wholly to reconcile men unto God. So Paul (speaking as a peacemaker) saith (2 Cor. 5:20), *We beseech you as ambassadors of Christ, that ye be reconciled to God*; and therefore all those that by God's grace are set apart for this work, must in sincerity set their hearts, and employ themselves diligently for this end: to reconcile men unto God, and to bring them to peace with God; and in their own conscience, this shall be a seal of the Lord's mercy towards them, whereby they may assure themselves that they be blessed; for howsoever unto some, their ministries may be the savour of death, yet they are always a sweet savour unto God in Christ.

3. Thirdly, hereby we may see what a blessed thing it is, in the day of God's wrath against His people, to stand in the breach, and by earnest prayer to stay His hand, and so to make peace between God and His people by prayer. This was Moses' practice many a time, for which he is renowned with all posterity (Psa. 106:23; Exod. 32:10,11). And so did Aaron (Num. 16:47,48), David (1 Sam. 24:17) and many others. This duty concerneth us, for God hath a controversy with our land for the innumerable crying sins hereof, as blasphemy, oppression, contempt of religion, adulteries, and such

like. Now when we see the great mortality of our brethren, or hear of treasons and conspiracies, and rumours of wars by enemies, who threaten our overthrow; then must we know that God shakes His rod at us, and then especially is everyone to entreat the Lord more earnestly for mercy and reconciliation; for this is a blessed work of peace, to stay the Lord from the destruction of His people. Read Isa. 59:16; 63:5; Jer. 5:7; 12:11; Ezek. 22:30,31; sundry times God complains of the want of such as should stand in the breach before Him for the land, that He should not destroy it. Behold the weight and worth of this duty in Abraham's intercession for Sodom; for he so far prevailed with the Lord (Gen. 18:32), that if there had been ten righteous persons in Sodom, the whole city had been spared for their sakes; but because there were none, so soon as righteous Lot was got out, it was burned with fire and brimstone from heaven ( Gen. 19:24,25).

4. Lastly, if peacemakers be blessed, the peace-breakers are cursed. Many there be of this sort, but above all, they are most notorious who disturb the peace of the land, which by God's mercy we have for many years enjoyed. It may be thought we have none such among us, but only traitors, and such as plot with foreign enemies; but the truth is, all those do disturb our peace that walk after their hearts' lusts in sin and wickedness, as idolaters, blasphemers, oppressors, drunkards and such like; these are the peace-breakers, who cause the Lord to take away the blessing of peace (Jer. 16:5), the Lord saith that He hath *taken His peace from His people*; the reason is (v.12) because *everyone walketh after the stubbornness of his wicked heart, and would not hear Him*; and (Lev. 26:23-25), *The sword of the enemy is sent of God, to avenge the quarrel of His covenant*. It is then our transgression and rebellion against God that will bring war and rebellion into our land; if this were not, our peace would continue for ever; for (Isa. 32:17) *the work of justice shall be peace, quietness and assurance for ever*. And (Isa. 54:14) *in righteousness shalt thou be established, and be far from oppression*. This therefore should move all ungodly persons to repent, and to break off the course of their sins, unless they will continue professed enemies to the peace of the state under which they live.

II. The second point, wherein the blessedness of these peacemakers consists; namely, in that they shall be called the children of God; that is, they shall be they shall be esteemed and reputed for God's children in this

world, of God Himself and all good men; and in the world to come, fully manifested so to be. That this is true happiness will soon appear by the view of the state of every child of God; for they are united unto Christ by the Spirit of grace, by which they are regenerate, and in Christ they are adopted for sons and daughters, and so enjoy God's special grace and favour. Now hereupon they are king's children, having God for their Father, who loves them more tenderly than any earthly parents can love their own children. Secondly, they have Christ for their brother, and so are heirs annexed with Him, having heaven and earth for their possession; (Rev. 1:6) *In Him they are made kings and priests unto God*; and (1 Cor. 6:3) shall be judges of the world at the last day; yea, they have (Heb. 1:14) the holy angels for ministering spirits to attend upon their persons, for their defence from the power of the enemy, which far surpasseth the dignity of any guard of men on earth whatsoever; all things work together for the best unto them, their crosses and afflictions are no curses, but fatherly trials and chastisements; yea, their sins are turned to their good; to them death is no death, but a sweet sleep unto their bodies, and a straight passage for their souls into eternal glory; yea, in the act of death, they have the comfort of life in the joy of the Spirit, and the angels ready, when breath departeth, to carry their souls to heaven.

If this be true happiness, to be called God's children; then they that live after their own wicked lusts, void of all care to keep a good conscience, are miserable and accursed; for they are the children of the devil, serving him in the works of sin, and expressing his image in ungodliness and worldly lusts. It stands men therefore in hand, if they have any care of true happiness, to labour after regeneration; whereby, forsaking the lusts and courses of their former ignorance, and embracing and obeying sincerely the Word of life, they may become God's children, and so happy.

Secondly, hast thou received this grace of God's Spirit, whereby thou art inclined to have peace with all men, and to seek for peace between God and thine own conscience, yea, between the Lord and others? Then comfort thyself, thou art the child of God, these motions come from grace. Flesh and blood bring forth no such fruits. Labour therefore to maintain these good motions, with all other pledges of thine adoption, and so shalt thou grow fully assured of thine own happiness. In this age men make much ado to get

good assurance of earthly purchases; but what madness is this, so greatly to regard momentary things, and to have no care, in comparison, of our eternal inheritance, which we shal have assured unto us, when we become the children of God.

# 5:10-12

"*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you*." Matthew 5:10-12

Here Christ propounds His eighth rule touching happiness, which he handles more largely than the former; for having laid down the rule (v.10), He expounds the same in a special application of it to His disciples in vv.11 & 12.

In the rule itself, note two points: first, the parties blessed; secondly, wherein their blessedness consists.

I. The parties blessed are they which *suffer persecution for righteousness' sake*. Persecution properly signifies pursuit, such as one enemy maketh after another; but here the word must be taken generally, for all kinds of persecution whatsoever. Now because it is a paradox, and absurd in human reason, to think him blessed that for any cause is persecuted; therefore Christ to verify the truth hereof, repeats the same rule in the next verse, where also he expounds every parcel thereof, wherewith I will content myself, because Christ is the best interpreter of His own words. In the 11th verse therefore, Christ sets down these things, all pertaining to the true exposition of this rule.

1. First, He explains more particularly the parties that be blessed, saying to His disciples, *Blessed are ye*. In the beginning of the chapter we heard that He cast His eyes upon them, and spake unto them; and now here He doth the like again; and therefore this rule must not be understood of all men in the world that suffer, but of all Christ's true disciples. Generally it is not true, for the heathen and infidels do often suffer for good causes, and yet remain infidels, without the true God, and so are not blessed. Again, a

Christian professor may give up his life in a good cause, yet not of love to God or His truth, but upon ambition, and so not be blessed; for (1 Cor. 13:3) *though I give my body to be burned, yet wanting love, it profiteth me nothing*.

2. Secondly, Christ expoundeth particularly what He meaneth by persecution, naming three parts thereof:

1. First, *slandering and reviling*, which is the persecution of the tongue. Thus the Jews persecuted the apostles, saying (Acts 2:13) they were *drunk*, or *full of sweet wine*. Thus Festus persecuted Paul (Acts 26:24) making him *mad*, or *beside himself*.

2. Secondly, persecution meaning hereby (as the word doth properly signify) first, *pursuit*, such as one enemy maketh after another when he seeks to spoil him of his goods or of his life; secondly, the *bringing of a man unto the bar*, and there of malice to accuse an arraign him.

3. Thirdly, *evil speaking with lying*, whenas men of purpose be without cause maliciously carried thereunto, as when the Jews called Christ a *Samaritan that had a devil* (John 8:48); and said that (Luke 11;18) He *cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils*; and thus were the Christians in the primitive church persecuted, being maliciously accused for killing their own children, for worshipping the head of an ass, for incest and such like.

To these three kinds of persecutions, St Luke (Luke 6:22) adds a fourth; namely, *hatred*; and a fifth, called *separation*, whereby men were excommunicated, and cast out of the temple and synagogues for Christ's sake and the gospels'. These are the several kinds of that persecution, for the enduring whereof, Christ pronounced men blessed (v.10); whereof hatred is the root, and the rest are branches.

3. Thirdly, Christ lays down the cause for which this persecution shall be inflicted; namely, *for my sake*; or as St Luke saith, *for the Son of man's sake*; which expoundeth this phrase, *for righteousness' sake* (v.10), to wit, by professing, believing, and maintaining the doctrine of the gospel taught

by Christ touching remission of sins and life everlasting to them that believe.

*The uses in general*.

We see that Christ urgeth this rule of blessedness more largely than the former; this He doth for special cause:

1. First, hereby He would teach His disciples, and us in them, that it is the will of God that His church in this world should be under the cross, in such affliction and persecution, as their blood should be sought for the maintenance of the faith. And this will He have to be the state of His church for special causes: First, that the members thereof by their afflictions may be acquainted with their own wants and infirmities, which they would not much regard, if they were freed from the cross. Secondly, that by affliction they may be kept from many grievous sins into which they would fall, if they lived in peace. Thirdly, that others, seeing the correction of the church for sin, might learn thereby to hate and avoid sin; and lastly, that the church might glorify God in a constant and courageous maintenance of His truth unto death; for even in persecution is God's truth preserved against the reason of man's wisdom, patient suffering for the truth being faithful witness-bearing thereunto.

2. Secondly, Christ had newly called the twelve out of all His disciples, to be apostles; whereupon they might think that they should be advanced to some outward honour, ease and peace. But Christ hereby calls them from that conceit, and puts them in mind of affliction, which should befall them in time to come; that when it came they might the better endure it. And thus He prepares all churches to suffer affliction; yea, and we ourselves must hereby learn in time of peace, to prepare ourselves against the day of trial, because His will is that *whosoever would live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer affliction* (2 Tim. 3:12).

3. Thirdly, hereby Christ intends to lay a ground of comfort to His disciples in their persecution, by a plain and full declaration of their happiness that suffer for righteousness' sake, in that they have sure title to the kingdom of heaven; out of which estate no sound comfort can be had. And this same must we lay up in store against the time to come; for we live now in peace

by God's mercy, but we know not how long it will continue. We have been threatened and dangerously assaulted by our enemies many a time, beside the rod of God shaken with His own hand against us; and we may not think our peace will last always, but seeing our sins increase, we may be sure our joy and peace will one day be turned into sorrow; and therefore it will be good to have this rule engraven in our hearts, that they are blessed which suffer for righteousness' sake. If therefore tribulation come for the defence of the gospel, we must have recourse to this promise of blessedness, and that will be our comfort.

*More particularly*.

1. In the words of this rule, *Blessed are they* etc., Christ would let us see that deadly hatred which the world bears unto God's church; for so much the word *persecute* importeth. The reasons of this hatred may be these:

1. First, the church of God in the ministry of the gospel seeks the ruin of the devil's kingdom, who is the prince of the world; the devil therefore rageth, and inflames the hearts of his instruments with malice against God's church, that they may persecute and quite destroy it, if it were possible.

2. Secondly, God's church is a peculiar people severed from the world in profession, doctrine and conversation, and therefore the world hates them (John 15:18).

And this very point may serve to stay our hearts when we shall be persecuted for the profession and embracing of the gospel of Christ; for the world doth hate God's church, and will do to the end; there must be enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, as then *he that was born of the flesh persecuted Him that was born after the Spirit* (Gal. 4:29).

2. Secondly observe that this hatred of the world is not only against the members of God's church, but even against Christ's holy religion; so Christ saith, *for my sake*, or *for my religion's sake*. This is to be marked as a most excellent argument to persuade our consciences that the gospel of Christ which we profess, is the true and blessed doctrine of God, because the

wicked world doth always hate it; yea, it hateth us also for the gospel's sake. Now if it were a doctrine of men, it would fit their natures well, and they would love it, for *the world doth love its own* (John 15:19).

3. Thirdly, if they be blessed that suffer persecution, then how may any man lawfully flee in persecution? *Answer*: A man may flee in persecution with a good conscience, these two things observed: First, that he be not hindered by his particular calling. Secondly, that he hath liberty offered by God's providence to escape the hands of his enemies. The intent of this verse is not to forbid flight, but to comfort such as are in persecution and cannot escape; for the word signifieth such persecution as is by pursuit and oppression, which cannot be avoided.

4. Lastly, seeing they are blessed that suffer for righteousness' sake; whether are they always cursed that suffer deservedly for an evil cause, for the contrary reason is in contraries? *Answer*: They are always accursed, save in our case; to wit, unless they repent for their unrighteousness, for which they are afflicted; but by true repentance they become blessed. The thief upon the cross had lived in theft, and was therefore attached, condemned and crucified, and so he suffered for unrighteousness; but yet he was saved because he repented and believed in Christ.

It is added, *for righteousness' sake*. In this clause we are taught a special lesson; namely that when God shall lay upon us any affliction or persecution, as imprisonment, banishment, loss of goods, or of life itself; we must always look that the cause be good, and then suffer willingly. This is a necessary rule, for we must suffer affliction either publicly or privately, if we will live godly in Christ Jesus. Now it is not the punishment, but the cause that makes a martyr; and to this purpose Peter saith (1 Pet. 4:15,16), *Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief or a busybody; but if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but glorify God in this behalf*; and therefore we must be sure the cause be good; yea, this we must look unto in our particular private crosses.

"*Blessed are ye when men revile and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you for my sake*" (v.11)

In handling the former verse, we shewed the meaning of these words, and how they serve to expound the former rule. The point here to be observed is this: that to *revile* and *slander*, yea (as Luke saith) to *hate* a man for a good cause, especially for religion, is persecution; which shews how fearful the common sin of the age is, whereby men revile their brethren with base and odious terms, because they shew some care to please God and to adorn their profession by a godly life. But thou art a persecutor, whosoever thou art that usest this, and therefore repent and leave it, for it is a preparation to a greater sin in this kind, and most odious in God's sight, as the punishment hereof declares (Gen. 21:9,10 with Gal. 4:29,30).

St Luke adds a second word: *And when they separate you*, whereby is meant excommunication out of the temple and synagogue; a punishment which Christ foretold should befall His disciples. This censure was put in execution in their synagogues; for besides the administration of civil justice, ecclesiastical matters were there handled. Now mark what Christ saith: Though excommunication be mine own ordinance; yet blessed are you when men excommunicate you out of the temple and synagogues for my names' sake; where He maketh excommunication a kind of persecution, when it is denounced against men for righteousness' sake.

Here then we may learn what to think of the papal bulls, whereby he excommunicates kings and queens, and particular churches, for denying subjection to his chair; namely, that they are the devil's instruments wherewith God's children are persecuted, and that all such that are thus excommunicated for defending the truth of the gospel, are blessed; for excommunication is not the instrument of a curse to them that suffer it for a good cause. Secondly, hence we learn that excommunication abused against God's Word is no powerful censure; though in itself being used according to God's ordinance, it is a most terrible thunderbolt, excluding a man in part from the church and from the kingdom of heaven; and therefore all churches must see that this censure be not abused, for the abusers of it incur the danger of the curse, and not they against whom it is unjustly pronounced.

"*Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you*." (v.12).

II. Here Christ draws a conclusion from the former rule; for having said in general that *they which suffer for righteousness' sake are blessed* (v.10), and applied it in particular to His disciples (v.11), hereupon He infers that they must rejoice in affliction, even then, or (as Luke saith (Luke 6:23)), *In that day*; yea, they must *be glad*; which word signifieth exceeding joy, such as we used to express by outward signs in the body; as skipping and dancing; such (2 Sam. 6:14) as David used to testify his joy for the return of the ark of God to his city. This is a most worthy conclusion, often urged and commended unto us in scripture: *Brethren, count it exceeding great joy when ye fall into divers temptations* (Jam. 1:2); *We rejoice in tribulation, knowing that tribulation bringeth forth patience* (Rom. 5:3); *The disciples rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer rebuke for the name of Christ* (Acts 5:41).

Here we learn then that God's church and people, that suffer in a good cause, must rejoice and be glad. This must be remembered, for we have been many times in great danger of our enemies for the gospel's sake; and it may please God to leave us in their hands, for our manifold sins, and great abuse of His heavenly blessings; which if He does, what must be our behaviour? Must we be swallowed up with sorrow and grief? No, but humbling ourselves for our sins, we must remember for what we do suffer, and rejoice and be glad in that behalf; for though our outward man perish, yet the inner man shall be revived.

Now because it is a hard thing to rejoice in grievous afflictions, therefore Christ doth give two reasons to move them hereunto:

1. First, from the recompense of reward after this life, in these words: *For great is your reward in heaven*. This point I have handled heretofore, and therefore I will here only shew how the papists abuse this text to prove the merits of man's works of grace; for hence they reason thus: *Where there is a reward, there is merit; but in heaven there is a reward for man's works of grace; and therefore in this life, there is merit by them*. To this it is answered divers ways. I will touch the heads of the principal:

    1. First, the word *reward* must not be understood properly but figuratively; for Christ's speech is borrowed from labourers, who after they have done their work, do receive their wages, which is the reward

thereof; even so, after Christ's disciples and servants have suffered afflictions for the name of Christ, at the end of this life they shall receive life everlasting.

2. Secondly, when we read of wages and rewards in scripture, we must not dream of anything due by right of debt and merit, but conceive thereby, that which is given by promise, and of mere mercy; like as when an earthly father promiseth to his son to give him this or that thing if he will learn; now the father's gift is not merited by the child, but is freely given, the more to incite the child to learn his book.

3. Thirdly, if we understand reward properly; then we must refer it, not to our sufferings, but to the sufferings of Christ; for there is no proportion between our sufferings and life eternal. *The afflictions of this present life, are not worthy of the glory which shall be shewed unto us* (Rom. 8:18).

2. The second reason is taken from the example of the ancient prophets: *For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you*. In this reason, Christ intendeth two things: First, to teach His disciples and us that persecution for good causes is no new or strange thing. Secondly, to comfort His disciples and servants in their sufferings; for that thereby they should be made conformable to the ancient worthy prophets, who were of old renowned among men, and are now glorified of God in heaven. Hereto we must compare the words of Luke spoken to the same purpose (Luke 6:23), *for after this manner did the fathers to the prophets*. By *fathers*, we must needs mean the ancient people of the Jews, for here He speaketh to His disciples and others that were Jews by nation. Now hence observe a strange point; to wit, that the ancient prophets, who were most worthy men of God, were persecuted in their times, not so much by forerunners and enemies to religion, as by those that were outwardly members of the church of God, and professors of religion. This may seem strange, that men living in God's church should grow to this height of impiety, to become persecutors of God's saints; but St Stephen giveth the reason hereof (Acts 7:51), their *hard hearts*, whereby *they resisted the Holy Ghost in the ministry of the Word*; for which God left them to themselves, so as they ran headlong to this height of impiety, to persecute God's dearest servants. The

like we may see in these our days; some that have been professors, after long hearing, break forth into open atheism, calling this into question: whether there be a God. And among others there is also to be seen as vile cruelty and oppression in their particular dealings, and as abominable filthiness, as is to be found among the heathen and idolaters; all which, and many other enormous sins proceed from this: that though men profess religion, yet they deny subjection to the gospel preached, so as it is not in them a Word of power; for which cause, God in His justice gives them up to hardness of heart, to commit sin without remorse. And therefore if we would escape the fearful judgment of a reprobate sense, let us labour with fear and trembling to become obedient to the Word which we hear; for if we do not glorify God in the means, wherein He offers grace and mercy, God will be sure to glorify Himself in our deserved confusion.

# 5:13

"*Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men*." Matthew 5:13

In this verse, and the rest to the 16th, Christ propoundeth the second branch of this sermon, touching the office of the apostles, and in them of all ministers; wherein, His intent is to move them to diligence in preaching the will of God to all people.

The coherence of this part with the former standeth thus: Christ had shewed before in divers precepts that many are blessed; whereupon some might ask, how they should attain to this happiness, and to those graces of the Spirit, which make them fit for that estate? Christ here answers that the preaching of the gospel is the principal means to work in the hearts those graces, to which true happiness is promised. And because it is an excellent privilege to bring men to this estate, therefore He exciteth His disciples to diligence in this ministry by two reasons drawn from the properties of this work, and propounded in two similitudes. The first is taken from *salt*, in these words: *Ye are the salt of the earth*; and amplified in the words following to the end of the verse. The second is drawn from *light* (vv.14,15).

For the first, *Ye are the salt of the earth*; *ye*, that is you whom I have called to be apostles and set apart for the work of the ministry, *are salt*; not properly, but by resemblance; yet not in regard of their persons, but of their ministry; because hereby they were to season men for God and to make them savoury both in heart and life. *Of the earth*; not of Judea only, but of the whole world, as may appear by their commission (Matt. 18:19), *Go therefore and teach all nations*.

From this description, both ministers and people may learn their duty.

1. First, *for ministers*. By this title of *salt*, here given unto them, Christ would teach them:

1. First, how they ought to dispense the Word of God, both law and gospel; namely, so as they labour therein to express the properties of salt, whereto Christ alludeth in His title. Now the properties of salt applied to raw flesh or fresh wounds are principally three: First, it will bite and fret, being of nature hot and dry. Secondly, it makes meats savoury unto our taste. Thirdly, it preserveth meats from putrefaction by drawing out of them superfluous moistness. The apostles therefore and other ministers being salt, must not only in general deliver the Word of God unto the people; but withal apply the same particularly unto men's hearts and consciences, as salt is applied unto meat. And that for three ends: First, the law must be applied to rip up men's hearts, to make them see their sins; it must fret and bite them by the curse thereof, to cause them to renounce themselves, and to cry with the Jews (Acts 2:37), *Men and brethren, what shall we do*? Secondly, the gospel must be preached, that men feeling their corruptions, like rottenness in their souls, may by the blessing of the Spirit be thereby seasoned with grace, and so reconciled unto God, and made savoury in His sight. This is the end of the ministry (2 Cor. 5:20), *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you in Christ's stead, that you be reconciled unto God*. Thirdly, both the law and the gospel must be continually dispensed, that thereby sin and corruption may be daily mortified and consumed, both in heart and life; even as superfluous humours are dried up by salt. And this is the right dispensing of God's Word; for every discourse upon a text of Scripture is not preaching, but he that so expoundeth and applieth the Word that his ministry may be salt unto his hearers, he it is that preacheth the Word indeed.

2. Secondly, Christ calling His disciples salt, teacheth them and all ministers that they themselves ought first to be seasoned by the Word; for how can they fitly season others by applying this salt unto their consciences, who never felt the biting of it upon their own? He that is unseasoned himself may speak God's Word, which God may bless to the good of others; but yet in respect of himself, it is a riddle which cannot be understood.

3. Thirdly, this title giveth good direction to every minister for his manner of preaching; for if the Word of God alone be that savoury salt wherewith man's heart is seasoned for the Lord, then it ought to be dispensed purely and sincerely, without the mixture of human inventions. This was Paul's care (1 Cor. 2:4,5), *My word and my preaching* (saith he) *stood not in the enticing speech of man's wisdom, but in plain evidence of the Spirit and power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*. Experience teacheth us that salt by mixture with other things loseth of his savour; and so it is with the Word. Indeed there is a place for arts and tongues, and human learning with every dispenser of the Word, wherein he may use them with great commendation, to wit, in his private preparation; but not in the public dispensation, whereby he seasoneth men's hearts unto God. That the Word of God alone must do, for to it alone belongs the promise of the Spirit (Isa. 59:21). And therefore he must use great discretion in this ministry, and labour so to speak that the Spirit may take delight to accompany the same.

4. Fourthly, this title teacheth all God's ministers by patience to possess their souls, when the wicked do fret and fume against them for their ministry; for this is a testimony that their ministry is salt, and bites their corrupt consciences as it ought to do; therefore they are to go on with cheerfulness, endeavouring more and more to season their hearts herewith.

2. Secondly, *the people of God* that hear His Word, may learn good instruction from this title:

1. First, hereby everyone may see what he is by nature, namely, like unto flesh subject to corruption, nay, as unsavoury flesh, and stinking carrion in the nostrils of God; for else what needed this salt? This therefore must move us to lay aside all pride of heart whereby we think highly of ourselves; yea, we must become base and lowly in our own eyes, in regard of the unsavoury taste of our natural corruption, else we shall never feel the seasoning virtue of God's holy ministry.

2. Secondly, everyone must hereby learn to suffer the word of reproof, whereby his heart and conscience may be ripped up, and his sores of

sin discovered. When we have a cut or a wound in our flesh, we can be content to put salt upon it, to dry up the noisome humours that otherwise would corrupt. Now can we endure the smart of salt for the health of our bodies, and shall we not much more suffer the Word of God to rip up our sins, and to mortify the same, for the salvation of our souls?

3. Thirdly, everyone must give all diligence to be seasoned throughout with this heavenly salt, that the thoughts of his heart, the words of his mouth and the actions of his life may be all savoury and acceptable unto God in Christ. Yea, in his conversation with men, he must labour to shew the power of the seasoning (Col. 4:6), *Let your speech be gracious always, and powdered with salt*; that is, seasoned by the Word, that it may savour of grace to those that hear us. If we live under the ministry of the Word, and be not seasoned therewith, our case is dangerous; for therein it is of the nature of salt, which causeth barrenness, where it seasoneth it; as we may see in the practice of Abimelech (Jud. 9:45), who *sowed salt in Shechem, to make the ground barren, and the place despised*.

*But if the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted; it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men*.

Here Christ amplifieth the former reason, whereby He moves His apostles to fidelity and diligence in their ministry by the danger of the contrary infidelity, which is as unsavoury salt, incurable and unprofitable, and so subject to a fearful curse; and therefore (saith Christ) you had need to be faithful in seasoning the world by your ministry. In this amplification, we may observe four points: First, the ordinary sin that doth accompany the calling of the ministry; secondly, the danger of this sin; thirdly, the unprofitableness of such a ministry; fourthly, the judgment of God due unto it.

1. As other callings have their several faults, so hath the calling of a minister, noted in these words: *If the salt have lost his savour* etc. Salt is said to become unsavoury when it loseth that virtue and acrimony which it hath in seasoning that flesh on which it is cast. Now ministers are as

unsavoury salt when they become unprofitable in their ministry, and either do not, or cannot dispense God's Word, for the seasoning of men's souls, that they may be acceptable to God, and reconciled unto Him in Christ. In this calling, there be especially four kinds of unsavoury salt:

1. First, the *blind watchmen* that have not knowledge (Isa. 56:10); and *dumb dogs that cannot bark*; that is, such as either cannot, or if they can, will not dispense God's Word for the salvation of men's souls.

2. Secondly, *heretical teachers* who preach false and damnable doctrine such as doth not season, but poison and destroy the soul; such were the false prophets among the Jews, who enticed to idolatry (Deut. 13:1,2), and the false prophets and heretics in the primitive church (2 Tim. 2:17,18), whose *words did fret as a canker, and destroyed the faith of many*. And such are the Romish teachers at this day, and the Jesuits and seminaries amongst us, who though they be qualified with many good gifts of learning, yet by mingling the Word of God with their own inventions and human traditions, they raze the foundation, they become unsavoury salt, and heretical teachers. And here by the way, who cannot but wonder that students in divinity should so much affect the postils and comments of friars and popish writers, as they do? Doubtless it argueth that the Word of God hath not seasoned their hearts; for where such unsavoury salt hath relish, the wholesome doctrines of God's Word hath never seasoned.

3. Thirdly, they are unsavoury salt, who teach true doctrine, but misapply the same. Many such were in the church of the Jews in the days of Jeremiah (Jer. 23:16,17), and Ezekiel (Ezek. 13;10,22), who much complained of *sewing pillows under the elbows of the wicked*, by preaching peace unto them, when they should have called to repentance by the discovery of their sins, and denunciation of God's judgment; as also, for *making sad the hearts of those whom God hath not made sad*; and such are those at this day who have smooth tongues, in respect of sin, and yet are full of bitter invectives against the better sort. By this means the Word of God loseth his acrimony and sharpness, whereby the wicked should be awakened out of their

slumber of security, and the godly further seasoned, and made more acceptable unto God.

4. Fourthly, they are unsavoury salt, who though they teach the truth, and generally apply it well, do yet lead ungodly and scandalous lives; for an offensive and unsavoury conversation in the teacher, doth hinder the seasoning virtue of the word of his ministry in the hearts of the people; and his doctrine cannot so much edify, as his course of life destroyeth, because natural men regard not so much what is said, as what is done. This being so, all God's ministers, and those also that destinate themselves to this calling, must have special care so to be qualified for this work, and so to preach the Word of God, that it may be savoury in the hearts and consciences of them that hear it. This is a matter of great importance, as well in respect of the minister, as of the people; and thus shall it appear that they are not only no unsavoury salt, but even such as do season others.

2. The danger of this sin, in being unsavoury salt (that is unfaithful in the ministry) is very great, noted in these words: *Wherewith shall it be salted*? Some refer this salting to the earth, as if Christ had said, wherewith shall the earth be salted; but it doth more truly belong to the salt itself, as Mark 9:5, *Salt is good, but if the salt be unsavoury, wherewithal shall it*, that is, the salt itself *be seasoned*? Again, the interrogation *wherewith*, imports a vehement denial; as if Christ should say, If salt once lose his natural property of saltiness, it can never be recovered. Now unfaithful and unprofitable ministers are unsavoury salt; and therefore their danger is exceeding great. And yet the comparison must not be so urged, as thereby to prove the state of ministers to be incurable, if they once be come unfaithful; but Christ's meaning is to shew that unprofitable ministers are very hardly, or seldom ever made savoury again; at least, if formerly they have been faithful, and after having fallen from it. That this is the true meaning, may thus appear; for notes of negation in Scripture do not always import an absolute denial, but sometimes they are put to express great difficulty, and to shew things that seldom come to pass. *O generation of vipers, how should you escape the damnation of hell*? (Matt. 23:33); that is, *very hardly*. And so where it is said that *David did not incline from the way of the Lord save in the matter of Uriah* (1 Kin. 15:5); that is, *very seldom*; for he sinned

grievously in numbering the people (2 Sam. 24). So Matt. 13:57, *A prophet is not without honour* (that is, very seldom) *save in his own country*; for sometimes he may be dishonoured elsewhere; and sometimes also, have honour in his own country. So in this place, this resemblance of incurableness in unfaithful ministers, must be understood of great hardness and difficulty; not of an impossibility, as experience also teacheth; for King Solomon was a prophet of God, who by his adulteries and idolatry, became wonderful unsavoury, and yet no doubt, he afterwards recovered, and became savoury again by true repentance, whereupon he penned the book of Ecclesiastes. So Peter, by his denial of Christ, became unsavoury; yet by God's mercy upon his repentance, he was seasoned again.

This then is the danger, that ministers declining from fidelity, do seldom or hardly recover. The reason is: First, because they want teachers to instruct them, as they instruct the people. Secondly, the Word in them is unsavoury which should season them, and so there is no other means to recover them ordinarily. Go through all ages, and observe the examples of false prophets in the Old Testament, of false apostles in the New, and of arch-heretics in the primitive church; and hardly shall you find any that repented. Yea, mark such ministers as in our age incline to popery, and for the most part they become irrecoverable. Hereby then every minister is taught to learn and practice Paul's lesson to Timothy, to take heed unto himself, and unto learning, continuing therein, fighting a good fight, having faith and a good conscience (1 Tim. 4:13,14,16 and 6:11,12). These things Paul doth notably urge in that epistle, giving good direction to attain thereunto.

3. The unprofitableness of unfaithful ministers, expressed in these words: *It is thenceforth good for nothing*; that is, as unsavoury salt, becoming unfit to season meat, is good for nothing (for cast it on the ground, it makes it barren; nay, cast it on the dung hill, and it hurts that also which otherwise serves for good use); so is it with ministers that become unfaithful, they are of all other most noisome both to the church and commonwealth; for God's curse is upon them, and they are good for no society. This might be declared by many examples, of such as having fallen to popery, from our ministry, have after proved not only deadly enemies to our church, and to the truth, but the rankest rebels and traitors unto our prince and state, of all others.

*Question*: Whether may such ministers as become unsavoury salt, by making apostasy from the truth (as if a Protestant minister become a mass-priest) be restored again into the ministry of God's church, upon their repentance? *Answer*: Some be of mind that they may not be received at all into the ministry, after such apostasy; but I find nothing in the Scripture which should hinder their restitution, if their conversion unto God and to His truth may appear to be true and unfeigned. It is alleged that the priests under the law, falling to idolatry (Ezek. 44:12,13), were for ever debarred from the priest's office. *Answer*: That was for special cause; for the priests were types of Christ, and their outward holiness shadowed out the perfect integrity and holiness of our Saviour Christ; for which cause there was none chosen to the priest's office who had any blemish in his body. Now by such open idolatry, they disabled themselves from being figures of Christ, and therefore were rejected. Again, we find that inferior officers were not debarred from their office in the sanctuary, though they committed idolatry as the priests did. It is said again that a minister must be unblameable; but a mass-priest cannot be unblameable. *Answer*: Without true repentance none is unblameable; but by true repentance, even a mass-priest may become unblameable. But such as fall away, become unsavoury salt, which cannot be made savoury again. *Answer*: By the power of God it may; and so may an unfaithful minister through God's mercy by renewed to repentance, and become profitable to the church.

4. The curse and punishment of unsavoury salt: *It is cast out and trodden under foot of men*; whereby Christ signifieth that unfaithful and unprofitable ministers shall be condemned both of God and man: *Because thou hast despised knowledge, therefore also will I despise thee* (Hos. 4:6). *Therefore have I made you to be despised and vile before all the people; because ye kept not my way, but have been partial in the law* (Mal. 2:9). See the sign of the Lord's contempt in His fearful judgments upon them; as on Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1,2); Hophni and Phineas (1 Sam. 2:34). And though they may escape His hand in this life, yet will Christ at His coming *cut them off, and give them their portion with hypocrites, where is nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Matt. 24:51).

The consideration whereof, must move all ministers to beware of unfaithfulness in their calling, lest the curse of unsavoury salt light upon

them. The carpenters who built Noah's ark, were themselves drowned in the flood; because neither Noah's preaching, nor their own working did move them to repentance. And the like judgment will befall unfaithful ministers; though they have the name of such as should season others, yet because of their unfaithfulness, they become unsavoury; God Himself at length will cast them out, and tread them under foot. If this were laid to heart, as it ought to be, it would drive many from their idleness, vanity and covetousness, whereby they become unsavoury to God.

# 5:14-16

*"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."* Matthew 5:14-16

Here, Christ layeth down the second reason to induce His disciples, and in them all ministers, to preach the Word of God faithfully; as if He should say: *By calling you are the light of the world, and your condition is such that all your sayings and doings are open to the eyes of men; therefore be ye careful that ye glorify God therein*. The first part of this reason is in these words: *Ye are the light of the world*. The second is expressed by two comparisons in the words following: *A city that is set on a hill* etc. The conclusion is in the 16th verse.

I. For the first part: *Ye are the light of the world*. If ministers be lights, why saith the scripture that *John Baptist was not the light of the world* (John 1:8)? *Answer*: There be two kinds of lights: original and derived. *Original light* is that which is the cause of all light, and so Christ alone is the light of the world; and in this sense doth the scripture deny John Baptist to be that light. *Derived light* is that which shineth forth, but yet is received from another; and so *John Baptist was a burning and a shining lamp* (John 5:35). So were apostles lights, for *God that caused the light to shine out of darkness, shined into their hearts, to enable them to give the light of knowledge in the face of Jesus Christ* (2 Cor. 4:6).

The use.

1. First, this title of *light* given to ministers sheweth the right use of the ministry of the Word. The whole world lieth in darkness, that is, in ignorance under sin, and so subject to damnation by nature. Now God hath ordained the ministry of the Word to be a light whereby this ignorance may be expelled, and they brought to the knowledge of their sins, and of the way

that leadeth unto life (Acts 26:18), Paul must preach that both Jews and Gentiles may come *from darkness to light*.

2. Secondly, by this title, Christ sheweth how His Word is to be handled; namely, so as it may be a light unto men's minds and consciences, to make them see their sins and their great misery thereby; then to let them see the remedy from that misery, which is Jesus Christ; and lastly, to shew them that strait way of obedience in all good duties to God and man, which God requireth in this life of a Christian. Men may take long discourses upon a text of scripture; but that only is true preaching which gives this light of knowledge to the mind and conscience which leadeth men to God.

3. Again, the hearers of the Word must be admonished of their duties from this title:

1. First, if ministers be lights in regard of their ministry, then every hearer must so apply his heart unto the preaching of the Word that it may enlighten his conscience with the knowledge of his sins, and of his misery by reason of them; as also, with the true knowledge of Christ, and of the will of God, which may guide him in obedience; otherwise this holy ordinance turneth to his deeper condemnation.

2. Secondly, every hearer must learn Paul's lesson (Eph. 5:8), *Ye were anon darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord; walk as children of the light*; that is, look what the Word teacheth, which is this light; that do. When the time is dark wherein we walk, we use torches and candles, that so we may see the right path. Behold, the world is darkness, we therefore must labour to have the Word of God to be a light unto our feet in all the steps of our callings wherein we live; for *he that walketh in the dark, knoweth not whither he goeth* (John 12:35).

3. Lastly, there be many that live in ignorance, as blind, as though they had never heard of Christ; and though they hear the Word preached, yet still they remain in darkness; but they must know that their case is fearful, for the ministry of the Word is light. They therefore having the benefit thereof, ought to be children of the light; and because they are not enlightened, undoubtedly a most fearful judgment of God is upon

them; for mark what Paul saith (2 Cor. 4:3,4), *If our gospel be hid, it is hid to those that perish, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of their mind*; and therefore, such persons must labour to know and practice the special grounds and duties of true religion, that so in conscience they may be truly assured that the Word of God is become their light.

II. The second part of this reason is this: Your condition is such, in regard of your calling, *that all your sayings and doings are seen of men*; and it is expressed in two similitudes: first, of *a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid*; secondly, of *a candle put on a candlestick* (v.15). And thus it dependeth on the former part: whereas Christ had called His disciples *the light of the world*, they might take it for a matter of some outward renown. Christ therefore tells them that His intent herein is not to give them titles of praise, but to make them acquainted with their hard condition, in which they were like to be, by reason of their great and weighty calling; wherein they should become spectacles to all the world; for thus He saith, *A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid*; but all that pass by may see it; and *a candle lighted and set on a candlestick, giveth light to all that are in the house*; even so, you mine apostles, by reason of your public calling, shall have all your sayings and doings manifest to the eyes of the whole world.

Because both these similitudes serve to express the same thing, therefore the points of instruction, which specially concern God's ministers, shall be propounded from the joint scope of them both:

1. First, whereas the condition of God's ministers is such, to have their whole conversation open and manifest to the eyes of the world; therefore they especially, above all others (though it concern every man in his place), must have care that their lives and conversations, both for sayings and doings, be holy and blameless; for their place is such that by their well doing, they win many unto the Lord; but by their bad conversation, they carry many a souls with them to destruction.

2. Hereby they must learn not to think it strange, if they lie open to manifold reproaches and abuses, more than any other sort of men; for they of all other lie most open to the world; and if their conversation be godly, it is the more distasteful to the world; as Cain hated Abel for his good works

(1 John 2:12,13). Hence it appeareth that men in this calling cannot, without great sin, hide the gifts and talents which God hath given them; for they are as lighted candles, which must not be put under a bushel. Sundry men have heretofore offended this way, as those in the primitive church, who being godly men and well qualified for the ministry, did yet withdraw themselves from public societies, to live in solitary places; for by their gifts they were excellent lights, and therefore they ought to have shined forth to others. And at this day they offend this way, that will not abase themselves in their ministry, to speak plainly to the mean capacity of the simple; yea, they also put the light under a bushel, who being fit for this ministry, do spend their days wholly in the universities, except it be they want a calling into the church, and have a lawful calling for their stay in the universities; and though men have not much means of calling forth, as were to be wished, yet they that live in schools of learning ought to shew themselves willing to become lights abroad in the church; saying with the prophet Isaiah, when his lips were touched with a coal from the altar (Isa. 6:8), *Here am I, Lord, send me*. In a word, all persons in this calling, that any way hide their gifts, are here blamed; for they are lights which should not be hid.

From these comparisons wherein Christ sets out the open state of His apostles to the view of the world, the papists do gather that the church of God cannot be hid, and therefore visibility must needs be the note of a true church. But we must know that God's church may sometimes lie hid in regard of the Word, and the ministry thereof; as it did in the days of Elijah (1 Kin. 19), and in the time when popery spread itself over these western parts. Neither doth this place make ought against us, for Christ speaks of His apostles, and of their ministry properly, which could not be hid; and not of every ordinary minister who are not lights of all the world, as the apostles were, but only in their particular standing. Secondly, the ministry is a light, yet not always shining to the whole world; and therefore it is added in the second similitude that it *giveth light to them that are in the house*; that is, in the church of God. And so in the darkness of popery, the ministry of the gospel was hid from the world, and yet it gave some light to the hidden church, the house of God, to shew them their calling, and the means of salvation.

Now, as these similitudes concern the ministers, so they may well be enlarged to every Christian in his place; in this regard the minister is a pattern to his people, and many times in Scripture others besides the ministers are called lights (2 Sam. 21:17), David is called *the light of Israel*; not only for the comfort of his regiment, but also as he was a king, by his upright life he gave light to the people, whereof he was governor. And so, answerably, all superiors in their places must be lights; the public magistrate to the commonwealth; the master to his servants; parents to their children; and every Christian to his brother. *Shine as lights in the world, in the midst of a naughty and crooked nation* (Phil. 2:15). This therefore is our duty, if we be Christians; as we must labour to get the knowledge of God's will into our hearts, so must we cause the power thereof to shine forth in the example of a good life, whereby others may be directed in the darkness of the world. But alas, herein the case of many is lamentable, who through ignorance and disobedience, be yet in darkness; these must be taken out of their places, as dark candles, and trodden under foot, and so cast into eternal darkness, where they shall flame in woe for evermore.

"*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*." Matthew 5:16.

III. This is the conclusion of this reason; where by *shining*, is meant ministerial teaching, whereby they make known God's will unto His people, wherewith He also requireth answerable practice in a godly life; as if He should say, Seeing by our calling you are so conspicuous to the world, therefore look to the evidence of your ministry, and to the holiness of your lives, that so the people may not only hear your doctrine, but also see your good works, and thereby be moved to follow the same, and so to glorify God in heaven.

A most worthy conclusion, wherein observe two points touching the ministry of the Word: first, in what manner ministers must teach the Word; secondly, the end of all teaching.

1. For the first: God's Word must be preached, that men may hear it; secondly, therewith must go an unblameable conversation, bringing forth good works that men therein may see the will of God. Here then are two parts of a minister's office: doctrine and good life; and they must go

together in him that is a good minister. He that teacheth to write will first give rules of writing to his scholars, and then set them copies to follow; and so doth every master in his art; there is no learning of anything, unless examples go with rules. Again, God will have men to learn His will two ways: by hearing and seeing. The minister therefore that is to teach God's will, must not only by doctrine instruct the ear, but by a godly life exemplify his doctrine unto the eye. *Be unto them that believe, an example inward, and in conversation* (1 Tim. 4:12).

In regard of this double charge that lies on every minister, the people for their parts must remember, in all their prayers to crave of God that the ministers may be enabled to teach God's will both in doctrine and life. The apostle Paul doth sundry times require the churches to whom he wrote, to pray for him in regard of his ministry (Rom. 15:30; 2 Cor. 1:11; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:3; 2 Thess. 3:1). Now if so worthy an apostle had need to be prayed for, much more hath every ordinary minister in God's church. And great reason it should be so, for the devil stands at Joshua's right hand to resist him (Zech. 3:1). He hindered Paul from coming to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:18). Though he malign every believer, yet he aims especially at the minister, that he may cause him to fail, if not in teaching, yet at least in the exemplifying of his doctrine by a sincere and godly conversation.

Now, because Christ requires of every minister, besides teaching, the evidence of good works in a godly life, therefore here will I handle this point of good works: and first, shew what a good work is; secondly, the differences of good works; and then observe the necessity, the dignity and the use of good works.

1. *A good work is a work commanded of God, and done by a man regenerate in faith, for the glory of God in man's good*.

1. First (I say), it is a work *commanded of God*, for God's will is goodness itself, and the rule of all goodness in the creature; and every good thing is therefore good because it is answerable to the will of God; no work therefore can be good, unless it be appointed, ordained and commanded of God. Men indeed may invent and do many good works, but they shall have no goodness in them, unless they do accord with God's will. Again, good works must be done *in obedience to God*.

> Now, unless God appoint them, the doing of them cannot be obedience to His will. Thirdly, will-worship, whereby men thrust upon God their own inventions for His service, is everywhere condemned (Col. 2:22,23; Deut. 12:32); and of like nature be all those actions wherein men of themselves do fasten goodness, without the will and appointment of God. This point must be remembered, because the church of Rome doth teach the contrary, that a man may do good works, not required or appointed by God; but the former reasons shew this to be false; and the arguments which they bring for their opinion, are nothing but abuse of Scripture, as in these few may plainly appear.

*Objection 1*. First, they say the Jews had freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16), which were not commanded in the Word, and yet were acceptable unto God; and so do many nowadays do good works acceptable to God, though not commanded. *Answer*: Their freewill offerings were ordained of God, and therefore were acceptable; they were only free in regard in the time of offering them; but for the manner how, and the places where they must be offered, both these were appointed of God.

*Objection 2*. Again, they say Phineas slew Zimri and Cozbi (Psa. 106:30,31) with God's approbation, though he was no magistrate; and therefore works not commanded of God, may be acceptable unto Him. *Answer*: Though Phineas had not any outward commandment, yet he had that which was answerable thereunto; to wit, an extraordinary instinct by the Spirit, whereby he was carried to do that fact; which was as much as if God had given him an express commandment. And so we may say of the ministry of sundry ancient prophets, who by extraordinary instinct were moved thereunto; and upon this ground did Elijah slay Baal's prophets (1 Kin. 18:40).

*Objection 3*. Thirdly, Mary's act (say they) of pouring a box of costly ointment on the head of our Saviour Christ (Matt. 26:7) was a good work; and yet there was no commandment for it in God's Word. *Answer*: Mary's act was a work of confession, whereby she testified her faith in Christ, and so was generally commanded, though not in particular. Again, she was carried thereto by a special instinct of the Spirit, for she did it to bury Him (v.12) (as Christ Himself testifieth) because His burial was so speedily after

His death, in regard of the approaching of the Sabbath, that they could not embalm Him, as the manner of the Jews was. Now every instinct of God's Spirit in the conscience of the doer, hath the force of a particular commandment.

*Objection 4*. Fourthly, the Spirit of God (say they) moves every man to any good work that is done; and therefore men need not a particular commandment for every work; for those that are carried by the Spirit, cannot but do well. *Answer*: True it is, the Spirit moveth men to good works freely, but yet this motion of the Spirit is in and by the Word of God; and at this day, those instincts which are besides the Word, are men's own fancies, or illusions of the devil.

Many other reasons they allege to this purpose for the justifying their vows of chastity, of regular obedience, pilgrimages, trentals and such like, but they are like to these, and notwithstanding them all, the truth is this: that for substance, a good work is such a one as is ordained, appointed and commanded by God. And here by the way, we may observe that they are far deceived, who so much commend the times of popery for good works; for the truth is that all their oblations to images, to monasteries and to churches, for masses, pardons and such like, were no good works, but only in their own opinion; for God commanded them not. Now it is the Lord's revealed will that must give the goodness to man's work. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requireth of thee* (Mic. 6:8).

2. Next I add: *Done of a regenerate person*. The author of a good work is not everyone in the world, but that man or woman that is a member of Christ, born anew by the Holy Ghost. So Christ here saith, *Let your light* etc., restraining His speech to the persons of His disciples. True it is that among Turks and infidels, many a civil man will do works of mercy, of civil justice, and liberality, and will abstain from outward sins, and live orderly. Now these, and such like, though in themselves they be good works, so far forth as they are required by the law of nature, or commanded by God's Word; yet in an infidel, or an unregenerate person, they are sins; for, First, they proceed from an heart which is corrupt with original sin and with unbelief (for the heart is the fountain of all actions (Matt. 12:35)) and also they are practiced

by the members of the body, which are weapons of unrighteousness; and therefore must needs be like unto water springing from a corrupt fountain, and running through a filthy channel. Secondly, these works are not done for God's glory and the good of men. Thirdly, they are not done in obedience to God, according to the rule of goodness, the will and Word of God, and therefore cannot be good works. And this must teach everyone that would do good, to labour for regeneration by the Holy Ghost, that so his person may be good, and then shall his works of obedience be good in God's sight; for such as the tree is, such will be the fruit. *An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit, nor a good, evil fruit* (Matt. 7:18). We must therefore labour to be engrafted into Christ, for without Him, we can do no good thing; but being partakers of His grace, we shall *abound with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God* (Phil. 1:11).

3. Thirdly, I add, that *good works must be done in faith*; for faith is the cause of every good work, and without faith it is impossible to do any good work (Heb. 11:6). Now, in the doing of a good work, there is a twofold faith required: First, a *general faith*, whereby a man is persuaded that God requires of him the doing of that work which he takes in hand; as when a man giveth alms, he must be persuaded it is God's will that he should give alms; and so for other good works; for *whatsoever is not of faith is sin* (Rom. 14:23); that is, whatsoever proceedeth not from this persuasion in the conscience, that it is God's will that such a thing should be done, or should not be done, is sin; for he that doubteth of the thing he doth, sinneth therein, though the thing done be good in itself. Secondly, herein is required *justifying faith*, whereby a man is persuaded in his conscience, of his own reconciliation with God in Christ; of this it is said (Heb. 11:6), *without faith it is impossible to please God*. This justifying faith hath a double use in the causing of a good work: First, it gives the beginning to a good work; for by justifying faith, Christ with His merits is apprehended and applied to the person of the worker, and he thereby is united to Christ, who reneweth the mind, will and affections of the worker, from whence the work proceedeth; and so it is as pure water coming from a cleansed fountain. Secondly, faith covereth the wants that be in good work (for the best work done by man in this life, hath

its wants). Now faith apprehendeth Christ and His merits, and applieth the same unto the worker, whereby his person is accepted, and the imperfection of his work covered in the sight of God; and this must provoke us to labour for faith.

4. Lastly, I add, the end of a good work; namely, *God's glory in man's good*. The honour of God must be the principal end of every good work. Now, God's honour stands in reverence, obedience and thankfulness; so that when we do any good work, we must do it in reverence unto God, in obedience unto His commandments, and in token of our thankfulness unto Him for His manifold mercies. The good of man must herein also be respected; the apostle saith (Gal. 5:14), The law is fulfilled in one word, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. How can this be, seeing to love the Lord our God is the great commandment of the law? It must therefore thus be understood: that the law of God must be practiced in the love of our neighbour, and not apart by itself. Again, the end of a man's life, and of all his actions, is to serve God, in serving of man, and by serving of man, to serve God; as when we pray (which is a good work) we must not only respect ourselves but pray for others; as for the church of God, and for our brethren, as well as for ourselves; yea, and for our enemies. So we must hear the Word, and receive the sacraments, that thereby we may be better able to further our brethren in the way of salvation. This our Saviour doth here express, saying, *That they may see your good works, and glorify your father in heaven*; as if He should say, Glorify you God, and also cause others to do the same.

1. First, here we may see what to judge of the works done by papists. It is commonly thought that they abound with good works, but it is not so; their best works are sins before God, for they fail principally in the main end of well-doing, which is to glorify God in the good of men; for a papist doing a good work, according to the rules of their religion, doth it to satisfy God's justice for the temporal punishment of his sins, and to merit heaven by it; and so erreth quite from the right end of a good work, respecting therein his own good, and nothing at all the good of others.

2. Secondly, hereby we may see for ourselves how far we come short in our good works, for commonly we fail in the main end thereof. Men spend their days and strength in labour and toil, but all is for themselves, for their own pleasure, their own profit and preferment, without respect to the good of their brethren. Now all such actions wherein men seek themselves only, and not God's glory in the good of others, be sinful in the doer, though otherwise good in themselves. And therefore we must learn, in all our actions, to aim at the glory of God in the good of men.

2. Thus we see what a good work is. Now follow the differences of good works. Good works be of two sorts: First, those which God in His Word hath directly commanded as part of His worship, such as prayer, thanksgiving, receiving the sacraments, hearing the Word and relieving the poor; and these are the more principal kinds of good works. The second sort are actions indifferent, sanctified by the Word and prayer, and done to God's glory, such as to eat, to drink and such like; for howsoever in themselves they be neither good nor evil, being things neither commanded nor forbidden; and therefore in respect of the things themselves, may with good conscience be either used or refused; yet because God hath commanded the manner how they must be used; namely, by being sanctified by the Word of God and prayer; and to the end thereof, to wit, God's glory; therefore when they are so used, they become good works.

Upon this difference of good works, observe the largeness thereof, how far they extend. There be three estates ordained of God: the church, the commonwealth and the family; and for the preserving of them, there be sundry callings required; some whereof are prescribed of God, and others left to be appointed by men; as all trades, and such like. Now not only the callings appointed by God, and the duties thereof are good works; but even all inferior callings appointed by men, for the good of these three estates; and the duties thereof, be they never so base, if they be sanctified by prayer, and done to God's glory, are good works. *Example*: A man is called to be a shepherd, and doth willingly accept thereof. Now though the calling be but base and mean, yet the works thereof being done in obedience to God, for the good of his master, are good works; yea, as good in their kind as the

best works of the highest callings; and the same may be said of all lawful callings and the works thereof, be they never so base; for God judgeth not the goodness of the work by the excellency of the matter whereabout it is occupied, but by the heart of the doer. This point must be learned, for the papist conceit doth stick fast in men's hearts, that there are no good works but the building of churches and hospitals, the mending of highways, giving of large alms, etc. But we must learn that every action of a man's lawful calling, done in obedience to God, for the good of men, is a good work before God; and therefore we must so walk every one of us in our callings, that the duties thereof may be acceptable to God. Again, this will hence follow, that in these our days, we may as well abound in such works as be good indeed, as the papists did in their superstitions. Thus much of the difference of good works.

3. Now more particularly, in the text are further set down three points touching good works: the necessity, the dignity and the use of good works.

1. The necessity of them appeareth by Christ's commanding of them saying, *Let your light so shine* etc.; for hereby He bindeth all Christians, after the examples of His disciples, to walk in good works. If it be said that Christ hath freed us from the law, and therefore we are not bound to do good works; I answer, Christ hath freed us from the law in regard of the curse and rigour thereof; but not as it is a rule of Christian obedience.

*Question*: How far forth are good works necessary to salvation, or to us that do them? *Answer*: There be three opinions touching the necessity of good works: first, of the papists, who hold them necessary as causes of our salvation and justification; but this we have confuted heretofore. Secondly, of some Protestants, who hold them necessary, though not as principal causes (for they say, we are only justified and saved by Christ), yet as conservant causes of our salvation; but the truth is that they are no causes of salvation, neither efficient, principal nor conservant; nor yet material, formal or final, as hath elsewhere been shewed. The third opinion is the truth, that good works are necessary, not as causes of salvation or justification; but as inseparable consequents of saving faith in Christ,

whereby we are justified and saved; or as a way is necessary to the going to a place.

2. The dignity of good works is expressed in this: that they are called good. Now they are good only in part, not perfectly, as I shew thus: Such as the tree is, such is the fruit; but everyone regenerate is partly spirit and partly flesh; that is, in part regenerate, and in part natural and corrupt. This is true of his mind, will and affections, which are the fountain of all his actions; and therefore the works that proceed thence must needs be answerable; that is, in part corrupt, as they come from nature; and yet good in part, as they come from grace.

*Question*: But how can God approve of them, if they be evil? *Answer*: We must consider good works two ways: first, in themselves, as they are compared with the law, and the rigour thereof, and so they are sins, because they answer not to that perfection which the law requireth; for there be two degrees of sins: Rebellious, which are actions flatly against the law; and Defects, when a man doth those things that the law commandeth, but yet faileth in the manner of doing, and so are man's very best works sins. Secondly, consider good works as done by a person regenerate and reconciled to God in Christ, and so God accepts of them; for in Christ the wants thereof are covered. But here we must take heed of the Romish doctrine which teacheth that good works are so far forth good, that there is no sin in them. Their reasons are many to prove this point, but they have been heretofore confuted. First, they say, good works have God for their author, and therefore are perfectly good. *Answer*: This were true, if he alone were the author of them; but man is another author thereof, from whom they take their imperfection. They say again that here they are called good, but if they had any sin in them, they should be called evil, for every sin is perfectly evil. *Answer*: Where sin is unremitted, it is perfectly evil; but when it is pardoned in our Saviour Christ, it is as though it were not. Thirdly, they object that if good works be sinful, then they must not be done; and hereupon they say that by our doctrine men are bound to abstain from all good works. *Answer*: That which is evil must not be done, so far forth as it is evil. Now good works are not simply and absolutely evil; they are good in themselves, and in us in part, coming from grace; and therefore they must be done, because God requires them at our hands. And for the

imperfection of them, we must pray for pardon to our Saviour Christ. And here by the way we may justly tax the proud doctrine of the papists, who teach that man may be justified by good works; whenas the best works of any man in this life are tainted with sin, and are far unanswerable to that perfection which the law requireth. We must be of a far other mind, namely, that for our best works, God may justly condemn us, because we have not done them as we ought. Therefore Christ bids us say of ourselves that *when we have done all that we can, we are unprofitable servants* (Luke 17:10).

3. The use of good works is here set down by our Saviour Christ to glorify God. This is not the whole end of good works; and therefore I will propound the same more fully, out of other places of Scripture; for Christ here only propoundeth that end of good works which concerned His intended purpose.

The use and end of good works is threefold, either concerning God, or ourselves, or our brethren:

1. As good works concern God, they have three uses: First, they serve as means whereby we give unto God testimony of our homage and obedience unto His commandments; for by creation, preservation and redemption, He is our Lord and our God, and so prescribeth laws for us to keep. In which regard we owe homage unto Him; which, that we may shew forth and testify, we must walk in good works, as He in His Word hath commanded us. Secondly, they serve to be tokens of our thankfulness unto God for our creation, redemption and manifold preservations, both in soul and body. Thankfulness indeed is shewed in word; but yet true thankfulness stands in obedience; and our obedience is shewed by doing good works. And therefore the apostle Paul exhorts us to *give up our bodies, as holy and acceptable sacrifices unto God* (Rom. 12:1). Thirdly, they serve to make us followers of God. We are commanded to *be holy, as He is holy* (1 Pet. 1:15); and to put in practice the duties of love one towards another as the Lord loved us; and therefore we must walk in the duties of the moral law, that therein we may imitate God. *He that hath this hope purgeth himself as He is pure* (1 John 3:3).

2. Secondly, the use of good works in regards of ourselves is fourfold especially:

First, they serve to be outward testimonies of the truth of our faith and profession; proving that the grace of our hearts is not in hypocrisy, but in truth and sincerity. And for this cause, Abraham is said to have been *justified by works* (Jam. 2:21); because his works did testify that his faith was true and sincere; for where the fire of grace is, there it cannot but burn; and where the water of life is, it cannot but flow and send out the streams thereof in good works.

Secondly, they serve to be signs and pledges of our election, justification, sanctification, and of our future glorification; as we know a tree to live by the fruit and bud which it bringeth forth; so by keeping a continual course in good works, a man is known to be in Christ, and to have true title to all His benefits; and therefore when the apostle willeth men to *give all diligence to make their calling and election sure* (2 Pet. 1:10), He propoundeth certain virtues wherein they ought to walk (vv. 5,6), as being the most evident tokens of election that we have in this life.

Thirdly, they serve to make us answerable to our holy calling; for everyone that professeth the gospel is called to be a member of Christ and a new creature, whose duty is to bring forth good works (Eph. 4:1,2), *Walk worthy of the vocation whereunto you are called, with all humbleness of mind, meekness* etc., and (Eph. 2:10), *Ye are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works, which God hath ordained that we should walk in them*. Now this is a most excellent thing for a man to be answerable to his calling. When David was a shepherd, he kept his father's sheep and lived as a shepherd; but when he was called to be a king, he behaved himself like a king in governing God's people (Psa. 78:72); and so every Christian ought to do; being a new creature, he must walk as God's child, and testify his vocation by shewing forth the virtues of Him that hath called him (1 Pet. 2:9).

Fourthly, good works serve to be a way in which we are to walk, that so we may receive the mercies of God promised to His children, and escape the judgments threatened against sinners; for God's Word is full of most sweet promises unto the obedient, and of terrible threatenings against rebellion

and iniquity. Now a man by walking in good works eschews the paths of wickedness wherein God's judgments light (Rom. 3:16); and holds the ways of righteousness, wherein God's blessings are scattered (Prov. 3:17).

3. Thirdly, the end of good works in regards of our brethren is principally this: that by our example in well doing, we may win some unto God, and keep others in the obedience of the truth, and prevent offences whereby many are drawn back. The contagion of a bad example, especially in men of superior place, is such that it will not only cast their own souls to hell, but also draw many with them. When Jeroboam the king sinned (1 Kin. 15:34), *he caused Israel to sin*. And therefore we must carefully look to all our ways in regard of others, and so live according to Christ's commandment in this place, that others seeing our good works may be won to the truth, and so glorify God which is in heaven. And thus we see the end of good works.

Now considering good works be of such excellent use, we are hereby admonished to exercise ourselves therein with all diligence; for hereby we benefit our brethren, we help ourselves, and we glorify God; neither must any man's poverty hinder him from this duty; for not only alms deeds, and large gifts to churches and highways, are good works, but also the special duties of every man's lawful calling, done in faith, to the glory of God and the good of men, be the calling never so base; by the doing whereof, in faith and obedience, he may get sure testimony of his election. This exhortation is most needful, for so soon as men have occasion to commit any sin, then they shake off the yoke of all obedience, as if there were no ways of good works to be walked in. The papists indeed make the merit of justification and life everlasting, the end of good works, but that hath been sufficiently confuted heretofore.

Hitherto we have spoken of the first point in this conclusion, touching the manner of teaching.

2. The second point herein contained, is the end of all teaching; namely, to turn men unto God, and thereby to bring them to glorify God. *That men may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*; that is, to teach that men may see your good works, and be won thereby to the faith, and so glorify God. Our Saviour Christ in His commission given to

His disciples before His ascension, bids them *Go, make all nations my disciples* (Matt. 28:19); and Paul saith that he *became all things to all men, that by all means he might* not only instruct, but *save some* (1 Cor. 9:22).

Hereby then all ministers, and all those that set themselves apart for this calling, must learn to propound this duty unto themselves as the main end of all their studies and labours; namely, to turn men unto God, that being converted they may glorify God. Again, the same end of the ministry admonisheth all hearers so to yield themselves obedient to the ministry of the Word, that it may take place in their hearts, to turn them unto God, that after their conversion they may glorify God. This the people ought the rather to yield unto, because it is the main comfort that the minister hath of all his labours, to see his hearers converted, and so enabled to glorify God. And to move them hereto, they are further to know that if they hear, and be not thereby converted, that so they may praise and glorify God by their obedience, then this ministry will be a bill of indictment against them, for their deeper condemnation at the last day (See Matt. 11:21,24).

# 5:17-20

"*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*." Matthew 5:17-20

"*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil*." (v.17)

In this verse, and the rest which follow to the end of the chapter, is contained the third part of Christ's sermon; wherein He goes about to restore the moral law to its true sense and meaning, which was much corrupted by the Jewish teachers. And to the end the same might be the better accepted, He makes way thereto by a notable preface in vv. 17-20; wherein He seeks, as well to prevent as to remove the false opinion which the Jews conceived of Him in respect of the law; as also to procure all reverence and loyalty to be shewed thereunto. For the Jewish teachers seeing our Saviour Christ condemn and neglect the tradition of the elders, and not so much to respect the ceremonies of the law, as they thought He should, did thereupon judge Him to be a deceiver, and one that went about to overturn the whole law of Moses. This opinion Christ confuteth by three arguments: First, from the end of His coming, in this verse; the second, from the nature of the law, in the 18th verse, whereupon He infers two notable conclusions to procure reverence thereunto (v. 19); and thirdly, from the scope of His ministry (v.20).

I. For the first: The exposition.

*Think not that I am come* etc.

This coming of Christ must be understood of the manifestation of the Godhead in our nature; for otherwise, His Godhead being everywhere, cannot be said to come properly; and as for His manhood, it had not been in heaven.

*To destroy the law*.

The law in general is that part of God's Word which commands things just, honest and godly; and being thus conceived, it is threefold: ceremonial, judicial and moral. The ceremonial law is that part of God's Word which prescribed to the Jews ceremonies, rites and orders to be performed in the worship of God. This law is laid down in the books of Moses, especially in Leviticus. The judicial law is that part of God's Word which prescribed ordinances for the government of the Jews' commonwealth and the civil punishment of offenders. The ceremonial law concerned the Jews only; the judicial law did indeed principally concern them; but yet, so far forth as it tendeth to the establishing of the moral law, having in it common equity, it concerneth all people in all times and places. What the moral law is, I will describe in three points: First, it is that part of God's Word concerning righteousness and godliness which was written in Adam's mind by the gift of creation; and the remnants of it be in every man by the light of nature; in regard whereof it binds all men. Secondly, it commandeth perfect obedience, both inward in thought and affection, and outward in speech and action. Thirdly, it bindeth to the curse and punishment, everyone that faileth in the least duty thereof, though but once, and that in thought only (Gal. 3:10), *Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the law, to do them*. The sum of the moral law is propounded in the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, which many can repeat, but few do understand.

That we may further conceive aright the moral law, we must make a difference between it and the gospel; for the gospel is that part of the Word which promiseth righteousness and life everlasting to all that believe in Christ; the difference between them stands especially in five things:

First, the law is moral, and was in man's nature before the fall; but the gospel is spiritual, revealed after the fall, in the Covenant of grace.

Secondly, the law sets forth God's justice in rigour, without mercy; but the gospel sets out justice and mercy united in Christ.

Thirdly, the law requireth a perfect righteousness within us; but the gospel revealeth our acceptance with God by imputed righteousness.

Fourthly, the law threateneth judgment without mercy, and therefore is called the *ministry of condemnation, and of death* (2 Cor. 3:7,9); but the gospel shews mercy to man's sin in and by Christ, if we repent and believe.

Lastly, the law promiseth life to the worker and doer of it: *Do this and thou shalt live* (Rom. 10:5); but the gospel offereth salvation to *him that worketh not, but believeth in Him that justifieth the ungodly* (Rom. 4:5); not considering faith as a work, but as an instrument apprehending Christ, by whom we are made righteous.

The church of Rome in a manner confound the law and the gospel, saying that the gospel, which is the new law, revealeth Christ more clearly than Moses did, which they call the old law. But this is a wicked opinion, which overturns all religion, being the cause of many gross points in popery, which could not stand if they would acknowledge a true distinction between the law and the gospel. They say for their defence that the precepts of both are the same in substance; that both require righteousness, both promise life and threaten death; both command faith, repentance and obedience; and therefore they are the same. *Answer*: First, the laws and precepts of the law and gospel are not the same; for Adam in his innocence knew the law, but he knew nothing then of believing in Christ; and though both require righteousness, promise life, and threaten death, yet the manner is far different, as before was noted. So likewise they differ in the commanding of faith; for the gospel commandeth faith, not as a work done, as the law doth; but as an instrument laying hold on Christ. Again, the law command faith generally; as to believe in God, and to believe His Word to be true; but besides this, the gospel requires a particular faith in Christ the Redeemer, whom the law never knew. Thirdly, the law commandeth not repentance, for the knowledge of the law was in Adam's heart when he needed no

repentance; true repentance therefore is a saving grace, wrought and commanded only by the gospel. And fourthly, for obedience, though it be commanded both by the law and the gospel; yet not in the same manner; the law commandeth obedience every way perfect, both in parts and degrees, and alloweth none other; but the gospel commandeth, and in Christ approveth imperfect obedience; that is, an endeavour in all things to obey and please God, if it be without hypocrisy. Again, the law commandeth obedience, as a work to be done for the obtaining of salvation; but the gospel requires obedience, only to testify our faith and thankfulness unto God. The church of Rome therefore erreth greatly in confounding the law and the gospel, which indeed are far differing; and so we must believe, if we would come into, and hold the right way that leadeth to life.

Now whereas Christ saith, *Think not that I come to destroy the law*; by *law* He meaneth principally the moral law, and in the second place the ceremonial law also. Next observe the opposition that Christ maketh between the law and the prophets; thereby signifying unto us that by *the law*, He meaneth that part of God's Word concerning righteousness and justice which Moses penned by God's commandment; and by *the prophets*, He meaneth that part of God's Word which is contained in the writings of all the prophets in the Old Testament after Moses; which books of the prophets contained in them either an interpretation of Moses' law, or predictions of the state of the church in the New Testament. Again, by *destroying the law*, we must not understand a breach of the law, such as is made by man's sin; but such a dissolution as taketh from it all virtue and power whereby it is a law; and so to *destroy the prophets*, is to put an end unto them so as they should nothing avail, either to the interpretation of the law, or to the foretelling of the state of God's church under the gospel.

*But to fulfil them*. Christ fulfilleth the law three ways: by His doctrine, in His person and in men. By His doctrine He fulfilleth the law two ways: both by restoring unto it His proper meaning and true use, as we shall see afterwards where He correcteth the corrupt interpretations of the Pharisees; as also by revealing the right way whereby the law may be fulfilled. Secondly, in His person He fulfilleth the law two ways: first, by becoming accursed to the law, in suffering death upon the cross for us; secondly, by performing perfect obedience unto the law, doing all that the law required

for the love of God or of His neighbour; in which respect He was said (Gal. 4:4) to have been *under the law*. Thirdly, Christ fulfilled the law in men. Men may be of two sorts: elect and reprobates. In His elect, He fulfilled the law two ways: first, by creating faith in their hearts whereby they lay hold on Christ, who for them fulfilled it; secondly, by giving them His own Spirit which maketh them endeavour to fulfil the law; which in Christ is accepted for perfect obedience in this life, and in the life to come is perfect indeed. In unbelievers, Christ fulfilleth the law when He executeth the curse of the law upon them; for this is a part of the law, and the execution and enduring of the curse is a fulfilling of the law. And thus doth Christ fulfil the law; so that the meaning of the words is this: Whereas you think that I came to destroy the law and the prophets, by making them of none effect, you are deceived; nay, on the other side, know that the end of my manifestation in the flesh was to fulfil the law, both in my dostrine and person; and also, in the persons of men both good and bad.

In this apology of Christ, for His behaviour towards the law; observe what malice some of the Jews, especially the Scribes and Pharisees, bare unto Him; for Christ was the author of the law, and yet they maliciously suspect and charge Him with the abrogation thereof; so as he is fain to clear Himself in this behalf.

The like hath been the malice of wicked men in all ages, against the dearest servants of God (Acts 6:14). Stephen is accused to speak blasphemous words against the Law (Acts 8); and Paul is charged with the same crime (Acts 21:28). And such is the malice of the papists against all evangelical reformed churches; because we deny justification by works, therefore they condemn us for enemies to good works; and in many other points they fasten upon us notes of reproach for holding the truth. Yea, among ourselves, the like malice doth appear in those that brand their brethren with odious names, because they shew forth more care than others, of their duty to God; but let all God's children beware of this Pharisaical practice.

Again, observe the titles under which He comprehendeth the whole Scriptures of the Old Testament: *The law and the prophets*. They are called *Moses and the prophets* (Luke 16:31). Christ began at Moses and all the

Prophets, and interpreted unto them in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27); there *Moses and the Prophets* do contain all the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

Here then we may note a property of the books of the Old Testament; namely, that every one of them was either written by Moses or some other of the prophets. And by this we may know the canonical books of the Old Testament, and distinguish them from the books called Apocrypha; for the Apocrypha books were not penned by any of the prophets, who spake and wrote in the Hebrew tongue, the native language of the Jews; but by some other in the Greek tongue, which was not the language of the old prophets. These books may be regarded in sundry respects, as containing many worthy rules touching manners; in which regard we may prefer them before other writings of men, so far forth as they are consonant with the Scripture; and so the church of God hath of a long time reverenced them; but yet they are no part of the law, nor of the prophets. And therefore the church of Rome doth notably wrong and abuse the world in styling these apocryphal books for canonical Scripture.

Thirdly, Christ, in this His apology, sheweth a sweet consent between the law and the gospel. They are not contrary one to the other; for Christ who is the substance of the gospel, came to fulfil the law; and therefore Paul saith (Rom. 3:31), *We establish the law*; and (Heb. 9:19ff.), *When Moses had given the law unto the people, offered sacrifices, and sprinkled the blood thereof upon the book, and upon the people*, which was a type of the shedding of Christ's blood, as it is there expounded (vv. 23,24); which did notably signify this consent between the law and the gospel, insomuch as without Christ, the law could not stand.

Now this consent between them standeth herein: The law requireth perfect obedience, and threateneth death to the least breach thereof, not propounding any way for the fulfilling thereof out of ourselves; but the gospel directeth us to Christ, who as our surety hath fulfilled the law for us; for which cause Christ is called (Rom. 10:4) *the end of the law for righteousness, in everyone that believeth*. And through Christ it is (Rom. 8:4) that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, which walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

"*For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*." (v.18)

II. Here our Saviour Christ propoundeth the second argument for the clearing of Himself from their false imputation of destroying the law, and it is drawn from the nature of the law, which is immutable.

The Exposition.

*For*.

This sheweth the dependence of this verse upon the former.

*Truly, I say unto you*.

This is a form of speech which our Saviour used when He would solemnly avouch any weighty truth; and propounding this in His own name, herein He sheweth Himself to be the Doctor of His church, whom we must hear in all things, for He speaketh as one that cannot lie. The thing He saith is this:

*Till heaven and earth perish, one jot or tittle of the law shall not pass*.

In which words He setteth down the stability and the unchangeableness of the law; and that He might fully express His mind, He borroweth a phrase from the Hebrew alphabet, wherein *Jod* is the least letter; one jot signifying that not so much as this little letter *Jod* shall pass out of the law. Again, by *tittle*, some think is meant the Hebrew vowels; but properly it signifieth a line bent or crooked, or the top of an horn; so that here it properly signifieth the bending or bowing that is in the top of some Hebrew letters; insinuating that not so much as the least part of a letter in the law should pass away. Now these things must not be taken properly, for it hath been and may be that in the Hebrew copies of the Old Testament some letters should be changed, as may appear by the diverse reading in sundry copies; for that may be without the loss of any sentence; but Christ's meaning is this: that not the least parcel or sentence in the law shall pass away; making parts in the law to be as tittles in the alphabet.

*Till heaven and earth perish*

That is, never; so much this phrase insinuateth; for though heaven and earth shall be changed in regard of their qualities, yet the substance of them shall never pass to nothing; and in this sense is the word *till* used elsewhere; (1 Sam. 15:35), *Samuel came no more to see Saul till the day of his death*, that is, never.

*Till all things be fulfilled*

That is, till everything commanded in the law be done, so as it shall no more urge a man to any obedience; which shall never be, for it must eternally be fulfilled; so that this phrase hath the like sense with the former, importing thus much: *even for ever and ever*. So that this is the meaning of this verse: that the law of God is unchangeable, not only in the whole, but for every part thereof; and the fulfilling thereof shall never have an end. Christ's reason then stands thus: *If the law be immutable, and for observation eternal, then I came not to destroy it: But the law is immutable and eternal; and therefore I came not to destroy it*.

1. First, here observe that the law of God is made perpetual and unchangeable. If any man ask how this can be, seeing the apostle saith, *the law is changed* (Heb. 7:12)? *Answer*: The law is threefold: ceremonial, judicial and moral, as hath been said. Now that place is principally to be understood of the ceremonial law, which indeed is abrogated, in regard of the observation of it in God's worship; but in the scope and substance of it, which is Christ crucified, with His benefits, whom it shadowed out, it remaineth still, and is now more plain than ever it was. As for the judicial law, though it be abrogated unto us, so far forth as it was peculiar to the Jews; yet as it agrees with common equity, and serves directly to establish the precepts of the moral law, it is perpetual. If it be said that Christ changed the moral law in changing the Sabbath day from the seventh day to the eighth; I answer Christ did so indeed by His apostles, but that is no change of the substance, but of the ceremony of the Sabbath; for the substance of that law is the enjoining of a seventh day's rest unto the Lord. Now though the seventh day from the creation be not kept, yet a seventh day is kept still. If it be further said that the law itself is abrogated; for that everyone that breaketh the law is not accursed, according to the sentence thereof (Deut. 27:26); *Answer*: We must know that the law is one part of

God's Word and the gospel another, revealing another part of God's will, besides that which the law made known; for it adds a qualification to the law, moderating the rigour thereof, after this manner: He is accursed (saith the law) that faileth in any commandment, except (saith the gospel) he be reconciled again in Christ, and in Him have the pardon of his transgressions. And yet the moral law remains for ever a rule of obedience to every child of God, though he be not bound to bring the same obedience for his justification before God.

2. Again, this property of the law, in being unchangeable and for ever to be kept, sheweth that no creature may be abrogated and changed, but God's law even in the least parts thereof, must stand for ever, till it be accomplished to the full; but if it might be dispensed with, then not jots and tittles thereof, but whole laws might be abrogated. This shews the blasphemous impiety of the popes of Rome, who in their canons be authorised to dispense with the laws of God; yea, in the last Council of Trent, he is privileged to dispense with some of the laws of consanguinity, against nature, flatly forbidden in the Word of God (Lev. 18); which is most horrible rebellion, and a great disgrace unto God.

3. Thirdly, from the property of the law, we may observe that it is not likely that any whole book of canonical Scripture is lost; for not one sentence of the law shall pass till all be fulfilled; much less then can whole books perish. Sundry men do think that whole books be lost; but that opinion calls into question the fidelity of the church and God's own providence in preserving His Word. Neither can it stand well with this text that saith no tittle thereof shall fail. Those that seem to be lost, were either human writings, as books of laws and chronicles, such as our books of statutes or chronicles be; or books of philosophy, such as Solomon wrote; or else some of them are in the canonical Scripture; for the books of Samuel and the Kings were written by divers prophets; and therefore we may more safely hold that no part of Holy Scripture is lost, neither shall ever fail. For howsoever after the last judgment the use of the written Word shall cease, yet the substance thereof shall remain in men's hearts and be kept for ever.

4. Fourthly, this immutability of the law contains a matter of great terror and woe unto all impenitent sinners; for howsoever they may flatter

themselves with a presumption of God's mercy, yet the curse of the law which is against them, shall stand for ever; and therefore while they go on in sin, they have just cause to howl and cry; for God's justice in His law is inviolable. Neither will (Prov. 11:4) gold or silver pacify God's wrath; for though a man by his power and wealth were able to overturn heaven and earth, yet that would not help him; though heaven and earth be brought to nothing, yet every part of God's law must stand for ever and be fulfilled. And therefore whosoever do lie in any sin, must in time repent, humble themselves, forsake their sins, and betake themselves unto Christ, that He may fulfil the law for them; or else the curse thereof shall certainly be fulfilled in them, and they shall lie howling under it eternally, where is nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth.

5. Fifthly, this immutability of the law, and so proportionally of every part of God's Word, as it proveth the Scriptures to be the Word of God, so it is a most excellent ground of comfort for all God's servants to stablish their hearts in the assurance of all His promises. A Christian heart is subject to receive many doubting of the truth of God's promises, especially in the time of trial and temptation; but this must be remembered for ever, that the whole Word of God is immutable; though man's promises may fail and their ways be abrogated, yet no jot or part of God's Word shall pass unfulfilled; and therefore they must constantly wait for the accomplishment thereof, for in due time it shall be fulfilled.

6. Sixthly, we are hereby taught to put on patience in afflictions; for they come by special appointment of our God, who saith in His Word (Acts 14:22) that *through many afflictions we must enter into the kingdom of heaven*. Now every part of God's Word must be accomplished; and therefore Christ bade Peter to put up his sword, when he would have rescued His apprehension; for (saith He) *I could pray to my Father, and He would send more than twelve legions of angels to help me; but how should the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must so be?* (Matt. 26:52-54).

7. Seventhly, our Saviour Christ in this property of immutability, giveth unto the whole law, and unto every syllable and letter thereof, its proper force, virtue and sense; so as there is nothing in it, not so much as one letter, vain or idle; for every commandment reveals the perfect justice of God, and

every letter serves to express the same commandment. And herein the law of God differeth from men's laws; for in them be many vain and idle words; yea, oftentimes whole sentences; but in the law of God it is not so (Prov. 8:8), *All the words of my mouth are righteous, there I no lewdness or frowardness in them*; yea (Psa. 19:7,8), *the law of the Lord is perfect, His statutes are right, and His judgments true and righteous altogether*. Now the consideration of this integrity and perfection of the law, and Word of God, must move us to study the Scriptures with great diligence. So saith our Saviour Christ (John 5:39) *Search the scriptures*; that is, shake and sift them (as the word signifieth), search narrowly, till the true force and meaning of every sentence, yea, of every word and syllable; nay, of every letter and jot therein, be known and understood. Confer place with place, the scope of one place with another, things going before with things that come after; yea, compare word with word, letter with letter, and search it thoroughly. This manner of studying the Scripture is most necessary, as being the thing indeed which preserveth and upholdeth the church of God and the purity of religion; for about four or five hundred years ago, men left off to study the Bible after this sort, and betook themselves to the writings of men, occupying their wits wholly in vain quiddities in philosophy, and in hid mysteries of divinity; by which means it came to pass that popery and apostasy from the truth spread itself over the world for many hundred years together. Afterward, God of His mere mercy, put into the hearts of some men, to be careful searchers in the Word of God, by which means the truth appeared, as light out of darkness. Thus God stirred up Luther, about the year of our Lord 1517, who by diligent search in the Scripture, and especially by serious meditation, with prayer, upon these words of the apostle (Rom. 3:21) that *now by the gospel, without the law, the justice of God is made manifest*; did find that by the perfect obedience of Christ, our justification was wrought; and thereupon began to maintain and profess justification before God to be free, through and by faith in Christ only, without help from the works of the law, against the doctrine of the church of Rome; and so by further diligence and industry in the Scripture, the truth of God shone forth more and more. Let all men, but especially students in divinity, consider this effect of searching out the Scripture as a spur to diligence in this behalf. By this means also errors and heresies are avoided and suppressed, and the will of God is plainly revealed. And here by the way, we may see how profitable and necessary the gift of interpretation is;

it is a most excellent gift of the Spirit, pertaining to the ministry; and therefore most commendable and necessary in the use thereof in schools of learning.

8. Eighthly, this immutability ascribed to God's law, that every part thereof shall be accomplished to the full, teacheth that all princes and magistrates, not only to be keepers of Moses' law in their own persons; but also within their rule and dominions, to do their best endeavour that the same be fulfilled and kept by others. For this cause did the law command that the prince of His people should have the law written before him in a book, to read upon continually, that he may learn to fear God, and to keep all the words of the law to do them (Deut. 17:18,19); and that which is there enjoined unto princes, belongeth also unto all magistrates, masters and parents, within their places and charges; they must be careful to see the whole law of God practised and obeyed, both in their own persons, and of those that are under them.

9. Lastly, by this immutability ascribed to the law, we may learn what it is to fulfil the law; namely, to keep and observe to the full every particular thing which the law commands us; and upon this we may ground two conclusions against the papists: First, that no man can come to life everlasting by his own righteousness and obedience; for he that would come to heaven by his own righteousness, must be able to fulfil the whole law perfectly in every respect; but since Adam's fall no man could keep the law in all things, saving our Saviour Christ, both God and man. Secondly, that our fulfilling of the law must be in the obedience of Christ, for he only was answerable to the whole law in all things; and therefore if we would come to heaven, we must not come in our own righteousness, but in His; as Paul wisheth to be found of God (Phil. 3:8,9).

"*Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven*." (v.19)

Our Saviour Christ, having plainly propounded in His apology for Himself, the stability and the eternity of the whole law; doth here lay down two notable conclusions for the upholding thereof:

1. Because the law is immutable and eternal, therefore he that breaketh one of the least of the commandments, and teacheth men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

2. Because the law is eternal, therefore he that keeps the commandments, and teacheth men so, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

1. For the first, by *least commandment*, He meaneth the precepts of the moral law, though in the former verse, by law He understood the whole law in three parts, judicial, moral and ceremonial. And He calleth them *little*, not simply in regard of themselves, as though they were so indeed; for in itself every commandment of God is great and weighty; but He speaketh according to the opinion of the Jews, for the Scribes and Pharisees had ordained certain rites and ceremonies according to the tradition of their fathers; the observation whereof, they made a greater matter of conscience than the keeping of some of God's commandments; and so esteemed them little. Again, saying *these least commandments*, He appointeth out what particular commandments of the moral law the Jews esteemed less than the traditions of men; namely, those which afterward He expoundeth in this chapter touching murder, adultery, swearing and the rest; for they esteemed not all the commandments of the law lesser than their traditions.

*Shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven*.

Here Christ sets down the punishment of a false prophet, which breaks God's commandments and teach men so; to wit, his base esteem in the church of God; for the kingdom of God is twofold: the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory. The kingdom of grace is the society and company of God's faithful servants here on earth; the kingdom of glory is the blessed estate of all the saints in heaven. Now here by the kingdom of heaven, He meaneth the kingdom of grace, which is the militant church on earth; and so John Baptist calleth it (Matt. 3:2): *Repent, and amend, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*; that is, the church of the Old Testament is now abolished, and the church of the New Testament is ready to take place by Christ's coming; and therefore, repent and amend. And (Matt 11:12), *From the time of John hitherto, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence*. So then the meaning of this first conclusion is this: whosoever breaketh one of the least commandments of the moral law (which afterwards I shall expound), and

teacheth men so to do, he shall be contemned, and not counted worthy to be a member of the church of God in the New Testament.

1. In this conclusion, in the practice of the Jews, Christ setteth forth two notable corruptions of an hollow heart towards God:

1. The first, to see little by the commandments of God, esteeming no more of them, nay less, than of men's laws and traditions. But St James saith (Jam. 2:10), *He that breaketh one commandment*, be it never so little, *is guilty of all*, though he make shew of keeping all. So likewise he that maketh light and base account of one commandment, condemneth all; though he seem to honour the rest never so much. Though Herod heard John gladly, and obeyed his doctrine in many things, and so seemed to make some account of some commandments; yet because he would needs live in incest, against the seventh commandment, he did in effect contemn and break them all. So at this day, there are many who profess religion, and give testimony thereof, by hearing the Word and receiving the sacraments; and hereupon they would be counted as lovers of God's law; yet in the course of their lives, and in their particular callings, they will not stick to oppress the poor, and to deal unjustly for their advantage; to profane the Sabbath for a little profit or pleasure, and to swear and curse when they are a little provoked. Now howsoever such persons may make a glorious shew of profession outwardly, yet by these and such like particular actions, they shew plainly that they have but Pharisaical hearts, which indeed make little or no account of God's commandments. Let us therefore every one look into our ways, and search in our hearts, whether this corruption be in us or no; and if it be, let us repent and forsake it, and labour to become like David, who had respect unto all God's commandments (Psa. 119:6); and so shall we not be despised in the church of God.

2. The second corruption of an hollow heart, noted likewise of Christ, in these Jews is, to place the ceremonies, rites and traditions of men above the commandments of the moral law. Herewith He doth expressly charge the Jewish teachers (Matt. 15:3), *Why do ye transgress the commandments of God by your traditions*? And this is

also the practice of the church of Rome at this day, they account eating of flesh in Lent, and on their fasting days, a deadly sin; and yet they will dispense with treasons and murders of Christian princes. They allow of stews, they permit and pardon sodomy; and yet utterly forbid marriage in some estate, which the Holy Ghost calleth *honourable among men* (Heb. 13:4). In these and many more, they prefer their own traditions before the most holy commandments of God; yea, many ignorant persons among us are tainted with this corruption; for be not some feast days appointed by the church as Christ's nativity, All Saints, and such like, observed by them with greater conscience and reverence than the Lord's own Sabbath? Though the memory of Christ's nativity may be celebrated; yet the Lord's day should have the special honour. Now for the reforming of this corruption, we must labour to have the same mind that was in David, who grew into admiration with God's commandments, and thereupon inured himself to the observation of them. We must therefore labour to have a high estimation of the laws of God, and this will be a notable means to draw us to a reverent fear and obedience towards the same. One cause why men do not so highly advance the law of God as they ought, is because they do not sufficiently weigh the dignity thereof. In every commandment therefore, we must first deeply consider the weight thereof; then labour to understand it aright; thirdly, learn to admire the wisdom and justice of God therein; and lastly, endeavour to yield loyalty and obedience thereunto.

2. Secondly, in this rule, our Saviour Christ puts a difference between a false prophet and a true; the false prophet breaks the commandments of God in his own person, and also by his doctrine teacheth others to do the like; but the true prophet and servant of God, in the ministry, endeavoureth the advancement of God's glory, as well by integrity of life, as by soundness of doctrine.

3. Thirdly, in the punishment of a false prophet here set down, we have good direction for our judgment touching the present church of Rome; namely, that she is not worthy to be esteemed a part of Christ's church on earth, by the sentence of our Saviour Christ; because she *breaks God's commandments, and teacheth men so*; for whereas the second

> commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of images, yea, and the making of images to resemble God; the church of Rome doth not only allow the contrary, against this commandment, but teacheth others so to do; saying that it is lawful to resemble the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost in images, either painted or carved, and to worship them therein; yea, and to worship the very images of Christ, and of saints, and also the saints themselves, with religious worship.

Again, they plainly break the tenth commandment, which forbiddeth the first motions unto sin with delight, though without consent of will, by teaching that concupiscence after baptism is no sin. And as they deal with the commandments, so deal they with the prophets, who give testimony unto Christ; for first, they destroy His manhood by their forged transubstantiation; secondly, they overturn His kingly office by making the pope the head of the church, and giving him power to make laws to bind the conscience. Thirdly, they overturn the priesthood by their massing priesthood, wherein they daily offer up an unbloodied sacrifice for the sins of the quick and the dead. Fourthly, they rob Him of His prophetical office in giving liberty to the pope to make new laws, and to expound the Scriptures as supreme judge. These things they teach, and therefore that church is not worthy to be counted a member of Christ's church. But seeing God in great mercy hath vouchsafed us this favour in this land that we should receive and embrace His holy Word, to publish and teach the same; and so esteemeth us worthy to be accounted a member of His church; we are therefore to rejoice in this mercy, and to praise God unfeignedly for this unspeakable blessing; and to shew forth our thankfulness, not only by teaching and receiving the truth of His Word, but also by yielding obedience in all things thereunto; yea, our earnest and daily prayer must be, because it is so great a blessing, to be counted worthy of His kingdom that God would continue the truth of His will to us, and to our posterity for ever.

2. The second conclusion*: Whosoever shall keep them, and teach men so, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven*; that is, he shall be honoured in the church of God, and esteemed a worthy member thereof, because by this means, he endeavoureth to keep the law unchangeable for ever. In this conclusion two points are to be considered: the *office* of a faithful teacher, and his *reward*.

1. His office is twofold: First, in his own person he must be a doer of God's commandments; secondly, in his public ministry, he must teach men so to do.

1. Here first observe the order of these duties: *doing* must go before *teaching*. This order Christ propounds, and that doubtless on special grounds; first, because a man cannot with joy and comfort fitly teach others, before himself being a doer of the thing he teacheth; for if a man teach others, from the instruction of the Spirit, he shall find his own heart inclined by the same Spirit, to be obedient to the Word he teacheth.

Again, the experience of the fruit and efficacy of the Word, in his own person, is the best commentary a man can have, for the opening of it unto others. The writings of men with the knowledge of arts and tongues, are excellent helps; yet if a man want the Spirit of God, framing his heart to believe and obey the Word he teacheth, whereby he should become a doer of it; doubtless the Word will seem but a dream or riddle unto him, neither can he fitly apply the same unto others, having never had experience of it in his own soul. This then should move all ministers, and such as set themselves to this calling, first and chiefly to labour to become doers of the Word themselves; other helps of learning are to be sought for with all diligence, to make them fit and able ministers of so great mysteries; but especially they must labour for the Spirit of grace, to frame their hearts to embrace, and their lives to obey the Word which they teach, that so they may be fitted, according to our Saviour Christ's direction. Now this Spirit is attained by knocking at heaven's gates by prayer (Luke 11:13), and by opening the door of our hearts, when our Saviour Christ knocketh thereat by His Word (Rev. 3:20).

2. Secondly, in laying down this duty, our Saviour Christ propoundeth a singular comfort to such faithful ministers as be grieved with the untowardness of their people. He propoundeth not the conversion of the people, as a property of a faithful teacher, but the doing and teaching of the will and Word of God. And doubtless a man may be a faithful teacher, and yet not convert many unto God; hence the prophet complains that *he had laboured in vain, and spent his strength in vain*

(Isa. 49:4). Nay, the same prophet is sent to *blind the eyes of his people, to make them dull of hearing, and to harden their hearts* by his ministry (Isa. 6:9,12); which was an heavy case; but yet that saying of the apostle Paul must be remembered; that howsoever unto some, his ministry was *the savour of death; yet, unto God it was always the sweet savour of Christ* (2 Cor. 2:15,16). So that a minister mourning truly for his people, to see their hardness of heart, may comfort himself with this: that in a good conscience he endeavoureth to obey the Word of God, and to teach men so.

2. The reward of a faithful teacher is this: *he shall be counted great in the kingdom of heaven*; that is, he shall be honoured, and counted worthy to be a member of Christ's church, both in this life, and in the life to come. This must be remembered, to incite all ministers to become faithful teachers, both in life and doctrine. To get respect in princes' courts is much sought after on earth; O then, how should this high respect with God prevail in our hearts to incite us to be faithful in this calling?

"*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*." (v.20)

III. These words are commonly taken to be reason of the former verse, by way of answer to a secret objection which the Jews might frame therefrom, to this effect: Thou sayest, whosoever breaketh one of these least commandments, and teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but our teachers, the Scribes and Pharisees, look to have chief place in the kingdom of heaven; and yet (if thy doctrine be true) they break God's commandments, and teach others so to do. Now hereto, Christ should answer thus: *I say unto you, except your righteousness exceeds theirs, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*. But if we mark well, , the words more fitly be referred to the 17th verse, as a third reason to prove that Christ came not to destroy the law, or the prophets, but to fulfil them; because He exacts at every man's hands, a more perfect and exact righteousness than that which the Scribes and Pharisees either have in themselves, or require in others; without which, no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven.

In this verse are three points to be handled: First, what these Scribes and Pharisees were; secondly, what was their righteousness; and thirdly, what is that true righteousness, whereby a man may enter into the kingdom of heaven, and stand just before God.

1. For the first, a *Scribe* is a name of office, whereof there were two sorts among the Jews: *Civil*, who as public notaries did register the affairs of princes; and such an one was Shimshai (Ezra 4:8); and *Ecclesiastical*, who were employed in the expounding of the Scripture; such an one was Ezra (Ezra 7:1,5,6). And those of whom our Saviour Christ saith (Matt. 13:52), *Every Scribe taught unto the kingdom of heaven is like an householder*; and (Matt. 23:2), *The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' chair*; that is, they are expounders of the law of Moses. And such Scribes are meant in this place; to wit, men in ecclesiastical office, descending from the tribe of Levi, who expounded the law unto the people; and these were all one with the Priests and Levites, under the law; and therefore Ezra is called both a Scribe and Priest (Neh. 8:1,2).

The name Pharisee betokeneth a sect, not an office; for there were three special sects among the Jews; the Essenes, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The Essenes were like popish monks and friars, which did separate themselves from the people, vowing and dedicating themselves to live in perpetual sanctity. The Sadducees were a sect that did expound the law, according to the letter and syllable, and withal denied the resurrection and the immortality of the soul, as is plain (Acts 23:8). The Pharisees were such as did forsake the common exposition of the Scribes, and taught and framed a more exact and strict exposition of the law, according to the traditions of the fathers; and they were most holy outwardly, and of chief account among the Jews; and therefore the apostle Paul saith (Acts 26:5), that *after the most strict sect of their religion he lived a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee*. Yet besides these three were another sect, called Herodians, who (as some think) were courtiers, which held and taught that Herod was the Messiah. And thus we see what the Scribes and Pharisees were, whom Christ here joineth together for amplification's sake; understanding thereby such teachers among the Jews, Priests and Levites, as lived after the most strait custom of the Pharisees; for the Pharisees were by office Scribes, as we may plainly see by comparing together John 1:19 with v.24, where the

Priests and Levites (who were Scribes as we have shewed) are called Pharisees.

2. What was the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, which is here so debased, as being unable to bring a man to heaven? By the tenor of Scripture it will appear that it was (Luke 11:39; Matt. 6:2,5,16) an external righteousness only, standing in the outward observation of the law; for they were careful to abstain from actual gross sin, as whoredom, theft, murder, idolatry and such like, and they were very forward in keeping the traditions and ceremonies of the elders (Mark 7:3,4), and in all things to carry themselves in shew conformable to the law (Phil. 3:6); but the inward righteousness of the heart they nothing regarded; thinking that perfect righteousness consisted in outward obedience, and by that they looked to be saved; as it is said (Rom. 10:2), *Neglecting utterly the righteousness of God*.

In these Scribes and Pharisees we may observe what is the natural persuasion of man touching righteousness; to wit, that an outward righteousness will serve the turn; and therefore every man naturally contents himself therewith; and hence it is that men will bring their bodies usually to the place of God's worship to pray, to hear the Word and receive the sacraments; but few have care to bring their hearts with them that they may inwardly worship God in spirit and in truth. So likewise, many are content to rest from their ordinary labours on the Sabbath day, but few are careful to consecrate their rest unto God. Men be careful to abstain from actual murder, but few make conscience of malice, hatred, reviling and quarrelling. Many hate theft that yet will not stick to rob their neighbours of their good name by vile reports. Many are ashamed to rob openly that make no bones to deceive by false weights and measures, by glosses and such like. And yet all these will bless themselves with their outward righteousness, and think all is well, not doubting but they shall be saved by it, though they have no more. But this is Pharisaical pride and folly; for all such outward righteousness is here condemned as unable to save the soul.

Again, here we mat see the palpable and gross opinion of all worldly men, even of those who commonly are called honest men. If they be told of their sins, and of the danger of damnation except they repent; their answer is that they are no thieves, no murderers, no gross sinners, and therefore they hope

God will save them; for they live orderly, and do no man wrong. But let all such take heed lest they deceive their own souls, for this civil honesty was the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, which could neither bring them, nor any other, into the kingdom of heaven, as Christ the God of truth saith expressly in this place. To give alms, to fast, to pray and to deal uprightly with men, be very good things; but yet we must labour for more than these, if ever we mean to come to heaven. We must get another righteousness of the heart, renouncing utterly our own righteousness, in the matter of justification, and condemn ourselves for our best actions, that so we may be fit to receive that true righteousness which will commend us to God.

3. What is that true righteousness which will bring a man to heaven? *Answer*: It is the righteousness of Christ (1 Cor. 1:30), for *Christ is made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness*; yea (2 Cor. 5:21), *He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*. This is that righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and whereby a sinner doth stand just before God; for when as by Adam's fall we all became guilty of sin, and thereby subject to the curse of God, and to eternal condemnation, from which we could never have delivered ourselves; then it pleased Christ to come from the bosom of His Father, and to become our Surety and Saviour, who in His life became obedient to the law for us, and in and by death upon the cross, suffered whatsoever was due unto our sins; which obedience and satisfaction being made by Him that was both God and man, was alone all sufficient, both to free us from the curse of the law, and also to justify us before God; and this righteousness of Christ is that which exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and is able to bring a man to heaven. Yet further for our justification, Christ's righteousness hath three parts: the purity of His human nature, the integrity and obedience of His life, and the merit of His sufferings upon the cross; and all these must be ours, to answer for our corrupt nature and sinful life deserving a cursed death.

Here some make question, How Christ's righteousness can be ours? And how one man's righteousness can save so many thousands? *Answer*: Christ's righteousness is not the righteousness of a mere man (for then it could save but one at the most), but it is the righteousness of that Person

who is both God and man; and therefore is an infinite righteousness, of merit sufficient to save a thousand worlds.

But some here say, If Christ's righteousness be ours, then we are as righteous as Christ? *Answer*: The same righteousness that is in Christ is ours, but not in the same manner or measure; for Christ hath it by merit and action of Himself; we have it only by mercy and imputation. It is in Christ as a root and fountain, in us by reception and application; like the light in the moon and in the stars [*planets*], which is not in them originally, but received from the sun, the fountain thereof.

Thirdly, it is said, If we by Christ's righteousness be justified, and made the sons of God; then is Christ by our sins made unjust, and so the child of the devil? *Answer*: We may safely say that Christ was made a sinner by our sins, not actually, but by imputation. Now hence it will not follow that He should be the child of the devil, for that cometh by the act and habit of sinning, after sinful conception; all which our Saviour Christ was freed from; for at the very time when He bare our sins, He was in Himself more holy than all men and all angels.

Fourthly, it is said that if Christ's righteousness be made ours, then we are made Saviours? Answer: It followeth not; for Christ's merits and righteousness are conveyed and applied unto men, not as they are in Christ's person, in whom they are sufficient to save ten thousand worlds, but as they serve to save and justify that particular person only, to whom they are imputed; so that this remains an undoubted truth, that righteousness which bringeth salvation, is Christ's righteousness only.

Here some may say, How is Christ's righteousness made ours, and we assured of it? *Answer*: It is made ours by saving faith, which the Holy Ghost creates in the heart and soul, as an hand whereby we may lay hold on Christ, and apply His righteousness unto ourselves, as He is offered unto us in the promises of the gospel.

Some object that if Christ's righteousness be made ours by our believing it to be ours, then if a man believe his neighbour's house to be his, it is his also; and so for any other thing. *Answer*: There is not the like reason in these things; for it is a mere fancy and imagination for a man to believe his

neighbour's house to be his, having no grounds for it, besides his own conceit. But when a man believeth Christ's righteousness to be his, he hath God's commandment and promise for his warrant and assurance that it shall be imputed unto him; and withal that faith so grounded, maketh Christ's righteousness as truly his, as anything a man hath in his own, being given him of another. Now this saving faith, laying hold on Christ's righteousness for man's justification, is never severed from sanctification by the Spirit, with the fruits thereof, whereby the old man being mortified, and the new man in Christ renewed, according to His image in righteousness and true holiness, the whole person is turned unto God, and made careful to please Him, both in thought, word and deed; and hereby do we receive assurance of our justification; for true sanctification is the earnest of the Spirit of adoption in our hearts, whereby we are sealed unto the day of our redemption.

Doth that righteousness whereby we must be justified and saved in the day of our Lord, come from Christ only, and not from ourselves? Then we see what just cause we have to humble ourselves, and to acknowledge our great unrighteousness, and want of all goodness in ourselves; and when we can do this unfeignedly, we have gone one step in the way to true happiness.

Secondly, we also must hereby learn to esteem all things as *dross and dung* (Phil. 3:8,9), with the apostle, in respect of Christ Jesus and His righteousness; for He it is that brings us to heaven, and therefore we must honour Him above all, and value His righteousness as that most precious jewel, which when a man hath found, he will sell all that he hath to get and keep it (Matt. 13:46).

Thirdly, we must hunger and thirst after Christ and His righteousness, for it is the fountain of all blessedness, and without it we are most miserable; yea, though we had all the world besides, yet without it we lose our salvation. Now what will it profit a man to win all the world, if he lose his soul (Mark 8:36)?

Fourthly, seeing Christ's righteousness is made ours by faith, and we made assured of it, by sanctification of heart and life; we must labour for true faith, whereby our hearts may be inwardly renewed. We must not content ourselves with an outward holiness, for that will never bring a man to

heaven; but our endeavour must be for inward holiness, whereby we shall be preferred with God above all the Pharisees in the world, and get assurance of eternal happiness. And this faith we must shew forth in all holy exercises; as when we hear the Word, we must lend the inward ear of the heart, with the bodily ear; and when we fall down to prayer, we must bow the knees of our hearts; and in fasting from meat, we must abstain from sin; yea, in all things we must be careful to serve God in spirit and truth; for which cause, we must pray with David, *Lord renew a right spirit within me* (Psa. 51:10); that so feeling Christ to live in us by grace, we may be assured that Christ's righteousness shall bring us unto glory.

# 5:21-22

"*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire*." Matthew 5:21-22

"*Ye have heard that it was said of old, Thou shalt not kill, for whosoever killeth shall be culpable of judgment*." (v.21)

Our Saviour Christ having laid down His preface, doth here begin His interpretation of the law, being indeed the only true Doctor of His church; and herein especially He doth meddle with the second table, beginning first of all with the sixth commandment touching murder. In the handling whereof, He observeth this order: First, He setteth down the false interpretation of this law, by the Scribes and Phsrisees, in this verse; secondly, He shews the true meaning of it (v.22), and lastly, He propoundeth rules of concord and agreement between those that be at variance (vv.23-26).

I. For the first: The Exposition.

*Ye have heard*

That is, you Jews which now hear me, whether Scribes, Pharisees or others; *you have heard that it hath been said of old*; that is, by your ancient teachers, the old Scribes and Pharisees, who have expounded this law unto you; and that this phrase must be understood of the ancient Jewish teachers, may plainly appear because in the next verse He opposeth His own teaching thereunto, and would have these His hearers, that before had learned a false interpretation of this law from their old teachers, now to learn of Him the true exposition thereof.

The Law is this: *Thou shalt not kill*.

The exposition of the ancient Jewish teachers was this: *For whosoever killeth*; that is, whosoever layeth violent hands on another, to take away his life (for they knew no other murder, neither did they extend this commandment to forbid any sin but actual murder) *shall be culpable of judgment*; that is, shall be held guilty of murder, both in the courts of men, and also before the judgment seat of God, where he shall receive the deserved punishment thereof. This was the interpretation of the Jews.

1. Here, first observe that antiquity is no infallible mark of true doctrine; for this exposition of this commandment was ancient, received from ancient teachers; and yet Christ, the doctor of truth, rejecteth it as false and corrupt; and therefore the argument which the papists use for the establishing of their religion, drawn from antiquity, is of no effect.

2. Secondly, by these words of Christ, *Ye have heard that it hath been said of old*, we may easily gather after what manner the Scribes and Pharisees expounded the law; namely, they left the Scriptures, and followed the interpretation of their ancient teachers. But here Christ checketh and reproveth this manner of teaching; and therefore the like cannot be warrantable among us at this day; whereby we see that kind of teaching reproved wherein every point is stuffed out with the testimonies of the fathers, schoolmen and human writers. And here also is discovered a wicked and dangerous practice of the papists, who refer all deciding of controversies, and interpretation of hard places of Scripture, to the church and to the fathers. If we say that the fathers oftentimes dissent, and the church may err, then they send us to the pope's breast. But if this course were safe, then the Jewish teachers might have had a good defence against this charge of Christ; for they had both church and fathers on their side, and the High Priest that was then in place. Indeed the fathers must be reverenced, as lights of the church in their time, and their testimonies duly regarded, wherein they agree with the written Word; but for the confirmation of the truth in man's conscience, and for the edifying of the soul in the graces of the Spirit, the Word of God hath the only stroke; by it alone God's children are begotten, and born anew to a lively hope, and by it

alone they are fed and nourished in the faith; yea, by it alone they are confirmed and established in the truth.

3. Thirdly, in these Jewish teachers, forbidding nothing as a breach of this law but the outward sin of murder; and on the contrary, approving of those as keepers of this law, that kept their hands from this actual crime of blood, and by consequence worthy of life everlasting; behold a plain picture of every natural man; for is not this the common opinion, that unless a man kill another, he breaketh not this commandment? And so for the rest, if he abstain from the outward actual gross sins of stealing, adultery, and false witness bearing, then he keeps those commandments though his heart be never so fraught with envy, malice, lust, covetousness, falsehood etc. But let us observe Christ's reproof of such erroneous interpretations of God's law, as a means to school our hearts from such vain conceits.

"*But I say unto you, whosoever shall be angry with his brother unadvisedly, shall be culpable of judgment; and whosoever saith unto his brother, Raca, shall be worthy to be punished by the council; and whosoever shall say, fool, shall be worthy to be punished by hell fire.*" (v.22).

II. Here, our saviour Christ propounds the true interpretation of this commandment.

*But I say unto you*; that is, whatsoever you have heard the Scribes or Pharisees teach you from themselves, or from their fathers, it is nothing, let them not deceive you; for I that am the Lawgiver and Doctor of my church, and therefore best know the meaning of my own law, I say otherwise unto you.

*Whosoever is angry with his brother* etc. Here Christ lays down three kinds of murder, and three degrees of punishment for the same:

1. The first degree of murder is anger, not anger simply; but rash and indiscreet anger towards a brother; and by *brother*, He meaneth, first, one Jew with another, to whom Christ spake; secondly, one neighbour with another, whether Jew or Gentile; for by creation we are all brethren, having one Father, which is God, as Adam is called *the son of God* (Luke 3:38).

2. The second degree of murder is calling his brother *Raca*. Some expound this word *Raca*, an idle or empty brain; others, an evil man; others take it to signify a loathsome man, one to be spat at, as we by spitting shew our contempt; but these interpretations cannot so fitly stand; for then the third degree of murder and this second, should be one and the same; for to call a man empty brain, evil or loathsome, and to call him fool, are equal in degree. Now Christ's intent is to set down distinct degrees of punishment adjoined thereunto. A more fit exposition is this: that *Raca* hath no perfect signification, but is only an interjection of indignation, whereby a man doth not slander or revile his brother, but only in gesture shew the contempt and anger of his heart against him; as when in English we say, *fie*, *tush*, or such like; which words are not open railings, but only outward signs of the inward anger and contempt concealed in the heart; so that the meaning is this: He that is angry with his brother, and expresseth this his anger either in gesture or countenance, by frowning looks, gnashing of teeth, or by imperfect speech, as *tush*, *fie*, *pish*, or such like, he is guilty of murder.

3. The third degree of murder is when a man doth shew his anger against his brother by open railings, and reproachful names; expressed in these words: *Whosoever shall call his brother fool*. And all these three degrees are beyond the interpretation of the Jewish teachers, who only condemned actual killing by this commandment.

Now to these several kinds of murder, Christ addeth distinct degrees of punishment. The first is *to be culpable of judgment* for unadvised anger. The second, *to be worthy to be punished with a council*, for outward signs of this anger. The third is *to be worthy of hell fire*, for reproachful names or railings. And here we must understand that Christ speaketh not properly, in setting down these degrees of punishment, but figuratively alluding to the custom of punishing offenders used among the Jews; for they had three courts: the first was held by three men for mean matters, and other cases of small importance. The second was held by three and twenty men, wherein were determined matters of great importance that could not be decided in the first court; as matters of life and death; and it was kept in the chief cities of the land. The third court was held at Jerusalem only, called the court of the seventy-two, from which none might appeal to any other. In it were all weighty and great causes determined, and this court is here called *a*

*Council*. Now Christ alluding hereunto, saith to this effect: *Look as among you Jews there are different courts, and some matter are adjudged in your courts of judgment, and others in the Council at Jerusalem; so God also hath His judgment, and His Council; those that are rashly angry shall undergo God's judgment; and he that makes known his anger by speech or countenance, shall be punished more grievously, and undergo a deeper judgment, as it were by the Lord's Council; but he that shall by open revilings and railings, shew forth his malice against his brother; as by calling him fool, or such like, he shall be worthy of the most grievous judgment and torment of hell fire*; alluding to the highest degree of torment among the Jews, which was burning; for before their government was taken from them by Herod, the Jews used these four kinds of punishments: hanging, beheading, stoning and burning. Further, the words translated *hell fire*, are properly the fire of Gehenna; for there was a place near to the suburbs of Jerusalem called Gehenna, which is a compound Hebrew word, signifying valley of Hinnom, wherein was a place called Tophet (Jer. 7:31), where the idolatrous Jews, following the horrible superstition of the nations about them, used to burn their children unto Molech; for which fact the place became so odious to the godly, that to aggravate the heinousness of this crime, they used this name to signify and betoken the place of torment appointed for the reprobate; whereupon in Christ's time, *Gehenna* and the *fire of hell* were in signification all one. Now in this valley the Jews used to burn their malefactors; and unto this kind of judgment Christ alludeth, meaning not simply hell fire, the torments of the damned, but a more grievous and greater kind of punishment than the former, because it was an higher degree of sin; so that Christ's meaning is this: *Howsoever your Scribes and Pharisees teach you that there is no murder but actual killing, and that it only deserves condemnation; yet I which am the Lawgiver, say unto you, that as you have divers punishments in several courts for diverse offences, as hanging, stoning and burning; so God He hath diverse degrees of punishments for the several breaches of this commandment; he that is rashly angry is worthy of judgment; and he that gives out any shew of his anger in gesture, shall be punished more grievously; but he that shews forth his anger by railing and reviling, shall endure the most grievous punishment of all*.

1. First, whereas Christ here maketh degrees of punishments for divers sins, the papists hereto would build their distinction of sins into venial and mortal. Venial sins (say they) are light sins, as bad thoughts, vain speeches and such like, which do not deserve damnation, but some temporal punishment only, such as were allotted to civil courts among the Jews; for here (say they) Christ only makes open railing and reviling of our brother such an heinous sin as deserves hell fire. But this distinction cannot here be grounded; for Christ doth not appropriate condemnation to this term of *hell fire*; but He hath reference thereto in every phrase that here imports a punishment; as, to be culpable of judgment for unadvised anger, is to deserve condemnation in hell fire; and to be punished by a Council, for testifying anger by outward signs, is to deserve condemnation, but yet in deeper degree; and to be worthy to be punished with the fire of Gehenna for open railing, is to deserve condemnation also, but yet in a deeper measure than the former for as among the Jews by the sentence of their courts, some offences were punished by beheading or hanging; greater offences by stoning, and the greatest by burning; all which punishments differed in degree, and yet every one was death; so before God, lesser sins deserve lesser condemnation in hell fire, and greater sins deeper damnation; and yet every sin deserves damnation; *for the wages of sin*, be it never so little, *is death* (Rom. 6:23); so that Christ here makes degrees of punishment according to the degrees of sin; and yet so, as every sin is mortal, deserving damnation, and none venial in itself.

2. Secondly, we may here observe two excellent rules for the expounding of the moral law: (i) First, *that under one sin named in a commandment, are forbidden all sins of the same kind, with all the causes thereof*. For Christ in expounding this sixth commandment, doth not only condemn actual murder, but even rash anger in the heart, and all signs thereof in countenance and gesture, with all railing and reviling speeches, as breaches of this commandment; and the like He observeth in these which follow. (ii) Second rule: *To the breach of every commandment, there is annexed a curse, albeit it be not expressed*. For Christ here setting down the breaches of this sixth commandment threateneth condemnation to the least breach thereof, saying, *He that is unadvisedly angry with his brother, shall be culpable of judgment*. Is it not then a wonder to see, how ignorant people do use the commandments for prayers, when as indeed (if they could perceive

it) they are God's thunderbolts, to throw their souls to hell for every sin they commit?

3. Thirdly, Christ condemning unadvised anger as a breach of this law, giveth us to understand that advised anger is not unlawful; and true it is that all anger is not sinful; for Christ was oftentimes angry with the Jews (Mark 3:5); and the apostle bids us (Eph. 4:26) *to be angry, but sin not*. If any here ask how we may discern godly anger from that which is evil and unadvised, I answer two ways: (i) First, by the beginning of it; for good anger proceedeth from the love of him with whom we are angry. Now love is the fulfilling of the law, and therefore anger proceedeth from love, and guided thereby, cannot be a breach thereof; but evil anger proceedeth from self-love, from dislike or hatred of the party with whom we are angry. (ii) Second, we may discern it by the end. Good anger is for God's glory against sin, because God thereby is dishonoured; and for our brother's good; but evil anger wants these ends, and intendeth private respects. It is quickly moved, it continueth long, and also carrieth with it a desire of revenge.

4. Fourthly, seeing unadvised anger, with the sign thereof, is a breach of this law, deserving death; hereby we are admonished to beware of this headstrong affection of anger, and betime to restrain and bridle the same; it hath a bad beginning, and an evil end, and thereby we become murderers. Now that we may overrule it, so as it prevail not against us: First, we must lay to our hearts this commandment of God forbidding rash anger, as a bar to stop it. Secondly, we must remember how lovingly and mercifully God deals with us every day, in forbearing and forgiving us; and therefore we ought to be like-minded towards our brethren (Eph. 4:31,32).

The second branch of sin here condemned is *to say unto our brother Raca*; whereby we may see that every gesture expressing rash anger, and despite of heart towards another, is murder before God; as *casting down the countenance towards Him*; this God reproved in Cain (Gen, 4:6). *Frowning or nodding the head*, or shaking it in contempt, as the Jews did to Christ (Matt. 27:39). Also, contemptuous laughter and deriding; hence (Gen. 21:9) Ishmael's jeering at Isaac is called persecution (Gal. 4:29). And the like may be said of all signs of contempt in words; as *fie*, *pish*, *tush*, and to say

this to a man in disdain, for otherwise a superior may say this to his inferior; so also when a man contemptuously takes a thing in snuff, though he say nothing, but flings away with an heart rising against his brother. All these and such like tokens of contempt and disdain, are here condemned for murder of heart. And therefore it standeth us in hand to make conscience of every gesture of our body, of the casting of our eyes, of our laughter, and of all passionate words, lest thereby we shew any contempt or anger towards our brethren.

If it be said, How can every gesture expressing rash anger or contempt be murder, seeing the law permitteth a widow to *spit in the face of her husband's brother, or next kinsman*, even *before the elders of the city, if he refused to raise up seed unto his brother* (Deut. 25:7-9). *Answer*: First, the Lord might command her so to do, thereby to manifest His great dislike of want of love in him towards his dead brother. Secondly, I answer, the words may as fitly be translated thus: *and spit in his sight*, that is, spit on the ground before his face, that he might see her; and that seemeth to be the true meaning of that place; for it was very unseemly for anyone, much more for a woman so publicly to spit in a man's face. And in that sense is the word used in the same book (Deut. 4:37), where God is said to bring Israel out of Egypt *in His face*, that is, *in His sight*.

Secondly, under this branch of murder by sign of contempt, are many abuses of the tongue most justly condemned; as first, *bitterness of speech*; when men that be at variance, give out hard and grievous words one against another. These are as pricks of swords, as the wise man saith (Prov. 30:14); and therefore the Holy Ghost chargeth us (Eph. 4:31) that *all bitterness, anger and wrath be put away from us*. Secondly, all *wrangling*, and contentious speech between parties disagreeing, when as neither will yield, but each one will think to have the last word (Phil. 2:14), *Do all things without murmuring or reasoning*; for that springeth of choler and stout stomach, clean contrary to meekness and patience, a fruit of the Spirit. Thirdly, *crying* (1 Sam. 4:14; Acts 21:36) also is here forbidden, whereby men or women being at variance in private speeches, do through choler and malice lift up their voices that they may be heard afar off. This is a fruit of raging anger and fury. Fourthly, *threatening speeches* are also here condemned, when as men from an inward dislike and rage in their own

private cause, do give out menacing words against others (Eph. 6:9), Masters are forbidden thus to deal with their servants; much less then may one brother thus threaten another. Fifthly, all kinds of *girding* and *taunting* others by privy and close nips, is here condemned, although there be no open railing; for thereby men seek to disgrace their brethren, and to glad their own hearts by grieving others; which is more than to say, *Raca*.

The third degree of murder is *reviling terms*, calling our brother *fool*, or such like. This is also a sin against the ninth commandment, by robbing him of his good name; for one sin in divers respects may be against many commandments. It is a breach of this sixth commandment in that hereby we grieve and trouble our neighbour, and so far as a reproach can go, make him weary of his life.

Upon the ground of this degree of murder, be all grievous practices of men against their brethren, justly condemned for bloody practices. As first, *usury*, whereby men bind their brethren to return gain for the bare loan of money or other goods, which naturally yield no increase; without all respect to their necessity, or to the success of the employing of it. Hereby many are brought to great poverty; reviling terms do nothing so much pinch the poor as this oppression. Secondly, *the hoarding up of corn till times of dearth, that thereby they may gain the more*. These men make a private gain of God's common judgments upon the poor. Indeed it is not unlawful in time of plenty, to lay up store against a time of dearth; but to do it with the hurt of the poor, is to suck their blood, and to eat up God's people; as when men keep their garners full, and suffer the poor to starve; the people's curse lies on such (Prov. 11:26). Thirdly, *fighting and striking by private persons, or by others in private causes*; for they wound or weaken the body of their neighbours, which is more than to grieve him by reviling speeches. Fourthly, *the detaining the food of the soul* by those that cannot or will not preach, is a damage against eternal life; and therefore Paul to cleanse himself from blood in this behalf, said, *I kept nothing back* (Acts 20:26,27). Fifthly, to *give offence* by word or deed, whereby others are occasioned to fall. This is *uncharitable walking* (Rom. 14:15), whereby we do as much as in us lieth, *destroy him for whom Christ died*. As this is cruel in all, so especially in public persons as magistrates, ministers, parents, masters and such like, because their practices are rules to their inferiors. They are like

lights in an haven, which guides the ships that sail by night, which standing amiss, lead the ships upon rocks and sands, and so cause shipwreck.

Having seen the true meaning of this law expounded by Christ, let us here further observe how He restoreth the true use thereof. We must not think that He did only here intend the rectifying of our judgments for understanding, and not also strike at the reformation of our hearts and lives for practice. Touching the use of this law therefore, Christ here teacheth us two things:

1. First, to descend into our own hearts, and there to search how we have broken this commandment; as whether we have borne in our hearts any malice against our brother, and whether we have expressed the rash anger of our hearts by speech or gesture, or have any way wronged him by reviling terms, or other injuries against his life. If we have, Christ tells us that we are murderers.

2. Secondly, Christ, setting down the curse to every degree of murder, teacheth us, upon due examination of our hearts, finding ourselves guilty in any degree, to cast down ourselves before the Lord, to accuse and condemn ourselves, crying out that all shame and confusion belongs unto us. This we must do, that by the view of our miseries, we may be moved more earnestly to sue for mercy. And indeed, if we examine our hearts and our behaviour thoroughly, we shall find that we are all murderers. For though we may be free from actual killing, yet our consciences will tell us that the motions of wrath and malice, and the signs of unadvised anger have broken forth, both in our words and gesture; for who can say he never snuffed at another by way of contempt or dislike? Who can clear himself from deriding and disgracing others? Now these things and such like, make us guilty of sin against the law, and so subject to the wrath and curse of God; which needs must be fulfilled, though heaven and earth should pass away. This undoubtedly is our miserable and woeful case in ourselves. And there is no way to escape this curse, but only this: we must humble ourselves before God, and confess against ourselves the murder of our hearts, declared in our gesture, speech and behaviour, then we must labour to be grieved for these sins; for which end we must apply unto ourselves God’s fearful judgments due unto us for them. Thirdly, we must earnestly sue unto God for mercy

and pardon, as for life and death, like as poor prisoners do when the sentence of death is to be pronounced against them. Yea, we must cry with sighs and groans that cannot be expressed, and give the Lord no rest, till he send into our consciences the comfortable message of mercy and pardon by His good Spirit. This done, we must labour in our callings for the time to come, to procure and further the welfare and safety of our brethren, as well as our own. We must not seek ourselves, but the common good, eschewing those things that may grieve our brethren, and doing those that may be good and comfortable unto them, that so by new obedience we may shew forth thankfulness for God's mercy and favour towards us.

Hitherto we have handled the three degrees of murder which Christ condemneth by this law, beyond the doctrine of the Jewish teachers. Besides these, there is a fourth degree here condemned, which is *actual killing*. This Christ doth not here name, because He taketh it for granted, even by the doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees. Now because it is the main sin of this commandment, therefore here it is to be handled; which we will do thus: First, we will shew when killing is murder, and when it is not, and then handle the kinds thereof.

1. For the first: Killing is not always murder, for sometime a man hath power given of God to kill, and it is no sin. Now God gives a man power to kill three ways: First, by the *written Word*, thus princes and governors, and under them executioners, are allowed to kill malefactors that deserve death; and thus soldiers are warranted to kill their enemies in a lawful war. Secondly, by an *extraordinary commandment*; and so Abraham might lawfully have killed his son ( Gen. 22:2,10,11), if the Angel of the Lord had not stayed his hand. Thirdly, by an *extraordinary instinct*, which is answerable to a special commandment; and so Phineas slew Zimri and Cosbi, without guilt of murder (Psa. 106:30,31). But killing is murder when men of their own wills, without warrant from God, slay others; and this sin is plainly and directly forbidden in this commandment.

2. For the second: The kinds of killing be two: either *voluntary* or *casual*.

1. *Voluntary killing* is when a man killeth of purpose and intent; and this sin is so heinous that it defileth the land where the blood is shed, till it be purged by the blood of him that shed it (Num. 35:31). And this

purpose to kill is twofold: either with deliberation and fore-desire of revenge, as when a man hath carried a grudge in his heart long before; or without deliberation, when a man without all former malice is suddenly carried by fury and anger to slay his brother; and this second kind of killing is distinguished from that which is upon deliberation by the name of manslaughter, and also favoured by the laws of some countries, because it is not done of set purpose, but through sudden anger before the blood be cold. But God's law maketh both of them murder, and admitteth no recompense for the life of the murderer (Num. 35:31). Nay, besides it adjudgeth the murderer to eternal death, both in soul and body. To this voluntary murder, we must refer those that give commandment, counsel or help unto the murderer; for he that commandeth is the principal agent, and the murderer is his instrument. Again it is voluntary murder to strike another, though with purpose only to wound, if death follow thereon. And that also which is committed by a drunken man; for his will is free, though sense and reason be blinded.

2. *Casual killing*, commonly called chancemedley, is when a man killeth another, having no purpose to do him hurt. The presumptions of casual killing be these: First, if a man kill another, having no ill will or anger towards him, nor to any other for his sake, neither is moved thereto by covetousness, or any affection. Secondly, if he be doing the lawful duties of his particular calling. Thirdly, if he be well occupied, doing some lawful work besides his calling. And lastly, if he be doing a thing which he ordinarily practiseth, keeping his usual place and time. And albeit this kind of killing, if it be merely casual, is no sin, yet the party committing it, in old time was bound to come to his answer, thereby to purge and clear himself from suspicion of murder, as also to avoid the hatred and danger of the friends of the party killed; and lastly, to keep and maintain the hatred of murder among God's people. Now this sixth commandment is not to be understood of casual, but of voluntary killing. And this also must be observed, that Christ giveth the name of murder to all the occasions thereof, that He might breed in our hearts an hatred of them all, as of murder itself.

# 5:23-24

"*Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift*." Matthew 5:23-24

III.

Here Christ propounds a rule of concord by seeking reconciliation with them whom we have wronged; and it depends upon the former verse, as a consequent and conclusion drawn therefrom, as may appear by the first words, *If then*, or *therefore*; as if He had said, If rash anger and the testification thereof, either in gesture or reviling speech, be murder, and deserve condemnation, then we are with all diligence to seek to be reconciled to our brethren whensoever any breach of love is made between them and us.

The Exposition.

*If thou bring thy gift to the altar*

Here Christ alludeth to the Jews' manner of worship under the law; which was to offer in the temple sacrifices unto God both of propitiation and thanksgiving. And though Christ here only names this one kind of ceremonial worship, yet under this He comprehendeth all manner of true outward worship, whether legal or evangelical; as if He should say, *If thou come to worship God any way*, either by offering sacrifices, or by praying unto God, by hearing His Word or receiving the sacraments.

*And rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee*

That is, that thou hast any way wronged and offended thy brother. This appeareth to be the true meaning by the like words of Mark (Mark 11:15), *If thou hast ought against thy brother* (meaning for injury done unto thee by

him), *forgive him*; and therefore our brother hath something against us when we have wronged or offended him in word or deed, and he hath knowledge thereof, and just cause thereupon to complain.

*Leave there thy gift before the altar*

Still He alludeth to the manner of the Jews' worship; who, when they went to sacrifice to the Lord, brought their sheep or bullock unto the utter court; or as some think, tied it to the horns of the altar, in token that they presented it unto the Lord. Now if at that very instant they did remember that they had any way offended their brother, then were they to leave their gift there (not quite omitting this duty, but only suspending or deferring it for a while), and go seek to be reconciled to their brother whom they had wronged.

*Question*: How could this departure be warrantable, seeing the Jews had a law (Ezek. 46:10) that when the service of God was once begun, *none might depart, no not the prince himself, till it was ended*? *Answer*: This rule must be understood of departure out of the utter court of the temple, whither the people brought their sacrifice soon after they had presented it, before it was begun to be offered; for till the priests had begun this service, it was lawful for the people to depart, especially upon this occasion.

*Question*: But what if the party offended cannot possibly come to his brother whom he hath wronged, by reason of his absence in some far country, his close imprisonment, or such like? *Answer*: He must testify his endeavour to be reconciled unto him; and if the act itself be necessarily hindered by God's providence, God will accept the will for the deed, if there be a willing mind; for this is Christ's meaning, that we should do our utmost endeavour to be reconciled unto our brethren whom we have wronged, shewing such care thereof, that we prefer the same before the outward actions of God's worship, not presuming to worship God, till we be reconciled to our brethren.

Here we have a notable rule for the maintaining of love and charity among men; namely, *brotherly reconciliation*. In the giving whereof Christ still continues His exposition of the sixth commandment; for having condemned murder and the provocations thereunto in the former verse; here He

commandeth the contrary virtue of brotherly love, and the means to uphold the same; to wit, reconciliation for offences given.

Out of this rule in general we may observe:

1. First, a third direction to the right expounding and understanding of God's commandments; namely, *where any vice is forbidden, there the contrary virtue is commanded*; and on the contrary, *where any virtue is commanded, there the contrary vice is forbidden*. This rule must be observed as a privilege of the law of God, above all human laws; for men's laws are satisfied by abstaining from the vice forbidden, though the contrary virtue be not practiced; as he satisfies man's law forbidding murder, that abstains from the actual crime, though he love not his brother. But he transgresseth the law of God, that performeth not the contrary virtue, though he abstain from the vice forbidden; for though a man abstain from killing, yet if he do not love his brother, he is guilty of the breach of the sixth commandment; which serves to confute the error of our ignorant people, who because they abstain from murder, adultery and other outward sins, do persuade themselves that they keep the law, and that God will therefore be merciful unto them. But they must know that though they should abstain from the vices forbidden, yet they stand culpable of judgment for want of doing the contrary virtues; for it is not sufficient to abstain from evil, but we must do good, and therefore John Baptist saith (Matt. 3:10), *Every tree that bringeth not forth fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire*; and the sentence of damnation shall be denounced against the reprobates for their omission of doing good (Matt. 25:42), *I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat* etc.

2. Secondly, by this rule of reconciliation, it appeareth that the performance of any outward service unto God is displeasing unto Him, if it be separated from the love of our brethren, (Isa. 1:11,12), *What have I to do with the multitude of your sacrifices, saith the Lord*; and so He proceedeth, rejecting in particular all the service of the Jews, because they lived in envy, debate and oppression. Their hands were full of blood (Isa. 58:5,6). The Lord doth there reprehend the Jews' fasting from meats, because they did not withal abstain from strife and oppression; adding withal that refraining from cruelty and doing works of mercy is the fast which He requires; which

serves to overthrow the natural conceit of men, who think that the whole worship of God standeth in the duties of the first table. This was indeed the conceit and practice of the Pharisees, whereupon they taught the people (Matt. 15:5) that if they gave oblations to the church, though they relieved not their poor parents, yet God was pleased with them. And the like is the practice of the church of Rome, who in cases of transgression, through want of brotherly love, do not appoint this reconciliation, but auricular confession and canonical satisfaction as matters well pleasing to almighty God. Yea, such is the conceit of our common people, that if they be present at divine service, if they hear the word preached and receive the sacraments at ordinary times, then they have done God good service, and He will respect them, though in their civil conversation they be at enmity with their brethren, or live in such like sins. But we must learn that God is served, not only in the duties of the first table, but of the second also; and that God abhors the duties of piety in such persons as make no conscience of the practice of love and mercy (Jer. 7:9,10), *Will you steal, murder, commit adultery* etc. and yet come and stand before me in this house, wherein my name is called, and say, *We are delivered though we have done all these abominations*? As if He should say, *Never think it*; and therefore if we desire true comfort in our serving of God, let us make conscience to join therewith the practice of mercy towards our brethren.

3. Thirdly, here also we may learn how to behave ourselves before we come to the Lord's table. If we call to mind, even when we be in the church, that we have any way offended our brother, we must first go and reconcile ourselves unto him, and then come to the Lord's table. We must not abstain upon the remembrance of our wrongdoing, for so we add sin unto sin, refusing spiritual society with God, because we will retain enmity towards our brother; but seeking reconciliation, we must return to receive the Lord's sacrament. Which flatly condemns the common practice of many, who abstain from the Lord's Supper, because they will not seek to be reconciled to their brethren. This argues an heart full stuffed with pride and malice, which prefers its own lust before the will of God; for God commands that the sun go not down upon our wrath; and it is His ordinance we should receive the sacrament to shew forth Christ's death, when it is administered by the church, against both which he offendeth that abstaineth, because he

is at variance with his brother; for Christ will not have the gift that is brought to be taken away, but there left a while, till reconciliation be made.

4. Fourthly, in this rule of reconciliation, we may see that there be degrees in the duties of God's worship; all are not equal, but some more, and some less necessary. The first and highest degree of holy worship is prescribed in the first commandment, as to love, fear and rejoice in God above all, and to believe in Him, and all His promises. The second degree of holy duties is to love our neighbour as ourselves, to seek peace and reconciliation with them whom we have wronged or offended. Thus much doth Christ here import, in preferring the practice hereof before the offering of sacrifice. The third degree consists in the outward ceremonial duties of God's worship commanded in the first table; as the outward actions of God's worship, and the outward solemnity of the Sabbath; for these give place to the works of love and charity commanded in the second table, and therefore Christ saith, *First be reconciled and then offer thy gift*.

Now by this distinction of holy duties, we have a good direction for our behaviour; that seeing the love of God and our brethren are the two highest degrees of good works, therefore we are above all things to seek after them, and prefer the doing of them before the outward worship of God; for that we see cometh in the last place. But the practice of men is otherwise; generally they are more forward in outward ceremonies than in the main duties of the love of God and of their brethren; like to the Pharisees (Luke 11:42), who passed over judgment and the fear of God, and were very strict in tithing mint and rue. But this is a preposterous course, and clean contrary to this precept of our Saviour Christ.

Thus much of this rule in general. Now I come to the more particular observations out of the words: *Leave thy gift at the altar*. Here Christ approveth of this worship of God among the Jews by offering sacrifices; from whence it followeth that sacrificing at the altar, and by proportion other ceremonial worship, was not abrogated either at Christ's birth or baptism, for here Christ alloweth of them; and therefore they ceased only at His death, when upon the cross He said (John 19:30), *It is finished*, then *He put out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us* (Col. 2:14).

*Thy gift*; that is thy sacrifice; whereof the Jews had two kinds: *Propitiatory* and *Gratulatory*, or of thanksgiving; and they are here called gifts, because in sacrificing the people gave something unto God; in which respect a sacrifice differeth from a sacrament, wherein God gives something unto us. Now the sacrifices of the law, wherein men gave something unto God, signified two things: first, that Christ should give Himself unto His Father for our sins; secondly, that we should wholly give ourselves unto God, both in soul and body, to serve Him; and therefore God saith (Prov. 23:26), *My son, give me thy heart*; (Rom. 6:13), *Give your members as weapons of righteousness unto God, as they that are alive from dead works*; (Rom. 12:1), *I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that you give up your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God*. This we ought to do in token of thankfulness for God's endless mercies; and this we then do, first, when we acknowledge ourselves not to be our own, but God's in Christ; secondly, when we consecrate and dedicate ourselves to the service of God, that both in heart and life we may shew ourselves thankful for our creation, preservation and redemption especially. But lamentable is the case with men in this behalf. Instead of giving themselves to God, men bequeath themselves to the devil, and become his slaves and vassals; they make their hearts his dwelling place, by malicious, wicked and lustful thoughts; they consecrate the faculties of their souls, with all the parts of their bodies unto him in the practice of sin. This ought not to be, seeing Christ gave Himself for us, let us give ourselves wholly unto Him.

*And there remembrest*. that is, doest call to mind, *that thy brother hath ought against thee* etc.

By this, Christ teacheth us that whensoever we come to do any service to God, we ought first of all to enter into our own hearts, and there to search and try our own estate, in respect of offences given to God or man, whereof we have not repented, that so before we come to God's solemn worship, we may be reconciled both to God and to our brethren. The want of this brings many a curse upon men's souls, even in the means wherein they think to receive God's blessing; and therefore we must look to the practice of this duty, that we do it speedily, and from our hearts. This we have need to look unto in respect of God whom we daily offend; for if He have ought against us, and yet we stand out against Him by impenitence, who can save us from

His wrath? Let us think on Eli's speech (1 Sam. 2:25), *If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge it; but if a man sin against the Lord, who will plead for him?*

# 5:25-26

"*Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing*." Matthew 5:25-26

Our Saviour still goeth on with His former rule of concord and reconciliation. Now because the meaning of the words are controversial, it shall not be amiss somewhat to discuss the divers expositions that are made hereof. The papists say that by *adversary*, is meant God, commanding men in His law; and by *way*, is meant the space of time in this life; by *judge* they understand Christ; by *serjeant*, God's angels; by *prison*, hell; and because in hell there be many places, therefore here by *prison*, they understand purgatory; and by the *uttermost farthing*, venial sins; as if this were the meaning: Agree with God while thou art in this life between this and the day of judgment, lest thou come before Christ, and He cause His angels to cast thee into purgatory, and there thou remain till thou have satisfied for thy least venial sins. This exposition they stand upon the more, because hereupon they would build their doctrine of purgatory.

But this cannot be the true meaning of this place, for the reasons following: First, these words depend upon the former, and are a continuance of the rule of reconciliation between man and man, and not between God and man. Secondly, their exposition overthroweth the meditation and satisfaction of Christ for man to God; for if (as they say) man may and must satisfy for his venial sins, even to the uttermost, then Christ did not make a perfect satisfaction for man to God; for if He did, why should man satisfy for himself? Thirdly, by this exposition they confound the adversary and the judge (for the Father and the Son are one) which in the text are made diverse and distinct. Fourthly, they make a redemption and delivery from hell, from which indeed there is no redemption. And lastly, in making a parable of this place, they set their purgatory on a sandy foundation; for

from the words of a parable can no sound collection be made, but only from the main scope thereof.

Others there be that understand these two verses of the party offended; for (say they) Christ had shewed before the duty of the party offending, *to seek reconciliation*; now therefore He layeth down the duty of the party offended and wronged, namely, that when the party offending comes to him, and desires reconciliation, he must agree and be reconciled with him quickly. This exposition, howsoever it is plausible and fit in reason, yet it cannot well stand with the words of the text, which threaten to the party that agrees not with his adversary betimes, to be carried before the judge, and cast into prison, there to lie till he have paid the uttermost farthing. But there is no reason why the party offended should thus be cast into prison, and therefore it cannot be understood of him.

Thirdly, others expound these words to be a parable, borrowed from the courts of the Jews; and it is hard to say whether they be the words of a parable or not.

But to leave all these, a fourth exposition, which I take most fit and proper to express the true meaning of the place, is this: The words contain no parable, but are literally and properly to be understood; for Christ had before exhorted the party doing wrong to seek to be reconciled with his brother by acknowledging his offence, and making recompense according to the injury offered. But because men are obstinate and stiff-necked, and will not yield and submit themselves to this duty; therefore he further urgeth the party offending to the speedy performance of this duty; by the danger ensuing upon the neglect hereof; saying,

*Agree with thine adversary* etc.

that is, use means to become friends with him with whom thou art at variance (for an adversary doth not here signify an open enemy, but anyone with whom we are at difference who hath an action against us in any matter by reason of our injury done unto him).

*Quickly*

That is, without delay, stand not upon thy supposed right, but rather yield from thine own right, than over-long to defer to be reconciled.

*Whiles thou art in the way*

That is (as we may plainly see (Luke 12:58)), while thou art going with thine adversary to have the matter tried before the magistrate.

*Lest thine adversary deliver thee to the judge*

That is, lest thine adversary having a good action against thee, do convince and cast thee before the magistrate.

*And the judge deliver thee to the serjeant, and thou be cast into prison.*

That is, lest after thou art convinced of wrongdoing, the judge command the serjeant to cast thee into prison. And because it might be thought a small thing to be cast into prison, for that he might quickly come out again, therefore our Saviour Christ addeth,

*Verily, thou shalt not come out till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing*.

This farthing was the least coin used among the Jews, called a quadrin, which contains two mites; as we may see (Mark 12:42) by the widow's gift cast into the treasury; and it is the fourth part of a penny in English; so that this last phrase is proverbial, as if He had said, Look for no compact or agreement with thine adversary, when thou art once cast into prison, for he will shew thee no favour, but use thee as hardly as may be, remitting nothing; but causing thee to make full restitution and satisfaction, even to the uttermost farthing. And this I take to be the true and proper meaning of the words.

The special points to be observed in the words are two: a *precept* and a *reason* thereof.

1. The precept is in these words: *Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him*; that is, use all good means to become friends with whomsoever thou hast any ways offended, before the matter come to

be tried before the magistrate. The reason is in the words following, drawn from the danger that will ensue deferring of agreement, *lest thine adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge to the serjeants* etc. The precept is a rehearsal of the rule of reconciliation given in the former verse touching agreement with those whom we have offended; which point, Christ stands the more upon, because of the stubbornness of men's hearts, that cannot abide to submit themselves, either in yielding a little of their own right, or making satisfaction for wrong done to others. Now this precept is further set out by these two circumstances: first, of the *time*, it must be done quickly, and not deferred upon any pretence or shew of our own right; secondly, of the *place*, in the way, as we go to the court.

1. In this precept, our Saviour Christ gives unto us a notable rule of equanimity for the maintenance of peace and love with those with whom we are to deal in the private affairs of our special callings; namely, to deal moderately, if the matter concerns ourselves, without all rigour or extremity; unless our place be such wherein our silence may impeach the glory of God or the good of His church (Phil 4:5), *Let your patient mind be known to all men*.

To the practice of this rule, many duties are required. First, we must construe all men's sayings and doings in the best part; herein there failed that bare false witness against our Saviour Christ by applying His speech to the material temple in Jerusalem (Matt 26:60), which He spake of the temple of His body. This mistaking and misconstruing of men's sayings and doings, is the cause of much debate continually. Secondly, we must learn to bear with, and to wink at our brother's wants (Prov. 19:11), *It is the glory of a man to pass by an offence*. If the same only concerns us, and be not too derogatory to God's glory; as if he be forward, hasty, angry, reproachful, and so forth; we must in Christian patience pass by the same, as though we took no notice of it, till by our reproof we may do him good. Thirdly, though direct injury be done unto us, yet if the same be private, and do not impeach the glory of God, our life, or good name, we must be content to bear it (1 Cor. 6:7); Paul doth sharply rebuke the Corinthians for going to law about trifles, *Why* (saith he) *suffer you not wrong*? *Why sustain you not harms*? And this by God's grace a man shall do, if first, he duly and equally considers his own deserts, both of like injuries from men, and of eternal

damnation from God Himself, whom he continually offendeth. Secondly, if he have an eye to the providence of God in that thing wherein he is wronged, who disposeth all things for the good of His children. Thirdly, for the maintenance of peace we must yield our own right. So did Abraham unto Lot (Gen. 13:9), though he were above him both in years and authority, bidding him choose where he would dwell, whether on the right hand or on the left. And our Saviour Christ, though He were free, being of the king's stock, yet for the avoiding of offence, paid tribute for Himself and Peter (Matt. 17:25-27). And observing these things with good conscience, we shall by God's grace maintain Christian concord.

2. Secondly, Christ commanding speedy agreement, condemneth that wilfulness and stubbornness of men whereby, rather than they will submit themselves and yield a little of their right, they will carry every trifling matter before the magistrate. This is a common fault among us in these days of peace, for every trial is made a law matter, which ought not to be among Christians; it plainly argueth great want of love, and small regard of this commandment of our Saviour Christ. I speak not this to condemn the lawful use of the law, but to reprove the bad practice of carnal men, who make lawing the means of their private revenge, and sometimes of flat injustice against their brethren, whom they do not affect.

3. Thirdly, Christ here also noteth out the hardness and cruelty of men's hearts, who will never let a man go, if once they get him in the lurch. Such cruel wretches are they that take the forfeitures of leases, bonds and obligations; and such, for the most part, are our common usurers. But all these must know that they are void of love and grace, whereby they should maintain this concord which Christ requires.

4. Fourthly, by this circumstance of time, *Agree quickly*, Christ would teach us to keep our hearts clear from grudging and heart- burning, even then, when we have occasion of suit or controversy with others; for this rancour of heart will cause further debate and contention, like to an angry humour in the veins, which sets the whole body in burning fits.

5. Fifthly, if we must use speed in seeking agreement with men whom we have offended, before we come to the trial of a mortal judge; then much more must we give all diligence to be reconciled unto God for our daily sins whereby we offend Him; and that with all speed, even in this life, before we come to His tribunal seat. For howsoever in the courts of men we may go upon sureties, yet at the bar of God's judgment, none can answer for us. If we be not beforehand reconciled to God in Christ, this undoubtedly will be the issue; we shall be cast into utter darkness, and there remain till we have fully satisfied the justice of God, which will never be. Let all estates and degrees think on this, and especially the younger sort, who deceive themselves by deferring repentance, whenas indeed they, as well as others, are every day going forward to the bar of God's judgment.

6. Sixthly, as in seeking reconciliation, so in doing every good work that concerns God's glory in the good of others, we must use all convenient speed; *while we have time, we must do what good we can unto all* (Gal. 6:10), for death and the last judgment come suddenly. *Say not unto thy neighbour* (saith Solomon) *go, and come again tomorrow, if thou hast it now* (Prov. 3:28). And again (Eccl. 9:10), *Whatsoever thy hand shall find to do, do it with all thy power*. This is Job's defence (Job 31:16), that he restrained not the poor of their desire, nor caused the widow's eyes to fail; and his practice must be our precedent, for the more good we do, the more grace we have, and the more like we be to our heavenly Father (Matt. 5:44,45).

2. Thus much of the precept. The reason followeth, *Lest thine adversary deliver thee to the judge* etc., which is thus much in effect: If thou shew extremity, thou shalt find extremity shewed unto thee again, even by the magistrate. They that deal stiffly and rigourously, shall be rewarded in their kind. God in His just judgement will have men measured unto, as they measure unto others (Matt. 7:2,6; Mark 4:24).

Here then we are taught to deal in equity and moderation with all men, in the private affairs of our callings, even as we would have them to deal with us; and then God will cause others to deal well with us; but if we deal ill with others, God will reward us in the same kind. This point all usurers,

engrossers, tradesmen etc., should well observe, who think they may do with their own what they will; but we must know that we are but stewards, and our account will be exact.

Secondly, here we see Christ alloweth: 1. Of the magistrate and his judgment seat. 2. Of his proceeding against the guilty in delivering him to the officer. 3. Of the office of the serjeant. 4. Of casting guilty persons into prison. 5. Of suing at the law, when right cannot be gotten by any other lawful means. But law must not be the first course we take in seeking our right, we must rather suffer some wrong, and seek to end the matter by friends; and use law as physicians use poisons, when gentle physick will not serve the turn, then in case of extremity they do minister stronger physick; yea, sometimes poison itself; so when we cannot otherwise procure our peace and right, then we may lawfully take the benefit of the law.

# 5:27-28

"*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery*: But I say unto you, **That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart*." Matthew 5:27-28

"*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery*" (v.27)

Here, our Saviour Christ goeth about to restore the seventh commandment, touching adultery, to its true sense and meaning, and so to its proper and right use, by purging it from the false and erroneous interpretation of the Jews; for which end, He first lays down the false interpretation of the Scribes and Pharisees (v.27), and then adjoineth the true sense thereof (v.28 especially); yet so as He continueth the same in the verses following.

I. For the first; before the interpretation of the Jewish teachers, He prefixes this preface: *Ye have heard that it hath been said of old time*; or, *of the ancient teachers*; the meaning and use whereof we have before shewed (v.21). Then after follow the words of the seventh commandment, *Thou shalt not commit adultery*; which are the proper words of the Holy Ghost; yet here must not they be taken in that sense which the Scribes and Pharisees gave unto them; for the better conceiving whereof, this one thing especially must be opened; namely, what is adultery here forbidden. Adultery properly is the breach of wedlock by such parties, some one whereof, at the least, is either married or espoused. I call it the *breach of wedlock*, to note the property of this sin, which is not in any other sin, unless it be of this kind, though the sin be far more grievous. Idolatry is a more heinous sin than adultery, being a breach of both the first and second commandment of the first table; and yet it comes short of adultery in this quality of breaking wedlock; for wedlock may be kept of those which are idolaters. Secondly, I say, *between any parties, if one be married*; meaning the husband as well as the wife, to confute the opinion of some Jews, and by some laws also maintained, that the man hath a privilege above the

woman, so as he breaketh not wedlock when he goeth into another woman besides his wife; which is false; for though he have a prerogative over his wife, in being her head, yet he hath no privilege to free him from matrimonial fidelity, but is as much bound to keep himself unto his wife, as she is to keep herself unto him. The preeminence of superiority cannot free the husband from the bond of marriage, the husband is bound to the wife as much as the wife is to the husband, and she hath power over his body, as much as he hath over hers (1 Cor. 7:4). Thirdly, I say, *or espoused*, because adultery is not only committed by such parties whereof one or both be fully married; but also by them, whereof one is single, and the other contracted only; and therefore is the same punishment (Deut. 22:22-24) allotted to both; for contract in right is marriage. Thus we see the sin here directly forbidden, according to the letter of the law. Now, though the Lord under this one includes all the sins of the same kind, as we shall anon perceive; yet the Pharisees took this literal signification for the whole meaning, and taught that the sin here forbidden was bodily adultery only; and so made the adultery of the heart to be no adultery; which exposition here Christ confutes.

1. First, here observe the fraud and cunning of these Pharisees; they would seem faithful interpreters of the law, in that they keep themselves so close to the words, that they will not pass one jot beyond the literal sense; but yet in the meantime they omit the full meaning and true use of the law. The like hath been the practice of heretics in all ages; as the Arians who denied that Christ was God, stuck fast to these words of Scripture (John 14:28) *The Father is greater than I*, and to such like. And the papists to uphold their breaden-god by transubstantiation, will needs keep the literal sense of these words of Christ, *This is my body*, whereby they overturn the nature of that sacrament. And the like might be shewed by sundry examples in all ages; whereby we are taught not to stand upon the propriety of the words of Scripture only, but to labour to have the true spiritual sense joined with them.

2. Secondly, here observe how grievous a sin adultery is, in that Christ by name doth expressly forbid it, among all the sins of this kind; yea, the very Pharisees do everywhere condemn it; for though they would easily dispense with disobedience to parents (Matt. 15:4-6), yet the woman taken in

adultery must be put to death (John 8:4-5). The greatness of this sin might be shewed by many arguments; for if he be worse than an infidel, that careth not for his family (1 Tim. 5:8), then far worse is the adulterer, for he destroyeth his family. Solomon (we know) maketh adultery worse than theft (Prov. 6:30,32), and yet theft is a notorious sin, greatly hated, and severely punished of all nations. Again, adultery destroyeth the seminary of the church, which is a godly seed in the family ((Mal. 2:15), and it breaketh the covenant between the parties and God, it robs another of the precious ornament of chastity, which is a gift of the Holy Ghost, it dishonoureth their bodies, and maketh them the temples of the devil, and the adulterer maketh his family a stew; for as David dealt with Uriah; so his own son Absalom dealt with him. And lastly, it bringeth God's vengeance upon the posterity; and therefore Job calleth it a fire which shall devour unto destruction (Job 31:12); yea, the greatness of God's punishment upon adultery, partly in this life, and principally after death, may plainly shew the greatness of this sin; for this and other sins, God overthrew Admah and Zeboim, Sodom and Gomorrah, with fire and brimstone from heaven (Deut. 29:23); and the place where they stood is made a pool of poisoning water unto this day. And although the Lord does not shew such extraordinary revenge against sin, yet His wrath is a consuming fire against whole families, towns and kingdoms for this sin. Though David repented of his adultery, yet for that very sin, *the sword must not depart from his house for ever* (2 Sam. 12:10). And for the life to come, *adulterers and whoremongers God will judge* (Heb. 13:4). Again (1 Cor. 6:9), *neither fornicators, nor adulterers* etc. *shall inherit the kingdom of God*; they may repent, and so be saved, but then they cease to be adulterers.

Now if adultery be so grievous a sin, worse than theft etc., then we must wish that in all places, it were severely punished as theft is; would families be reformed, and become good seminaries, both for church and commonwealth. Secondly, the grievousness of God's wrath against this sin, must admonish everyone to beware thereof, for it brings the besom of destruction to sweep it all away, both in church and commonwealth.

*But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart*." (v. 28)

II. Here our Saviour Christ lays down the true sense of this commandment, and as we see, He speaketh as the law-giver and Prophet of His church, who hath absolute power to give laws and expound the same. *But I say unto you*: The Pharisees said that there was no adultery but that which was outward and bodily; but Christ plainly confuteth that and saith *that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her*; that is, desireth to increase his lust; *he hath committed adultery with her already in his heart*. Here then our Saviour Christ setteth down two things touching the interpretation of this law: First, the *occasion* of adultery, which is looking to lust; Secondly, that the lust of the heart, that is, the motion and inward inclination of the heart unto this sin, is adultery before God, though it never come into action.

1. For the occasion: To look upon a woman is not sin, but may be done lawfully; yea, thereby a man and woman may glorify God, as the Queen of Sheba, by beholding Solomon's person (I Kin. 10:8), and hearing his wisdom, did take occasion to glorify God; but here is meant the abuse of the sight; that is idle looking, or curious looking of men upon women, or women upon men. Now idle looking is when one looketh without just cause; as when a man looketh with intent to lust. Thus did the sons of God behold the daughters of men (Gen. 6:2), by whose looking came lust, and for lust came the flood. So Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:7) first lifted up her eyes upon Joseph, and then lusted after him; and Dinah, Jacob's daughter (Gen. 34:1), went out to see the daughters of the country, and to be seen again, and so when Shechem saw her, he lusted after her, and ravished her. So the prophet David (2 Sam. 11:2,3), living in peace and security, cast his eyes idly and curiously upon Bathsheba as she was washing herself, whereupon he lusted after her and so committed both adultery and murder. This idle and curious looking, St Peter calleth *an adulterous eye* (2 Pet. 2:14), both because it is the beginning of lust, and the increase thereof. But this sin is little regarded, and made a small matter with many, who can be content to come with Christian ears into the assemblies, and yet will bring with them idle and curious, yea adulterous eyes; but such persons which so abuse their sight, to the dishonour of God, must know that they may persuade themselves that grace enters into their hearts by hearing, yet undoubtedly by their idle and curious eyes, Satan enters into their soul, and keeps out God's Word, whereby their soul should be renewed. We therefore must here be admonished to take heed how we use the sight of our eyes,

especially when we are in the assemblies of the saints, and holy exercises; and to prevent this evil, it were to be wished that men and women would sort themselves, and not be mingled in the congregation, unless it were the husband with his own wife. Again if the idle and curious eye be the beginning of adultery, then we must learn with care to govern our eyes, as the servants of God have done. David prayed to the Lord (Psa. 119:37) to *keep his eyes from regarding vanity*. And Job, because he would avoid unchaste thoughts, *made a covenant with his eyes not to look on a maid* (Job 31:1).

Now as looking to lust is here forbidden; so by proportion are all other like occasions unto adultery; as first, reading of unchaste and wanton books of love matters, using light and wanton talk. Many are given to these kinds of delights, but they must know that therein they sin grievously, for they have not only a wanton eye, but a lascivious tongue also. Secondly, the acting of all such plays and comedies, the matter whereof is the representation of the light behaviour of men and women; for therein are idle and curious looks set forth to the eye, which ought not to be, being here condemned. Thirdly, the wearing of vain and light attire whereby others are provoked to cast their eyes upon them to lust; for if the light and wanton eye be condemned, then that which causeth it is much more condemned. This ought to be regarded; for light and foreign attire is a secret profession of an unchaste heart. Fourthly, mixed dancing of men and women in time and measure; for therein is more occasion and provocation unto lust, than by the bare beholding each other with the eye. Fifthly, evil company: so are the words of the apostle Paul out of an heathen poet (1 Cor. 15:33), *Evil conversing corrupt good manners*; which may well include the unseemly conversing of men with women, not warranted either by the general or particular calling. Sixthly, the pampering of the body with dainty meats or strong drinks; that was the sin of Sodom (Ezek. 16:49); and it is much more an occasion of lust than the bare sight of the eye. Seventhly, idleness and laziness, in not employing the body in some honest calling, for thereby also is lust incited.

And thus much for the meaning of this commandment, forbidding all occasion to adultery under a lustful eye.

Now considering that a man is guilty of adultery, that useth occasions thereof; hereby we mat see that we cannot excuse ourselves from the breach of this law; for though we be clean from the bodily outward act, yet who can say, *My heart is clean*? Who is free from the occasions thereof? As from a wanton eye, vain apparel, wanton speech, intemperance and the rest; all of which makes us culpable of this sin; and therefore we must lay our hands upon our mouths, and condemn ourselves of guilt before God. We must humble ourselves, acknowledging our sins and breaches of this commandment; and lastly, we must take heed of all occasions that may move or incite us unto lust and wantonness.

2. The second point which our Saviour Christ propoundeth in the interpretation of this law is this: that the lust of the heart, though it never come into act, is adultery. Now that we may know what our Saviour Christ meaneth by lust, sundry points are to be handled: First, how lust can be a sin, considering it is only a hidden desire of the heart; secondly, how lust can be a sin of the seventh commandment, seeing it is forbidden in the tenth; and thirdly, how great a sin lust is.

1. For the first, that lust is a sin is thus proved: God's law requireth obedience of the whole man, both in soul and body, and in every part, faculty and power thereof. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy strength* (Matt. 22:37); and that obedience which cometh not from the whole man is sinful. Now when a man conceiveth unchaste thoughts in his heart, then his soul and mind and his affections have not done their duty unto God, and so he sinneth in lusting.

Yet this doctrine was never received of all, but some have still excepted against it, and their principal reasons are two:

1. They say, lust is a natural inclination, desire and appetite, which was in Adam before his fall, and so cannot be a sin. *Answer*: Lust or appetite in the heart is not simply a sin; for so it is a natural desire which was in our first parents in their integrity; but to lust after that which God forbiddeth, that is the sin; as for a man to lust after a woman, or a woman after a man, not being man and wife, which we see here Christ condemneth.

2. They say, God blesseth adulterers and fornicators in their lust with the issue of seed in child-bearing, as well as man and wife in lawful marriage; and therefore it cannot be a sin. *Answer*: In adultery two things may be considered: the unlawful lust of the heart, and the act of generation. Now when God gives issue to adulterers and fornicators, it is no approbation of their sinful lust, but only a common blessing of natural generation, which is His own ordinance by creation; for howsoever God approves not of the sin, yet He preserves nature in sinful works. And thus we see that lust is sin.

2. How can lust be a sin of the seventh commandment, seeing it is directly forbidden in the tenth; for in this brief Decalogue there is no needless repetition of anything? *Answer*: Lust is twofold: either without consent of will; as when unchaste desires come into the mind and heart, and are not entertained of the will, but be speedily checked so soon as they arise; and such lust is forbidden in the tenth commandment; or with consent of will, when a man is willing to entertain and cherish the thoughts that come into his mind, though he never puts them into practice; and these are forbidden in the seventh commandment.

3. The greatness of this sin of lust: This is here expressed by Christ calling it adultery before God; as if He should say, Look how great a sin bodily adultery is before men, who punish the sin with death; even so great and heinous a sin before God is the inward unchaste lusting of the heart, whereto a man gives consent of will, though he never brings it into action; for this he stands culpable of adultery before God, and shall therefore be condemned, unless he repent.

The use of this third point is manifold:

1. First, hereby we may learn how to examine ourselves by this seventh commandment; for our Saviour Christ here teacheth us that they which willingly retain unchaste desires with delight, though they never give their bodies to the outward act, are adulterers before God; and therefore when we would examine ourselves by this commandment, we must search our hearts, whether we have willingly retained therein any lustful thoughts; and if we have, we must know that we are guilty

of adultery before God. And because none of us are free from this sin, it must humble us and cast us down before God as breakers of this commandment.

2. Secondly, if the lust of the heart be adultery before God, then we must with care and diligence learn the apostle Paul's lesson (2 Cor. 7:1), to *purge ourselves from all uncleanness both of flesh and spirit*; that is, we must labour to keep our hearts and minds pure and chaste, as well as our bodies. And to induce us hereunto, consider the reasons following: First, we all desire to see God, and to know His love in Christ for our comfort in this life, and salvation for ever. But *without holiness and purity of heart, we can never see God* (Heb. 12:14), nor know the comfort of His love; for when a man defiles his mind with unchaste thoughts, he depriveth himself of the taste of God's favour, and of the experience of His love. Secondly, consider the state and condition of man's heart by effectual calling; it is the dwelling place and temple of the Holy Ghost (for when a man is in Christ, he liveth in Christ by faith, and Christ in him by His Spirit); now then look as men use to trim up their dwelling houses for the receiving of some noble guest, so ought we to keep our hearts pure and clean from unchaste lusts, that they may be fit habitations for the blessed Spirit of God. But by unchaste lusts, we make the heart a stable for the devil, and a cage of all unclean spirits. Thirdly, if we suffer our hearts now to burn with fleshly lust, we make an entrance in them for the burning of hell fire for ever; for these two always go together, burning lust and hell fire (unless repentance come between). And therefore if we would escape hell fire, we must quench the fire of lust, and cleanse our hearts from this uncleanness. Fourthly, by profession we seem to be the members of Christ; and if we would be so indeed, then we must take heed of unchaste lusts, for thereby we pull our hearts from Christ, and knit them to an harlot.

These and such like reasons must move us to avoid all unchaste desires; and for the preservation of chastity in our hearts, these rules must be observed:

First, the mind must be filled with godly meditations, and the Word of God must dwell in our hearts plenteously; for unchaste lusts do therefore arise in

our hearts because we are idle minded, and empty of God's Word. If that were truly engrafted in us, these wicked desires could not enter, or at least take no place in us. Secondly, we must often give ourselves to the spiritual exercises of faith, repentance and new obedience; as to the usual hearing, reading and meditating on God's Word, to the often receiving of the Lord's Supper, and to continual prayers, not only publicly, but privately especially; for these confirm God's graces in the heart, and do even nip in the head all ungodly motions whatsoever. Thirdly, we must use sobriety in meat, drink and apparel; for ungodly lusts are kindled, fed and nourished with too much pampering of the body. Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim sinned most grievously in this kind through fulness of bread; and therefore we must use moderation in these things, that grace may be strengthened, and all evil lusts weakened in us. Fourthly, we must always be doing some good thing, either in our general calling of a Christian, or in our particular calling; yea, in our lawful recreation we must intend and practice good; for when men are idle, Satan fills their hearts with evil thoughts, and so defiles the same. Fifthly, men and women must not privately converse together, without warrant so to do, either from their general or particular calling, so as with good conscience they can say, the Lord doth call them so to converse; for the mutual conversing of men and women is the cause of many noisome lusts, and therefore neither men nor women without good warrant should thrust themselves into such occasion of temptations. Remember what the apostle saith (1 Cor. 15:33), *Evil conversings corrupt good manners*. The apostle Peter felt the smart of this boldness, though in another case; for coming to warm himself in Caiaphas' hall, without good warrant so to do, when a silly maid demanded of him whether he was not one of Christ's company, he denied him flatly, and that with cursing; and so many men and women conversing without warrant where they should not, do fall into many noisome sins; and when they think themselves most strong, then with Peter they have the greatest falls.

# 5:29-30

"*And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut if off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell*." Matthew 5:29-30

In these two verses, our Saviour Christ layeth down a most heavenly instruction for the avoiding of offences; propounding it by way of answer to a secret objection which might be framed, by occasion of His former exposition of this seventh commandment: for having condemned the adultery of the heart, declared by the eye, some man might say, What shall we do with our eyes, if an unchaste look be so dangerous? Our Saviour Christ answers: *If thy right eye cause thee to offend, pluck it out*; which words must not be taken literally in their proper sense; for this is a rule in the expounding of Scripture, that when the literal sense is against any commandment of the law, then the words must not be taken properly. Now these words in their proper sense, do command a breach of the sixth commandment, which bindeth every man to preserve his own and his neighbour's life, and so no man can without sin put out his eye, or cut off his hand.

By eye then, we are to understand first, the eye of the body; yet not that only, but any other thing that is dear and precious to us; as our eye, even our right eye is. *If it cause thee to offend*, that is, cause thee to sin, and to fail in the way of obedience unto God's commandments. *Pluck it out, and cast it from thee*. These words are a lofty kind of speech called hyperbole, where by thus much is signified: Restrain and govern it most carefully, though it be to thine own great pain, loss and hindrance; *for better it is for thee that one of thy members perish, than thy whole body should be cast into hell*. These words contain a reason of the former exhortation to this effect: It is better for thee to want the benefit and use of things most precious and dear

unto thee in this life, and so to be saved; than by having and using them, to perish for ever. So that the true meaning of this place is this: as if our Saviour had said, *Go through the whole course of thy life, and take a view of all thy ways, and therein see what thing is an occasion for sin unto thee; that take heed of, and avoid, though the use thereof be most dear unto thee; for it is better that thou shouldest want the use thereof, and so be saved, than by it to perish eternally in hell.*

*Also if thy right hand make thee to offend, cut it off; for it is better for thee* etc. Here the same exhortation and reason is again repeated, which we must not think to be a thing needless and frivolous; for such repetitions in Scripture have special use, to signify that the things so delivered be of special importance worthy of all careful observation and obedience. Now by *right hand*, here is meant anything that is most profitable unto us, whatever it be, if it cause us to sin against God, it must be avoided, and left off most carefully.

By this exhortation of our Saviour Christ, we are taught to carry a strict watch over all ourselves, and over all the parts of our bodies, especially the eye and hands, that they become not unto us occasions of sinning against God.

1. And for the government of the eyes, there are two special rules:

    1. First, we must use our sight, that is, open and shut our eyes, in obedience unto God. Solomon giving rules for the well ordering of the tongue, sight and foot, saith thus of the eye (Prov. 4:24,25), *Let thine eye behold the right, and thy eyelids direct thy way before thee*; which words seem to carry this sense: that we should order our sight according to the straight rule of God's Word, for that is the way wherein we ought to walk. Now the necessity of observing this rule may appear by sundry examples: Eve's looking upon the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:6), with desire to eat thereof, against God's commandment, was the door and entrance of that sin into her heart. Was not Ham accursed for looking upon his father's nakedness (Gen. 9:22,25)? Was not Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt for looking backward towards Sodom (Gen. 19:26)? Fifty thousand threescore and ten men of Beth Shemesh were slain for looking into

the ark of the Lord, against His revealed will (1 Sam. 6:19). By all which it is plain that we ought to use our sight in obedience to God; for which end, it will be good before we look on anything, to consider whether the same will be for God's glory, the good of ourselves and of our brethren; if it be we may use our sight. If not, we may not use it.

2. Secondly, we must make our eyes, not the weapons of any sin, but the instruments of God's worship and service. This we shall do if we employ them thus: 1. In beholding God's creatures in heaven and earth, that in them we may see God's glory, wisdom, mercy, power and providence, and thereby take occasion to magnify the name of God. 2. In beholding God's judgments very wisely and narrowly, that therein we may see His justice and wrath against sin, and so be humbled in ourselves and certified from sin. 3. In beholding of the elements of God's sacraments, especially the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, which be visible words, wherein we may see our Saviour Christ, as it were crucified before our eyes. 4. In using them as instruments of invocation, by lifting them up to heaven (Psa. 123:1,2), to testify the lifting up of our hearts unto God. This use of the eyes nature teacheth us, for whereas other creatures have but four muscles in their eyes, whereby their eyes are turned round about, man only above them all hath a fifth muscle, whereby his eye is turned upward towards heaven. And this which is said for the well ordering of our eyes, must be observed in the rest of the senses, and in all other parts of the body; they must all be employed and set a work in obedience to God, and continually observed, that they become not the weapons of sin, but the instruments of His glory.

2. Secondly, this exhortation of Christ must teach us to avoid all the occasions of every sin, though it be with great loss unto ourselves in the things of this life. This is the chief point that our Saviour Christ aimeth at in this place, and therefore it ought with special regard to be learned and remembered. Man's nature is like to dry wood, or tow, which will burn so soon as fire is put unto it; give a man the least occasion of any sin, and he is as ready to commit it, as dry wood is to burn, though thereby he do as much as in him lieth, to cast away his own soul for ever. Look therefore as mariners on the seas have constant and continual care to avoid both rocks

and sands whereby they may suffer shipwreck; so must we most warily avoid the occasions of every sin. A most worthy example hereof we have in Moses, who was brought up in Pharaoh's court till he was forty years old, where he enjoyed all earthly pleasures and honours that his heart could wish; and so might have continued if he would, for he was the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter; but yet Moses left them all, and *chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God in Goshen, than to enjoy all the pleasures of Egypt* (Heb. 11:25,26). And this he did, because they were but the pleasures of sin, which he could not enjoy, unless he would forsake the true fear and worship of God, and all good conscience; and his example we ought to follow.

Now that we may avoid all the occasions of sin, and so put in practice this wholesome precept of our Saviour Christ, I will here entreat of the occasions of sin, and shew withal how they may be avoided.

By *occasion of sin*, I mean anything that either of itself, or by man's abuse, becomes offensive, and provoketh unto sin. In this large acceptance, an occasion of sin extendeth itself, not only to such things as are evil, but even to things good and commendable in themselves, which by man's abuse cause transgression against God. Occasions of sins are twofold: either *given* or *taken*.

I.

An occasion given is that thing, either word or action, that is evil in itself, the speaking or doing whereof, stirs a man effectually to sin. Occasions given are twofold: either of one man unto another, or of man unto himself.

1. The occasions whereby one man may provoke another to sin are many. I will reduce them to six heads:

1. The first is *bad counsel*, whereby one man persuadeth another unto sin. This is a great cause of much evil in the world. Thus came the fall of our first parents, for (Gen. 3:4,6) Satan persuaded Eve, and Eve her husband. Thus came the crucifying of the Lord of life, for the High Priests and rulers persuaded the people to ask Barabbas, and to destroy Jesus (Matt. 27:20). Hence cometh seeking to wizards. One friend

persuades another, for their outward good, as they think. Yea, from this bad counsel comes the common neglect of all good duties in God's worship.

2. The second is *consent or approbation of sin*; and it is twofold: *secret* or *open*.

1. Secret approbation or consent is when men see sin committed, and are not grieved thereat. For this cause the apostle Paul checketh the Corinthians (1 Cor. 5:1,2), that they were not sorrowful, but rather puffed up at the fact of the incestuous man; whereby they did in some sort hearten him in his sins. This is a great occasion of sin in our days. The prophet David was of another mind (Psa. 119:136), his eyes gushed rivers of tears because men brake God's laws.

2. Open approbation of sin is when men do openly countenance sinners and lewd persons, which make profession of bad practices. This is a great occasion of horrible impieties. Hereby the hands of the wicked are strengthened in their wickedness, as the Lord complaineth (Jer. 23:12,17). And this is the sin of this age; for who is so bad that hath not some patron of his evil, and some back friend to soothe him in his sin, which makes sin shameless, and sinners impudent? But all God's children must follow Elisha, who in great fervency of spirit told Jehoram to his face, though he were king, that (2 Kin. 3:14) if it had not been for the presence of good king Jehosaphat, He would not have looked towards him, nor seen him. The Lord Himself will not take the wicked by the hand, neither can He endure that His children should help the wicked, or love them that hate the Lord (2 Chr. 19:2).

3. The third occasion given, is *provocation unto sin*, when either by word or deed, men excite or draw on others to some evil; as unto anger, revenge, hatred, to drunkenness or such like; and this is a common fault of those that delight in drunken fellowship.

4. The fourth occasion is *neglect of good duties unto our brethren*; as of exhortation, admonition, instruction or rebuke. (Josh. 7), Achan stole the execrable thing for himself alone, and yet all the people are charged with that fault and punished for it. The cause was their neglect

to keep one another from that sin, according as God had commanded them (Josh. 6:18). This is a great occasion of impiety among us; if neighbour would admonish neighbour, and one brother another, sin would not be so rife as it is. But this duty is not only neglected of private men one to another, but of public persons, who are most bound unto it. The magistrate is negligent in punishing, and the minister in reproving sin; and the master of the family careless in reforming those that are under him, which causeth sin to abound.

5. The fifth occasion given, is *evil example in the practice of any sin whatsoever which may be known*. This is most dangerous, like unto wildfire, that imflameth all places whereon it lighteth. The truth hereof appears amongst us; for let any one man or woman take up a new fashion in attire, and presently the same is generally received. Let a man invent or sing a lewd song, and presently it is learned of all, even of little children that can scarce speak. Whence also comes it that crawling infants should swear roundly, and frame themselves to all impiety, when they cannot speak readily, but from the bad example of their elders with whom they are brought up? Now among all men, their bad example is most dangerous, who make the greater profession of religion. They are like false lights upon the shore, which lead the ships upon the sands. And therefore such as shew any care or forwardness in holy practice of religion, must have special watch over all their ways, that (if it be possible) they may be blameless both in word and deed; for all men have an eye at them, and the wicked would gladly spy holes in their coat.

6. The last occasion given is the *private slandering of God's ministers and the disgracing of their ministry*. This is an offence as general as the rest, and it causeth many to condemn the means of their salvation. When men meet together, their common talk is of the ministers, and of their doctrine, not to be edified by mutual conference, but only to disgrace their persons, and to make their ministry contemptible; but they little know what great mischief this causeth, and therefore it ought to be avoided.

These are occasions of sinning given by one man to another; for the avoiding whereof, which is the plucking out of the eye and cutting off of the hand here commanded, this rule must be observed: *We must hate and eschew the occasion of sin as deadly poison; and esteem those persons that give them unto us, in that regard, as ill as the devil*. Thus Christ dealt with Peter, His own disciple, when he went about to hinder Him from doing His Father's will in suffering for our sins; He saith (Matt. 16:23), *Come behind me Satan*; considering him in that action as if he had been the devil himself; for we must know that the devil comes not only openly unto men, but cunningly conveys himself in these occasions of sin given by others, that thereby he may enter into them for the destruction of their souls. We must endeavour as Paul did (Acts 24:16), *to keep a good conscience in all things*; that is, to keep ourselves pure and uncorrupt from all the occasions of sin in the world. With a watchful eye against offences must we walk on, in that way that leadeth unto life, eschewing these stumbling blocks which the devil casts in our way by other men; and so shall we obey this good counsel of our Saviour Christ.

2. The second kind of occasions of sin given are those which a man gives unto himself; and they arise either from his affections, or from his imaginations.

1. First, from man's *affections* arise as many occasions of sin as there be corrupt affections in him; as from corrupt desire ariseth *covetousness*, which is so great an occasion of sin, that the apostle calls it *the root of all evil* (1 Tim. 6:10). This draws man's heart so much to the world that he can spare no time for the means of his salvation; herewith he is so choked that he never thinketh of repentance till the last gasp. Such another occasion of sin is *pride of heart*, whereby many give themselves so much to the garnishing of their bodies that they neglect their souls altogether. The like is *self-love*, whereby men overweening their gifts, think not themselves honoured according to their desert, and so through discontent give themselves to plot and practice much mischief for the advancing of their estate. Of this sort are the Romish priests and Jesuits, as their manifold dangerous attempts against our church and state do evidently declare. And thus we might run through all the affections of man's heart, shewing that the corrupt motions

thereof are the cause of much sin unto him, and a most dangerous means for the ruin of his soul.

In regard whereof here also we must shew how this *eye may be plucked out*, and this *hand cut off*; that is, by what means may we reform out hearts, and stay the rage of our affections, that they cause us not to sin. The way is this: *We must mortify and crucify our unruly affections and corrupt desires*. And for this end we must put in practice three duties:

1. First, we must believed that we are crucified with Christ; that is, as we conceive ourselves to be in Christ by faith, whereby we have communion with Him; so we must conceive that this communion with Christ is in His death and burial, so as our sinful nature, with all our corrupt affections, were nailed to His cross and buried in His grave, as the apostle shews at large (Rom. 6:3,4 etc.). Now when this persuasion shall take place in our hearts, it will by God's grace keep us from yielding to corrupt motions and desires, and move us to labour to subdue them daily; for herein stands our assurance that we have fellowship with Christ, when we have fellowship in His death. And therefore as we see malefactors to cease from stealth and robbery, when they are once hanged; so we being crucified with Christ in respect of the old man, must not suffer the same to rule in our affections, or to have force in our members; knowing (as the apostle saith (Rom. 6:6) that *our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin*; and (Gal. 5:24) that *they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof*; whereupon He bids us (Rom. 6:11) *think that we are dead to sin*, meaning with Christ, and so cannot live therein; St John saith (1 John 3:9) *He that is born of God, sinneth not, because the seed remaineth in him*; that is, true faith assuring the heart that all the benefits of Christ's death and passion belong unto him; whereof this is one, that in our nature He suffered death upon the cross, that we by the power of His sufferings might have sin crucified in us, so as it should not reign in us, to bring forth fruits unto death.

2. Secondly, we must remember God's commandment forbidding every sin, and every wicked lust and affection; and withal we must apply the

threatening of His wrath against the same, that thereby our flesh may be subdued.

3. Thirdly, we must strive against our corrupt motions and affections, not giving them liberty to bear sway in us, but ruling them by meditating in the Word of God, and by prayer for strength of grace to overcome them all; dealing with them as parents do with knives, turning the edges of them before they leave them in the hands of their children, lest they be hurt therewith; as if our love be set upon the world, we must labour to set it upon Christ and His righteousness; and if our hatred be against our brethren, we must labour to set it upon sin, and so for every affection, as joy, fear etc., we must so keep them to their right objects that they may rather further us in well doing, than become in us the occasions of any sin against God.

2. The second kind of occasions of sin which a man giveth to himself arise from his *mind and imagination*. And they are many, I will note only three:

1. The first is an inward conceit of perfect knowledge touching man's duty to God and the way of His salvation. That this is a common conceit in the hearts of the ignorant especially, may appear by this common speech of theirs; *that they know as much as any preacher can teach them*; for the sum of all (they say) is to love God above all, and my neighbour as myself, and to believe to be saved by Christ. Now this they know as well as the best; and hereupon they become condemners of the preaching of the Word, the ordinary means of their salvation, as of a thing needless and superfluous. This conceit is common among us, and doth much hurt to many a man's soul.

The way to cut it off is this: The vain man that is puffed up with this conceit must *examine himself touching his knowledge, whether it be sufficient to salvation*. And for this end he must make enquiry in himself for these two things: (a) First, whether he sees his own natural blindness, and whether he be moved thereby to labour for the knowledge of God and of His will. Where this is wanting, there is nothing but a vain conceit of knowledge. (b) Secondly, whether his knowledge be joined with conversion of heart from sin unto God; and with reformation of life from evil to good. This change of

heart and life goeth with all saving knowledge. Now if these be wanting (as undoubtedly they are in all vain persons), then is their knowledge so far from being saving knowledge, profitable to salvation, that it rather turneth to their deeper condemnation.

(ii) The second imagination in man, occasioning him to sin, is *the persuasion of his strong faith*. The more ignorant sort that want both faith and repentance, will thus brag of their strong faith; that no evil company can hurt them, and hereupon they take occasion to live as they list. But that this is a vain presumption may hereby appear, because (Acts 15:9) true faith *purifieth the heart*, and (1 John 5:4) *strengtheneth a man in life to avoid sin*, yea, it ministereth sweet comfort towards the time of death. But usually these men that brag and boast so much of their faith, are corrupt in heart, sinful in life, and fearful in their death; many times despairing of God's mercy; as lamentable experience ofttimes teacheth.

The way to cut off this occasion of offence is this: *to make a trial in ourselves whether our faith be true and sound or not*. This will appear two ways: (a) First by the beginnings and degrees of the works of the Spirit, which go before a true and lively faith, which be three: (1) first, a true sight of our sins, with an apprehension of the wrath of God due for the same; (2) secondly, a true sorrow and grief of heart for offending God by these our sins; and (3) lastly, an hungering and thirsting after the mercy and grace of God in Christ, above all worldly things. Where these things are, there is grace; but where these things are wanting, there is no true faith but a vain presumption. (b) Secondly, faith will appear by the work of love; for in love will faith bring forth all the duties of the moral law, both to God and man. *Faith worketh by love* (Gal. 5:6), and *love is the fulfilling of the law* (Rom. 13:10). Now all such persons as stand so much upon the strength of their faith, shall soon find, if they examine themselves by these two rules, that they have nothing in them but a vain presumption, which will turn to their deeper condemnation, unless they repent, and get true faith.

3. The third imagination causing a man to sin, is a *thought of security*, whereby he puts far away the evil day; persuading himself that though God will come in judgment against sin, yet it is far off. This was the wicked thought of the Jews, who said (Ezek. 12:27), The wisdom

shewed to the prophets were of times afar off, and for many days to come. This conceit is naturally bred in every man, and is the occasion of many foul sins; (Matt. 24:48), *The evil servant said in his heart, my master doth defer his coming*, and thereupon he takes occasion to smite his fellows and to live lewdly. (Isa. 28:15), The wicked say, *we have made a covenant with hell and death, and though a scourge run over and pass through, yet it shall not come at them*. And the ungodly that walk after their own lusts, say (2 Pet. 3:3,4), *Where is the promise of His coming*? And is not this wicked thought rife among us? For God hath now a long time called us to repentance by the preaching of the gospel, and because it takes no place in our hearts, he sends upon us His heavy judgments, as plague, famine, rumours of wars; but yet all this hath not caused us to meet the Lord. Generally that complaint of the prophet may be applied unto us (Jer. 8:6), *No man saith, what have I done*? Now the cause hereof, is this wicked conceit, whereby we think (Amos 9:10) *the evil shall not come nor hasten for us*. In this regard, we are like the men of the old world, who would not believe Noah though he preached unto them both by word and deed; and so they knew nothing till the flood came and took them all away. So fearful is it to put away from us the threatenings of God's judgments. And yet this sin takes place not only in the ignorant, but many times in the hearts of God's children.

The way to remove this wicked conceit is *to esteem of every present day, as the day of our death, or of the last judgment, and so accordingly to prepare ourselves to die, and to meet God in judgment every day*. This thing Moses aimed at, when he prayed to God (Psa. 90:12), *to teach him and his people to number their days, that they might apply their hearts unto wisdom*; for this persuasion of long life moves many to give themselves to the sins and vanities of this world excessively. We must therefore shake off this vain persuasion, and every day prepare ourselves for death, and for the day of judgment; so shall we number our days aright, and apply our hearts unto wisdom; for this is true wisdom in man: *rightly to consider his latter end*. And the more near doth this duty concern us, because of the continual intercourse of God's judgments upon us, in famine, plague and pestilence etc., which plainly argues that more heavy judgments are to ensue, unless we prevent the same by speedy and true repentance.

II.

Having thus shewed what be the occasions given whereby men are drawn to sin, I come to *occasions taken*. *An occasion of sin, or an offence taken, is when a man of a good thing frames that unto himself which causeth him to sin against God; and so much as in him lieth, to cast away his own soul*. These occasions taken arise specially from four heads: first, from the Scripture; secondly, from the doctrine of the church drawn out of Scripture; thirdly, from the state of the church; and fourthly, from the state of the wicked.

1. For the first: Though the Word of God be most perfect in every way, both for matter and style, yet hence do many take offence, and that two ways principally; partly from the plainness and simplicity of the Scripture, and partly from the contents thereof.

    1. For the first, it is most true that the Scripture style and phrase in many things is plain and familiar, even to the capacity of the simple; yet this is no disgrace to Scripture, but rather an honour, which more setteth out the majesty of God's Word. And yet hereby many take occasion to condemn it, esteeming the study of Scripture too base and shallow, and the knowledge thereof too plain and familiar for their fine wits; whereupon some give themselves to other studies and courses, which might glorify God in this calling. Others also, though they addict themselves unto divinity, yet they more employ themselves in the writings of men for their private studies than in the Word of God; and in their public ministry, they more affect the ostentation of human wit, eloquence and learning, in multiplicity of reading, and set words and phrases, in divers languages, than that plain evidence of the Spirit, which the apostle Paul much commends (1 Cor. 2:4). This also is a great fault in many hearers, that they are more delighted with the vain conceits of men in preaching, than with the pure Word of God, counting basely of that sermon wherein the prophets and apostles are only quoted, but highly advancing that sermon for deep learning which is stuffed with fathers, schoolmen, poets and such like.

To cut off this offence: First, the will of God must be considered for the penning and preaching of His Word in plain and simple manner; for herein

is that true (1 Cor. 1:27,28), that *God hath chosen such things as to the world are foolish, weak, vile and despised, to confound and bring to nought the wise and mighty things of the world*. And hereby is also made evident (1 Cor. 2:5) that *the faith of God's elect doth not consist in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*. Again, the preaching of the gospel (1 Cor. 1:17) *with the wisdom of words, makes the cross of Christ of none effect*. Let no man therefore deceive himself, for (v.25) *the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men*. Again, he that doth exercise himself in the Word of God, either privately or publicly, must labour thereby to see his own sins, and God's heavy judgment due unto him for them; and so will he begin to reverence God's Word as the only means of true comfort. The woman of Samaria (John 4:11,12) at the first began to cavil with Christ, when she heard Him talk of the water of life; but so soon as He discovered her sin to her conscience, telling her (v.18) she had had five husbands, and he whom she now had was not her husband; then she left off to cavil, and (vv. 19,29) honoured Him by believing His Word, and causing others to come and believe Him. The Jews (Acts 2:12,13) made light of the giving of the Holy Ghost unto the apostles at the first; but when Peter had pricked their hearts (vv. 36,37,41), they sought unto the Word, and received it with gladness. So the jailer, though overnight he dealt unkindly with the apostles, putting their feet in the stocks in the dungeon (Acts 16:24), yet being stricken with a fear by the opening of the prison doors, he then fell down before them trembling, and asked what he might do to be saved (vv.29,30).

2. Secondly, others take occasion of offence from the *contents of the Bible*; as when they read of the miracles wrought by the prophets, by Christ and His apostles; they say, the like may be done by magic, and so blasphemously do father upon the Scripture that most wicked practice of sorcery; like to the malicious Jews, who said of Christ that he *cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub* (Luke 11:15). Other deny the history of Moses to be true by reason of Noah's ark, which (say they) as it is described for quantity could not contain a couple of every kind of creatures, with provision and fodder for them, for a whole year's space. Of this opinion was Apelles, an ancient heretic in the primitive church. And many upon this occasion have become atheists,

denying the truth of God's Word to their damnation. To these, I answer:

1. First, for the miracles, that no creature, men or angels, is able to do such works as are recorded in Scripture, to be done by the power of God. Christ opened the eyes of one that was born blind (John 9). The devil by his skill, and man by art can do much in curing blindness caused by wounds and diseases, but no power of nature, nor of magic, no not all the power of all angels, is sufficient to procure sight to one that was born blind; that must be done by a power creating, which is in no creature. Again, as histories record, the devil is able to enter into a dead body and cause it to move, and can speak in it; but to raise up one to life that had been dead four days, as Christ did Lazarus (John 11:43,44), is a work that all the devils in hell, nay all the angels in heaven, are not able to do. And for Apelles the heretic, who took occasion from Noah's ark to condemn the books of Moses; the answer made to him in the primitive church may serve the turn; to wit, that it was quantity sufficient to contain couples of all kinds of creatures, and provision for a whole year's space: for to omit the height and breadth of it, it was three hundred cubits long (Gen. 6:15), and every cubit (according to the ancient measure) contained nine feet, which in all came to the length of half a mile or more. Again, others say that though every cubit had been but one foot and a half (as our cubits are) yet having three lofts (v. 16), it was of sufficient bigness to contain all kinds of creatures by couples, and provision for them for a year's space. But yet put the case that we could not tell how an ark should be made great enough to contain couples of all kinds of creatures and provision for them; should we thereupon take occasion to condemn the books of God that record the same, and the thing itself? God forbid; nay rather, we must hereby learn to acknowledge and confess our own blindness, and the shallow reach of our own understanding, and so admire the wonderful work of God.

The way to cut off this occasion of offence taken from the Scripture, is first to observe that (howsoever nothing is more repugnant to our natures than the Word of God) yet the same Word of God hath more prevailed with many men's hearts, to win the same unto it, than anything in the world besides

could ever do. Human writings are far more plausible to natural men than the holy Scriptures of God; for the wisdom of God in Scripture is esteemed foolishness to man's natural reason; and yet who did ever cleave fast to the writings of men, as God's children have done to the Word of God, for the testimony whereof they have been and are content to live and die? This thing argueth plainly that there is in Scripture a divine power; for if it had been from man, and against his nature, as it is, man would have condemned it.

2. Secondly, this must be considered, that the pen-men of holy Scriptures, both the prophets and apostles, have recorded their own faults in penning of it, which plainly argueth that they were penned by holy men of God, according to the direction of the Holy Ghost, and are not the inventions of politic heads to keep men in awe; for then the authors and pen-men thereof would rather have concealed their own faults than have published the same in their own works to their discredit.

3. Lastly, consider the subject and matter of the whole Bible, to wit, Jesus Christ, who therein hath professed Himself to be the Son of God. Now if Christ had not been very God, and yet should have taken that honour unto Him, then the like judgments would have befallen Him that befell others for the like offence; for none ever took that honour unto them, who were not grievously punished. As was Adam in paradise (Gen. 3:17,23), for seeking to be like unto God; and Herod, for receiving and applying to himself the blasphemous praise of the people crying (Acts 12:22,23) *The voice of God and not of man*. But howsoever most fearful judgments befell God's enemies that thus sought to rob Him of His honour; yet Christ's end was glorious and blessed; which may move us to think highly of Scripture, as of the Word of God.

2. The second head from whence offences are taken, is *the doctrine of the church grounded on the Word of God*. The offences hence taken are manifold:

1. First, from a supposed newness of our doctrine. This is taken of the papists, and especially of our own recusants; for they say our doctrine is but of fourscore years continuance, since the days of Martin Luther;

avouching also that for the space of fourteen hundred years we cannot bring record of any church that held and professed the doctrine which we now teach and hold.

Now for the avoiding of this offence, two points must be remembered:

1. First, that the doctrine of our church for the substance thereof, is the doctrine of the prophets and apostles (Acts 2:42). The doctrine taught by the apostles concerning Christ is made the foundation of the church, and look where this doctrine is rightly held and confessed, there it is an infallible note of a true church. Again, the apostles to justify their doctrine, had recourse to Moses and the prophets, as we may see in the Acts of the Apostles in sundry places (Acts 26:22). Now the doctrine touching Christ held and received in our churches, is confirmed by the testimonies of the prophets and apostles, and therefore for substance and doctrine is theirs.

2. Secondly, we must know that for the ground and foundation of religion, our churches agree with the churches after Christ, which continued for the space of six hundred years; for we do not only allow of the Apostle's Creed, but of the four general councils, and of their confessions and creeds, and that in the same manner and sense which they did; so as the religion of our church is unjustly slandered to be new.

2. The second offence taken from the doctrine of our church is from the supposed strictness and rigour thereof. We teach indeed that a Christian man must wholly deny himself, his own will and desires, and resign himself wholly unto Christ, to be guided by His Spirit according to the direction of the Word. Now hence some would gather that our doctrine permits not a man to laugh, or to be merry, or to do anything for his own delight; and hereupon they grow to contempt of religion, counting the profession and practice thereof preciseness; and therefore they will not be bound unto it, but live as they list; and this is common amongst us.

The way to cut off this occasion of offence is twofold:

1. First, we must know that by the doctrine of our church, it is lawful for a man to be merry, if it be in the Lord, *Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice* (Phil. 4:4). God causeth wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread to strengthen his heart (Psa. 104:15). Again, God doth put most glorious colours, and delightsome smells, into the flowers of the field, no doubt for this end, that man might take his delight therein. Yea, besides the skill of music, God hath given to many a man, a voice more sweet and pleasant than is the sound of any musical instrument, which were to no end, if a man might not therewith cheer up his heart in a moderate delight. Nay, laughter itself is the gift of nature, which was in Adam before his fall, and therefore is lawful. But yet I say, *man's rejoicing must be in the Lord*, to cut off many abuses of delight; for first, there be many that cannot be merry but in the practice of some sin; if there be a thought of God, or of His Word, all their mirth is quashed. But we must endeavour ourselves so to rejoice that God may approve thereof. Again I say, *in the Lord*; because sin will soonest prevail with a man, when he gives himself to delight and pleasures. This Job knew well, and therefore while his sons feasted each other (Job 1:5), he offered sacrifices for them particularly every day; for (saith he) it may be my sons have sinned and blasphemed God in their hearts.

2. The second way to prevent the taking of this offence is *to resign ourselves wholly unto God, that He may do His whole will in us and upon us*; so Christ said to His disciples (Luke 9:23); *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me*; this is, wholly resign himself to be guided by me; and (Matt. 13:46) he that would get the precious pearl, must *sell all that he hath, and buy it*. (Rom. 12:1) We are desired *by the mercies of God to give up ourselves, both souls and bodies unto God*; whereby we may see that we have just cause to bewail the case and condition of all such as count religion preciseness; for they are like unto Ananias and Sapphira, who brought part of the sale of their possessions unto the apostles, and said it was all. So these men look to be saved by Christ, they hear His Word, and receive His sacraments, and therein make as high a profession as any can do; namely, that they will give themselves wholly to Christ; but when they are out of the assemblies, they shew themselves to have

dissembled with God; for they practice no such thing as they made shew of; and therefore they may justly fear lest that befall them in their souls, which befell Ananias and Sapphira in their bodies (Acts 5:5,10), even sudden death; for they are liars unto God Himself.

3. Thirdly, others take offence at the cross, which accompanies sincere profession of true religion. Many like well the doctrine of our religion, but yet they are loath to embrace and to profess the same, lest they should be reproached for it in the world.

The way to cut off this occasion of offence is this: we must remember that the cross endured for the gospel's sake, especially if we profit by it, is an infallible mark of a child of God. (Heb. 12:7) *If ye endure chastening, God offereth Himself unto you, as unto sons; for what son is it whom the father chasteneth not*? In reason we find this to be true; for say that two children be fighting in the street, and there comes a man who taketh one of them and beateth him, but the other he lets alone; will not all men say that the man is father to the child whom he beateth? Even so, the Lord for our nurturing, will send crosses upon us, when we embrace His gospel. Now if we shall profit by His corrections, and learn whereby to humble ourselves under His mighty hand, then we begin to receive assurance of His fatherly dealing towards us His sons and daughters; and therefore we must be so far from being hindered in the course of our holy profession by reproaches and crosses, that they must be the means to encourage us therein (Jam. 1:2,3).

As from the doctrine of the church in general, so from the parts thereof, do many both learned and ignorant take occasion of offence:

1. As first, from the doctrine of God's predestination, whereby we teach that God hath decreed the condemnation of some. This doctrine many do renounce as a doctrine of cruelty, and thereupon frame unto themselves private opinions, which will not stand with the Word of God.

The way to avoid this occasion of offence is this: first, to grant unto God Himself so much in this case, as we will yield to mortal man in the like. Among ourselves we allow of this liberty one to another that a man may kill a fly or a worm; and for his lawful use and pleasure kill sheep, oxen and

other creatures, and yet be a merciful man; shall we not then allow unto God, that he may glorify His name in the just and deserved condemnation and destruction of His creature? This is less than we grant to men, for a worm is something unto man; but a man is nothing in respect of God. Again, among ourselves, in something we give liberty one to another to do as we will, and yet think the action just and lawful; much more then ought we to give freedom of will unto God in all His actions, without conceit of cruelty in any one of His works; for all His works are done in equity. Secondly, it must be remembered that we teach not that God doth simply ordain some men to hell fire; but touching reprobation, our doctrine is this: that God hath decreed and purposed to glorify His name in the due and deserved condemnation of some; for in man's reprobation God hath two actions: First, He decrees to pass by some men without shewing His eternal mercy unto them, and only to declare His justice upon them; then after He decrees, when they are by themselves fallen into sin, to inflict upon them deserved condemnation for the same.

The unlearned also, from this doctrine of predestination, take occasion of most fearful falling; for thus they reason: If I be predestinated to salvation, I am sure to be saved, let me do what I will; and if I be predestinated to condemnation, I am sure to be condemned, though I live never so godly; for God's decree changeth not, and therefore I will live as I list. Thus do desperate persons embolden themselves to sin, and to cast away their souls.

The way to cut off this offence is this: they must remember that *in God's decree, the end, and then means that bring men to that end, go always together*; and therefore that such as are ordained to salvation, are ordained to the means thereof; namely, to vocation, justification, and sanctification (Rom. 8:30). The end and the means in God's decree must never be severed. Now righteousness and holiness in Christ, are the means whereby God hath decreed to bring men to salvation; and therefore they sin grievously, that upon the immutability of God's decree, take occasion to live profanely. Hezekiah is sick unto death, yet God promiseth to add unto his days fifteen years (Isa. 38:5). Now if Hezekiah had consulted with these men, they would have told him thus: Be of good cheer O king, neither eat nor drink, nor use anything to cure thy sore, or to preserve life; for thou shalt certainly live fifteen years; God hath said it, and it must be done. But Hezekiah

taketh no such course; nay, he useth the means both to cure his sore and to preserve his life. And so did Paul, for his own and others preservation, keep the mariners in the ship (Acs 27:31), who were the means upon the sea to bring them safe to land, though God had given unto him all that sailed with him (v.24).

2. The second special doctrine of the church whereat some take occasion of offence is *concerning the fall of Adam*; for we teach that God in some sort decreed his fall; whereupon some object that we make God the author of sin considering His decree is unchangeable. Now to prevent this offence, two rules must be remembered:

1. That God's will may be distinguished. It is either general or special. God's general will is that whereby He willeth that sin shall be, by His just permission. But God's special will is the approving will of God, whereby He taking pleasure in anything, will have the same done and brought to pass. Now we say not that God willed Adam's fall by His approving will, but only by His permitting will; because it was good in regard of God that man should fall.

2. We must remember that God's decree went before Adam's fall only as an antecedent, not as a cause thereof; for the unchangeable decree and will of God takes not away the liberty of man's will, or of the second causes, but only inclineth and ordereth the same as the first and highest cause of all.

3. The third special doctrine of the church whereat offence is taken is this: That man of himself can do no good, but all goodness and grace in man comes from God. Hence our common people take occasion of looseness of life; for tell them that they must repent and believe if they will be saved; their answer is that they do it as well as God will give them grace; all goodness (they say) must come from God; yea, the wiser sort among us will not stick to lay the fault of their loose life on God, who gives them no more grace.

But for the avoiding of this occasion of offence, we must know that when we are not able to do our duties as we ought, and to pray, to repent, and believe as God requireth, the fault is in ourselves and not in God; for we

were created righteous in Adam, and in him had power and grace to have done whatsoever God required at our hands. But Adam lost this power through his default; and we in him lost it also; and therefore our inability cometh from ourselves. Again, we must consider that God gives grace indeed, yet not miraculously in alehouses and taverns, but then when men use the means to come by grace, and do that which by nature they are able; that is, come and hear the Word attentively, endeavouring to believe and obey the same; for though the good usage of the gifts of nature cannot merit any grace, yet ordinarily we may observe that in the use of means is grace received. (Acts 2:41), at one sermon there were converted three thousand souls amongst the rebellious Jews. (Acts 16:14), Lydia's heart was opened in hearing Paul preach; and ordinarily men are converted in the means; for faith cometh by hearing the gospel preached (Rom. 10:17).

4. The last point of doctrine from whence many take occasion of offence is the doctrine of *justification by faith alone, without works*. Hence the papists condemn our church as an enemy to all good works; and many hereby take occasion of a lewd life, because good works must not justify them before God. Now to cut off this offence, we must hold and know that good works and faith are disjoined in the work of our justification before God; but they are conjoined in the whole course of our lives and conversation, both before God and man. No work in man but faith is required to his justification, though in God there be respect to His own free mercy and to Christ's merits; but in our lives faith and works go hand in hand together. Now that these may be well distinguished, I shew it plainly: in the fire is both heat and light, yet in the warming of the body the heat hath force only, and not light, though to many other uses it serves necessarily; even so in a child of God are required both faith and works, but to justify him faith only is required, though works be necessary through his whole life; for they justify us before men, and win unto us a testimony of our justification before God, not only in our own hearts, but from the Lord (Jam. 2:21), and therefore we must not content ourselves with a faith in speculation, void of works; but within the compass of our callings, do what good we can for God's glory and the comfort of our brethren.

3. The third head from whence offences are taken, is *the state of the church*:

1. First, in regard of *the wants that be in the church*, and namely in this our church. Hence sundry men take occasion to condemn our church as no church, our sacraments as no sacraments, our ministers as no ministers, and our people as no Christians; and therefore do separate themselves from our church, as being no true member of the church of God. To prevent this occasion of sinning, three rules must be observed:

1. First, that *to believe and confess the doctrine of salvation, taught and delivered by the prophets and apostles, is an infallible and inseparable note of a true church of God*; for God's church is nothing else but a company of God's people called by the doctrine of the prophets and apostles unto the state of salvation. This doctrine is the seed of regeneration, whereby men are begotten unto Christ; and it is that sincere milk whereby they are fed and nourished unto eternal life. Now I say that this our Church of England (through God's mercy) doth maintain, believe and profess this doctrine of the prophets and apostles; for the proof hereof, let him that doubteth have recourse to our English confession, and to a book entitled, *The Articles of Religion established in the Church of England*; in which are set down the foundations of Christian religion allowed and held by all evangelical churches. And further, to shew that this our profession is not in hypocrisy, but in truth; this our church is ready to maintain and confirm the same doctrine by the shedding of their blood, against all foes whatsoever; and this thing indeed hath been the only cause of all our dissensions with the church of Rome. Whereupon we see there is just cause our church should be reputed the true church of God, and a good member of His catholic church.

2. Secondly, observe the practice of Christ and His apostles towards the church of the Jews, which in their time without all doubt, was exceedingly corrupt; for the office and place of the High Priest was bought and sold, and through ambition and covetousness became annual; yea, there were two High Priests together at one time; all which were against God's ordinance. Again, the Scribes and Pharisees which were the doctors of that church, erred in some fundamental points of doctrine, teaching justification by works; and withal they greatly corrupted the law of God, both by their doctrine and traditions;

and the temple became a den of thieves; and yet for all this, Christ did not separate from that church, neither taught His disciples so to do; but was present at their sacrifices and assemblies, and kept His Passover with them; and so did His apostles, till they saw them of obstinacy and maliciousness refuse the grace of God offered unto them in the ministry of the gospel. Now their example must teach us that so long as our church holdeth Christ, we must esteem it to be the church of God, and not for some wants thereof depart from it.

3. Thirdly, all the Reformed churches in England do with one consent honour our church as a true church of Christ; now their judgment is not slightly to be regarded, but to be preferred far before the rash opinions of private men; for the church hath a gift of discerning in weighty matters: she can judge of books of Scripture, which can be authentical, which not; she can judge of spirits and of doctrines; and therefore also can judge what company of men is a true church and what is not; and this their judgment also must confirm us in this truth, that this our church is a true member of God's catholic church. Now whereas some allege the wants of our church to make it no church; I answer: though I will not excuse any default in it, wherein it is wanting, to that which God's Word requireth, but rather desire that *the righteousness thereof may break forth as the light, and salvation thereof as a burning lamp* (Isa. 62:1); yet this may be said in behalf of our church, that the wants thereof are not such as do any way raze the foundation of religion, or of God's holy worship, and so cannot make it to cease to be a true church, and therefore none ought to separate from it for such wants; and yet this hindereth not, but that God's servants may in godly manner desire the reformation of things that be amiss; for a good church may be bettered, and we ought to strive after perfection.

2. The second offence taken from the church is from the diversity of opinions that be therein; for hence many reason thus: learned men be of so many opinions, that we know not what to follow; and therefore we will be of no religion, till the truth be established by some general council, and all agree in one.

For the avoiding of this offence we must know that though men differ in sundry opinions in the true church of God, yet they all agree in the articles of faith, and in the foundation of God's worship. Their difference is in matters besides the foundation, and therefore it must hinder none from receiving and embracing true religion. Again, it is God's will that there should be diversities of opinions; yea, schisms and heresies in His church, that men might be proved whether they hold the truth in sincerity or not; as we may see (1 Cor. 11:19; Deut.13:1,2). Now in this case Jeremiah's directions must be observed (Jer. 6:16), *Stand in the parting of the ways* (saith he) *and enquire for the old and ancient way* (that is the doctrine of the prophets); what God willeth and commandeth by them, and by His apostles, and that we must follow with all good conscience. This Christ intended when He bade the Jews (John 5:39), *Search the Scriptures* which testified of Him; and this we must sanctify by earnest prayer, as Cornelius did (Acts 10:1,2).

3. The third occasion of offence taken from the church is the *misery thereof*; for the state of the church is oftentimes in affliction, because it consisteth of such as are subject to the contempt and reproach of the world. Hence sundry are discouraged from joining themselves truly to the church; and although this occasion of offence be not much among us, save only in reproaches, yet it may be more; and therefore we must learn to prevent it, and to cut it off.

The way is this: *We must believe and remember that out of the church there is no salvation*. In this regards Noah's ark was a true type of the church; for as none were saved from drowning that were out of the ark in the general deluge, so none can be saved ordinarily from condemnation who are out of the church; for in the church is God's covenant of grace, with the sacraments, which be the seals thereof. In the church is vocation, justification, sanctification, and the way to glorification; but out of the church are none of all these, and therefore it is said that (Acts 2:47) *God added to His church daily such as should be saved*. In the church is protection against all enemies, and from all judgments so far forth as shall be for the glory of God and the good of the church; and in a word, in the church is life everlasting; but out of the church is nothing but a fearful looking for of eternal woe and condemnation; and for this cause (Heb.

11:26) Moses *chose rather to suffer affliction in God's church, than to enjoy all the pleasures in the world out of it*; whose example we ought to follow, and so shall not the misery of the church be any occasion unto us to forsake the same, especially if we consider that *the whole world will profit a man nothing, if he lose his soul* (Matt. 16:26).

4. The fourth offence taken from the church is *from the apostasy of some that live in the church*; for ordinarily in God's church are many apostates, as in this our church, many that were in times past Protestants, are become papists, some Arians, Sabellians, and some open atheists and blasphemers. Hence many, fearing their falls (as they pretend) dare not join themselves to the truth, and the profession thereof. But to cut off this occasion, two rules must be remembered:

1. First, that the falling away of any man from the truth is the work of God discovering a hidden hypocrite (1 John 2:19). *They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but this is come to pass, that it might appear they were not all of us*.

2. Secondly, consider that the beginning and continuance of our religion and salvation stands on God's free election, which is unchangeable; and hereupon must we stay ourselves touching our estate, when we see others fall away (2 Tim. 2:19). Paul comforteth the church, against the fear of grief which they might conceive by the apostasy of Himeneus and Philetus, which were two pillars amongst them, by this rule: *The foundations of God remaineth sure, and hath this seal: the Lord knoweth who are His*. Now because some might say, God indeed knows it, but we do not; to this (I take it) the apostle answers, when he saith, *and let everyone that calls upon the name of the Lord depart from iniquity*; as if he should say, Look that you call upon God for grace, and make conscience of all sin, and by this you shall know yourselves to belong to God; which thing when once you know, then stay thereon, for God's calling is unchangeable.

Again, as these occasions are taken from the whole church in general, so more especially some take offence from several things therein:

1. As first, *from the wants that be in ministers, both for judgment and doctrine*. Hence politic carnal men plead thus: Preaching is full of imperfection, therefore men publish their own errors; but the written Word containeth in it the sermons of Christ and of His apostles, which are most perfect; and therefore it is best to content ourselves with the Scriptures read, and to hear no preaching by men.

To cut off this offence, we must remember that the preaching of the Word, though it be by sinful man, is God's holy ordinance, prescribed and enjoined as solemnly as any moral precept is, either against murder, or adultery; for from the beginning, till the Jews came to mount Sinai, God Himself preached to His church, which was then contained in some few families. But from that time, because the people could not abide the voice of God Himself (Deut. 5:25), it pleased Him to ordain the ministry of the Word by the hand of sinful man. Now it being God's own ordinance, unless we will make ourselves wiser than God, we must subject ourselves thereto, with all reverence, albeit it be delivered by sinful man. Thus Cornelius did (Acts 10:33), and the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:13).

2. Secondly, many are offended at the lives of ministers, and from the wants that be in them, whether in deed or in suspicion only, many take occasion to condemn their doctrine; thinking, as the rulers of the Jews said to the blind man (John 9:34), *Thou art altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us*?

Now to cut off this occasion, two things must be remembered: First, we must distinguish of every minister, and consider in him a double person: both that he is a sinful man, subject to many infirmities, as we ourselves are; and also that he is the Lord's ambassador, sent in God's name to deliver His will unto us. Now look as we honour the ambassador of a prince, though his person be vile and base; so much more ought we to reverence the ambassador of God Himself, and receive his doctrine, as from God, though for his person he be subject to manifold infirmities. Secondly, we must consider that it is God's will and commandment that though ministers be manifestly faulty and sinful, yet their ministry must be received and obeyed carefully (Matt. 23:23), *The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' chair* (saith Christ), *all therefore that they bid you observe, that do, but after*

*their works, do not*. (Phil. 1:15) *Some preach Christ of envy* (saith Paul) *and not in sincerity*, but yet the apostles rejoiced therein, because Christ was preached every manner of way (v.18). And therefore as we do not refuse meat for our bodies when we be hungry, though a wicked person have dressed it; so must we not refuse or condemn the Word of God, the food of our souls, for the sins of the party that delivereth it.

3. Thirdly, many take offence at the lenity of the church towards offenders; and for the presence of wicked persons at the Lord's table, do refuse to communicate with the church. Now albeit men should not be admitted hand over head to the Lord's table, but scandalous persons ought to be restrained; yet the want thereof ought not to keep the godly from this sacrament; for another man's evil conscience cannot defile thy good conscience, another man's sin cannot hurt thee, unless thou do some way communicate with him therein. Christ was most careful in His duty than ever man was, and yet He communicated with the wicked Jews, Scribes and Pharisees in the service of God, under the law.

4. The fourth head from which offence is taken is *the state of the wicked, principally in regard of their prosperity*. Hence some holy ones suspect their own estate and religion, as either not good, or not regarded of God. This befell David (Psa. 73), when he saw the prosperity of the wicked, and their increase of riches with peace and ease, he said (v.13), *Certainly I have cleansed my hands in vain, and washed my hands in innocency*. Hence also Jeremiah reasons with God (Jer. 12:1,2), why the way of the wicked should prosper, and they be in wealth that transgress rebelliously. Hence undoubtedly at this day, many call into question the good providence of God.

Now the way to cut off this offence is (Psa. 73:17), to *enter into the sanctuary of God*, as David did; that is, to come to the assemblies of God's people, where the Word is preached; for there a man shall see the manifold reasons why God will have His own people afflicted, and also the fearful end of the pleasures of the wicked; namely, a fitting of them to further destruction.

Again, from this same ground, do many rich men take offence; for having the world at will, they bless themselves with this persuasion, that God loves them, and thereupon take occasion to condemn all religion, and to go on in the pursuit of worldly profits and delights. And this is one main cause why among the rich, we have so few good and sound professors; because that from a false ground of outward things, they persuade themselves of God's love and favour.

But to cut off this offence, we must remember that man's case is the more fearful, when he wants all crosses; for *God chastiseth every child whom He receiveth* (Heb.12:6), and it is a mark of God's child to be in affliction, if he profit thereby. The stalled ox cometh sooner to the slaughter than the ox that is under the yoke; and the sheep that goeth in fat pasture cometh sooner to the shambles than that which goeth on the bare commons. So oftentimes God fatteth the wicked with the blessings of this life, as He did the rich glutton (Luke 16:25), that He may more justly condemn them in the world to come.

Lastly, we must remember what Solomon saith (Eccl. 9:1,2), *No man knoweth love or hatred, of all that is before him*; that is, of all outward things. *All things fall alike unto all, both good and bad*; and therefore no man must so bless himself with his outward estate that he be drawn to esteem of religion as a thing needless or superfluous.

# 5:31-32

"*It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery*." Matthew 5:31-32

Our Saviour Christ, proceeding further to restore the seventh commandment to its perfection, doth here confute a false interpretation of a politic law of Moses, given by the Scribes and Pharisees. For this end, first He lays down the words of Moses' politic law; but yet so, as containing in them the false interpretation of the Jewish teachers (v. 31), then He opposeth the truth of God against their false interpretation, and maintaineth the first institution of marriage (v.32).

I. For the first, Moses' politic law was that *he which putteth away his wife, should give her a bill of divorce*. This law the Jewish teachers did falsely interpret: For the better perceiving whereof, these three points are to be handled touching Moses' politic law:

1. What kind of law it was.

2. The straitness of that law.

3. What effect and force it had.

1. For the first: The law is set down (Deut. 24:1), *When a man marrieth a wife, and she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath espied some filthiness in her; then let him write a bill of divorce an put it in her hand, and send her out of his house*. This law was not moral but civil, or politic, for the good ordering of the commonwealth. Now among their particular laws, some were laws of toleration and permission, which were such as did not approve of the evil which they concerned, but did only tolerate and permit that evil which could not be avoided, for the preventing of a greater

evil, which otherwise would fall out. As when the sea hath made a breach in the land, if it cannot possibly be stopped, the best course is to make it as narrow as it may be. Such was the law concerning usury (Deut. 23:20), permitting the Jews to exercise it upon a stranger, but not towards a brother; and the like was the law touching polygamy (Deut. 21:15). If a man had two wives, the one hated and the other loved; and they both have borne him children; if the firstborn be the son of the hated (though she were married to him later) yet her seed was legitimate, and her son had the right of the firstborn. In both which laws were tolerated that which God condemned, only for the preventing of a greater evil. Under this sort comes our law of usury, for taking ten in the hundred, not approving but permitting so much for the avoiding of greater usury. Unto this kind the papists would reduce their law of permitting stews for the preventing of greater sins; but that law can have no title to such permission; for a law of permission is to diminish that evil which by man cannot possibly be cut off altogether; now their sin, which they would prevent by their stews, might be cut off among them, if they would give allowance to God's own ordinance of lawful marriage unto all sorts and sexes. So likewise this law of Moses for divorce, was a law of permission, not approving of the giving of a bill of divorce for every light cause, but tolerating of it for the preventing of greater mischief, even of murder; for the nature of the Jews was this: if a man once took dislike of his wife, he would never be at rest till he had shed her blood, if they might not be parted asunder. Now this law of divorce was given to restrain this great evil; for hereby a man was tolerated to put away his wife when she found no favour in his eyes, lest he should kill her; yet so, as he gave her a bill of divorce, wherein he must set down the cause why he put her away; whereby also many were restrained from putting away their wives, because it was a great shame for a light occasion so highly to transgress God's holy institution, who made them by marriage one flesh. The truth of this may appear by the Lord's own complaint against His people, to whom He speaketh as to a wife that had forsaken her husband without a cause on his behalf (Isa. 50:1). *Where* (saith he) *is that bill of your mother's divorcement whereby I sent her away*? As if He should say, I gave her no bill, but her departure and separation from me is by her own sins; which phrase sheweth what was the custom of the Jews in this case.

2. The *straitness* of this law appears in this: that the man only was permitted to give this bill unto his wife, but the wife might not give it to her husband; for Moses saith, *Whosoever shall put away his wife*. Neither is there any place in Scripture to prove that the wife had this liberty so to deal with her husband. If it be asked whether the wife in a just cause, as for adultery, had not the like liberty, I answer, If we respect God's institution touching marriage, the right of divorce is equal to them both; for in regard of the bond of marriage they are equally bound one to another. Here indeed this liberty is permitted only to the man by this politic law, not that he had more right, nut to prevent the evil of the hardness of his heart, who taking displeasure at his wife, would rather spill her blood than continue with her. If it be alleged that a man is the woman's head (1 Cor. 11:3), I answer that it is for regiment and direction in her place, but not in regard of breaking the bond of marriage, whereby he is bound to his wife as well as she to him, as the apostle teacheth (1 Cor. 7:4).

3. The *force and effect* of this law was this: it made the bill of divorcement for any cause given, to be tolerable before men; and marriage after such a divorce, lawful and warrantable in the courts of men (Deut. 24:4). But yet in the court of conscience before God, the divorcement itself, and second marriages made thereupon, were both unlawful, for God hateth this separation (Mal. 2:16). And whether party soever marrieth another upon this divorce, commits adultery (Matt. 19:9). This must be remembered for the true understanding of this law of Moses; the first words whereof are a permission to this effect: If a man do conceive such a dislike against his wife as that he will not abide with her, but will needs put her away, then he may; but yet so that he give her a bill of divorce; which doth not acquit him before God, but before men only.

II. Having thus shewed the true meaning of this law, it remaineth now to see what the Pharisees taught touching divorce. Their doctrine was this: that he which gave a bill of divorcement unto his wife for any light occasion, was thereby acquitted from her before God; and thereupon might marry another without the guilt of adultery; and also that another man might lawfully marry her that was thus divorced. That this was their meaning, may appear by the contrary answer of our Saviour Christ, whereupon He crosseth and confuteth this their interpretation in the words following: *But I say unto*

*you, whosoever shall put away his wife (except it be for fornication) causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery* (v. 32).

Here Christ answereth not to Moses' law, but to the corrupt interpretation of the Scribes and Pharisees, whereby they depraved that law. By *fornication*, Christ meaneth not every sin of that kind, but only the sin of adultery; or that which is greater in that kind, namely, incest. Adultery is a sin that is committed by two parties, one whereof is either married, or espoused, as hath been shewed before. *Causeth her to commit adultery*: that is, giveth her occasion to marry again, and so to commit adultery; because their first bond remaineth still. *And he that marrieth her that is divorced*: that is, for any small cause, and not for adultery, he also commits adultery.

Here two points are set down: first, that *he who puts away his wife for any light cause, causeth her to commit adultery*; secondly, *he that marrieth her that is divorced, committeth adultery*. Yet unto both these Christ putteth an exception in the case of adultery. The papists and some others would restrain the exception to the first part of the sentence, and make it a negation to this effect: *He that puts away his wife, being no fornicator*, etc. But the truth is that the exception belongs to the whole answer of our Saviour Christ, denying divorce, save only for adultery; and permitting no marriage after divorcement, save only where the divorce is for adultery.

1. First, whereas our Saviour Christ opposeth unto this politic law of Moses concerning divorce, the law of nature touching marriage ( Gen. 2:24), He giveth us an excellent distinction between all politic laws and the law of nature, which is the moral law; for that is a law of eternal equity, commanding good, and forbidding evil simply, without respect of man; but politic laws are tempered according to the conditions of men, and though they do not approve, yet sometimes they permit evil, for the avoiding of greater mischief, yea, they tolerate that which before God, and in conscience, is condemned. This point must teach us not to content ourselves with performing obedience to the politic laws of men, for the laws of men may tolerate that which God's law doth condemn; so the law of this land in practice tolerates usury, but usurers must not hereupon think that all is safe and well with them, and that they sin not in taking ten in the hundred,

because the law of the land permits it; for our law tolerates that for the preventing of greater usury, whenas the law of God doth utterly condemn the same. Again, our laws are open for men to go to law at the first, upon every light occasion, without seeking former means of agreement; but yet such men as do so, are guilty of sin before God, notwithstanding their liberty by our politic laws. Some politic laws also tolerate contracts of marriage made without consent of parents; yet such children sin against the law of God; for herein God requires children's subjection to their parents and governors. And the like might be shewed in many other points; so that is no sufficient justification of our actions, to say the laws of men allow us so to do.

2. Secondly, we may learn that a man cannot lawfully and with good conscience put away his wife, except it be for adultery; the text is clear both here, and also in Matt. 19:9, which confuteth the civil laws of some countries, and the popish constitutions that allow other causes of divorce besides adultery. Here they object sundry things in their defence against this doctrine, as:

*Objection 1*: The saying of Christ, *Whosoever forsaketh father, or mother wife,* etc. *shall receive much reward* (Matt. 19:29). Here (say they) is divorce for religion allowed. *Answer*: Christ by *forsaking*, meaneth not that separation which is made by giving a bill of divorcement, but that which is caused by imprisonment, banishment or by death.

*Objection 2*: *If the unbelieving depart, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not bound in such things* (1 Cor. 7:15). Here (say they) is another cause of divorce. *Answer*: The malicious or wilful departing of the unbeliever doth dissolve the marriage; but that is no cause of giving a bill of divorce; only adultery causeth that. Here the believer is a mere patient, and the divorce is made by the unbeliever, who unjustly forsaketh, and so puts away the other.

*Objection 3*: *Avoid an heretic after once or twice admonition* (Tit. 3:10). This (say they) is spoken to all Christians; and therefore for heresy may a bill of divorce be given. *Answer*: First, that commandment is not given to every private person, but to the ministers of the church, who after one or two admonitions are to excommunicate and cut off all heretics from the church. Secondly, it hindereth not but that the bond of marriage may remain

sure and firm, though one of the parties be cut off from the church; for *the believing husband must not forsake his unbelieving wife, if she will dwell with him* (1 Cor. 7:12).

*Objection 4*: After marriage, one party may have a contagious and incurable disease, which may cause the other to give a bill of divorce. *Answer*: A contagious disease may cause a separation for a time, but no divorce; and if that disease be incurable, and disable the party from the duty of marriage, then such persons must think themselves, as it were, called of God to live in single life.

*Objection 5*: But married persons may seek to spill the blood one of another, and therefore it is good to give a bill of divorce to prevent that evil. *Answer*: Such enmity may cause a separation for a time, till reconciliation be made, but the bond of marriage must not therefore be broken.

*Objection 6*: Death maketh a divorce. *Answer*: Death indeed endeth marriage-estate, and setteth the party living free to marry in the Lord, where he or she will; but this comes not by divorce given of either party; so that the conclusion still remaineth firm, that a man with good conscience cannot give a bill of divorcement for any cause but for adultery; and therefore those laws which permit divorce for other causes, are greatly faulty before God. If any shall ask whether men's laws may not make more causes of divorcement than this one? I answer: no, for marriage is not a mere civil thing, but partly spiritual and divine, and therefore God only hath power to appoint the beginning, the continuance and the end thereof. If any yet ask why idolatry and magic, which be greater sins than adultery, may not break marriage? *Answer*: They are greater indeed, against God, but not in this ordinance of marriage; for the sin of adultery breaketh only the bond of marriage, which may remain still between two parties, though one be an idolater, a witch or an atheist. Now considering that adultery is so great a sin that it cuts off the knot of marriage, above all things, those persons that are called to this estate, must take heed of all sins, so of this especially.

3. Thirdly, here may be asked, whether after divorce for adultery, the parties divorced may marry again without committing adultery? The point hath been diversely discussed, we will consider the reasons on both sides.

1. First, for the lawfulness of it, especially to the party innocent.

1. From Christ's doctrine in this place; for in His answer to the false interpretation of Moses' politic law touching divorce, He first propounds a general rule, and then puts an exception thereto; the nature of which exception is always to imply and put down the contrary to the general rule. As in this place, the general rule is, *Whosoever putteth away his wife, causeth her to commit adultery, and he that marrieth her committeth adultery*. The exception then must be contrary; namely, that in the case of adultery, he that puts away his wife lawfully convicted thereof, causeth her not to commit adultery; neither he that marrieth her that is divorced doth commit adultery. If it be said that Christ propoundeth two rules, one for the case of divorce, the other for the case of marrying after divorce; and applieth his exception for adultery only to the case of divorce, and not to the case of marriage after divorce. *Answer*: As the exception for adultery is here in this chapter joined with the case of divorce; *he that putteth away his wife, except it be for fornication*, etc., so in the 19th chapter (v.9), the same exception for adultery is expressly applied not only to the case of divorce, but also to the case of marriage after divorce; saying, *whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and marry another, committeth adultery*; so that if in this place the exception makes the divorce lawful for adultery, then in the 19th chapter, it maketh it lawful to marry again after such divorce, without the guilt of adultery.

2. The innocent party is not to be punished for the wilfulness of the offender, and therefore the party that is faultless may with good conscience marry again after lawful divorce.

3. God hath provided marriage to be a remedy against incontinence for all persons (1 Cor. 7:2). But if parties lawfully divorced might not marry again, then they should want this remedy and be deprived of this benefit. *Answer*: But what if the party offending live in adultery still, then the party innocent cannot in conscience join him or herself to the other, and reunite the bond of matrimony; for that were too much lenity towards so foul a crime; and a sin against God, for want of

Christian reconciliation, which requireth that this reuniting should be in the Lord and not in the flesh alone.

4. The phrases of Scripture used by the Holy Ghost concerning marriage after divorce, restraining it to some cases, and allowing it in others, seem to take it for granted that after lawful divorce, it is no sin to marry again.

2. Reasons alleged on the other side:

1. First, Christ's general saying (Mark 10:11), *Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery*. Hence some infer that there may be no marriage at all after any divorce. But they abuse that Scripture; for though Mark put down no exception, yet Matthew hath made supply thereof in two places (Matt. 5:32 and 19:9). Now the gospels were penned by several men, that that which was not fully expressed by one, might be supplied by another; that so by conferring writer with writer, the whole truth might be made manifest.

2. Secondly, (Matt. 19:6) *Whom God hath coupled, let no man put asunder*. Therefore after divorce, they still remain man and wife before God, and may not marry to others. *Answer*: The party offending breaks the bond of marriage, and so sinneth grievously against that commandment; but the party innocent marrying again after lawful divorce, only taketh the benefit of that liberty whereto God hath set him free, through the unlawful breaking of the bond by the party offending.

3. Thirdly, (Rom. 7:2) *The woman is bound to the man while he liveth*, and therefore may not marry again after divorcement. *Answer*: That place must be understood of the state of marriage continuing undissolved till death; but in the case of adultery, the bond of marriage is broken; and therefore that hindereth not, but marriage may be after lawful divorce.

4. Fourthly, (I Cor. 7:10,11) *Let not the wife depart from her husband; and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, and be reconciled unto her husband; and let not the husband put away his wife*. Here (say

they) is a plain place against marriage after divorcement. *Answer*: The apostle speaketh of departure, and putting away, for other causes than adultery; as for hatred, dislike, etc., which indeed are no sufficient causes of divorce, and therefore they that separate thereupon ought not to marry.

5. Fifthly, the bond of marriage is a resemblance of the conjunction that is between Christ and His church, which is inseparable and eternal; and therefore marriage is also inseparable. *Answer*: That resemblance stands not in everything, but in this: *That as in marriage two are made one flesh, so spiritually Christ, and every true member of His church becomes one*; and that *as Eve was taken out of Adam's side, and made flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone; so the church springeth as it were out of Christ's blood, which issued from His side*; for else, if their reason were good, we might say that marriage should be eternal in the life to come; because the union of Christ with His church is eternal; which we know to be false, for (Matt. 22:30) *in the resurrection, men marry not, but are as the angels of God*.

6. Sixthly, if parties divorced might marry again, their children should be injured, having step-fathers or step-mothers instead of their own natural parents. *Answer*: This reason is not sufficient to disallow divorce, or marriage after it; for by the same reason we might delude all the judicial laws of Moses, and of all countries, which impose death for sundry crimes, because thereby some children should lose their parents; but justice must be justice with all men, though the posterity have hindrance by the execution thereof.

*Question*: But what if laws of some countries forbid marriage after divorcement? *Answer*: Yet the liberty of conscience remaineth still; for this being given of God, cannot be taken away by man; and therefore when men have freedom from the magistrate, they may with good conscience marry again after lawful divorce. And yet here we must know that divorcement, or marriage after, must not be done privately, by man and wife upon their own heads, but by order of law, before the magistrate, according to the custom of that church or commonwealth whom it concerns. Again, there be some particular causes which may justly hinder marriage after divorce; as first, if

the parties reunite their bond again by reconciliation; *for the knot broken by adultery, may be reunited again by the consent of the party innocent*. Secondly, when the one party is a manifest cause of the adultery of the other, and so becomes an accessory to the other's offence; for it seems unequal that he who hath put his hand to the committing of a sin, should reap any benefit or privilege by the same. And therefore I say the party innocent hath freedom in this case.

# 5:33-36

"*Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black*." Matthew 5:33-36.

Our Saviour Christ, having restored the seventh commandment to its true sense and meaning, doth here proceed to do the like unto the third commandment; observing herein the same order that he did in the former; for first, He layeth down the false interpretation of the Scribes and Pharisees given to this commandment concerning swearing (v.33), and then delivereth the true doctrine of an oath (vv.34-36).

The corrupt sense given by the Scribes and Pharisees is propounded in the words of the Holy Ghost (Lev. 19:12; Deut. 5:11), *Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shall perform thine oaths unto the Lord*; which are not here taken in that true meaning wherein Moses set them down, but in the false interpretation of the Jewish teachers; whereof that we may the better judge, let us search out the true meaning of Moses' law concerning an oath; for which end we must first see what perjury is; then propound the kinds of perjury; and lastly, shew the grievousness of this sin.

I. In perjury there must be two things:

First, a man must affirm or avouch something against his own mind, his own meaning, purpose, intention or persuasion. When a man knows a thing to be true, and saith it is true; or knoweth a thing to be false, and saith it is false, and swears thereto, this is no perjury, because his speech is answerable to that which is in his mind; but when a man knows a thing to be true, and avoucheth it to be false; or knowing a thing to be false, avoucheth it to be true, upon his oath; this is perjury; because in so doing, he speaks against his mind and persuasion.

Secondly, in perjury, there must be an oath; it is not perjury to speak a thing that is false, unless he also swear to the thing he speaketh falsely, against his mind; and yet every oath maketh not direct perjury, unless it be a binding oath; for a man may swear to a thing that is unlawful, and after alter his mind, and not perform his oath, without the guilt of perjury; as if a child being under age, do bind himself by oath to marry without his parents consent; but coming to riper years, doth better consider of the matter, and subjects himself to his parent's disposing, who marry him to another. Now though he sinned in so swearing, yet he is not perjured, because the oath was not a binding oath; for a child under years hath no power to take an oath.

II. That we may yet better judge of this sin, we must know that there be three kinds of perjury:

1. First, *when a man confirmeth by oath, that which he knows or thinks to be otherwise*; as when he takes an oath that a thing is true, which he knows to be false; that a thing was thus, which he knows was otherwise.

2. Secondly, *Deceitful swearing is perjury*, when a man, either about things past or to come, swears contrary to the true knowledge and purpose of his own mind. Example of this we have in the Romish priests, who both defend in writing, and practice in action, this deceitful swearing; for being brought before the magistrate, and made to swear to this demand, or such like; Whether they said Mass, or knew where Mass was said at such a time? They answer upon their oaths, that they did not nor knew not (though indeed they did), which is according to their doctrine, that unto dangerous interrogatories a man may frame a safe meaning unto himself, and swear to it; as in the former instance, they swore they knew not where Mass was said, meaning, to reveal it to the judge. But this is flat perjury; for their oath is given them to answer according to the meaning of the magistrate's demand; and if a man might lawfully frame a meaning to himself in swearing, he might easily delude all truth, and so should not *an oath for comfirmation be the end of all strife* (Heb. 6:16), but the breeder thereof, through surmise of false meaning in him that sweareth.

3. The third kind of perjury is *the breaking of a binding oath*; as when a man upon his oath promiseth to do a thing that is lawful, and doth it not; yet

this is not always perjury: as first, if God after the oath taken, make the thing promised impossible to be done; as if a man swear to make another his heir of such and such lands; now dwelling by the seaside, the sea breaks out, drowns all his land before he dieth; is this man perjured, because he performed not his promise bound with an oath? No verily; for God made the thing impossible. Secondly, if a man be bound in conscience to break his oath; thus David swearing rashly to slay Nabal and his family (1 Sam. 25:22), was yet stayed from so doing by Abigail's counsel, and brake his oath, and gave God thanks for it (v. 32); for indeed his oath was unlawful, being the bond of iniquity; and the doing of it had been the doubling of his sin.

Here it may well be demanded whether those that are sworn to the statutes and laws of societies and incorporations be perjured if they break the same? *Answer*: The statutes of incorporations be of two sorts: some are of the foundation of societies, without which the incorporation cannot stand; and these (not being against the Word of God) cannot be broken without the guilt of perjury. Others, are statutes only of outward order and decency; as touching apparel, gesture and such like; as in some incorporations the statutes require that every man therein should wear the round cap; hereunto many are sworn who always wear it not; now, though I say not that they are faultless altogether, yet they are not perjured; because this statute of order binds not a man simply, but either to obedience, or to pay the mulct [*fine*]; which if a man be content to pay, he satisfies the statute and benefits the society as much as if he kept the statute.

Having shewed what perjury is, with the kinds thereof, let us see whether we be free from it. After examination, it will appear that men's lives are full of perjury; for where is much swearing usually, there cannot but be much perjury; because they that swear in their common talk, do forget their oaths, as they do their communication. But say we are clear from perjury, yet are we in danger of God's heavy judgments for the breach of our vow in baptism; wherein we promise to believe in God, and to serve Him, forsaking the world, the flesh and the devil. Now the breach of this vow is as ill as perjury; for therefore may baptism be called a sacrament, because of the oath and vow which a Christian makes to God therein; for the word *sacrament* properly, betokeneth the oath which a soldier maketh to his

captain for his fidelity. The breaking of Joshua's oath unto the Gibeonites, by Saul, caused three year's dearth (2 Sam. 21:1), and was not satisfied but with the blood of seven of Saul's kindred. And Zedekiah's perjury to the king of Babylon (Jer. 52:3) was one cause of the Lord's fierce wrath against Jerusalem and the princes thereof. Now shall one man's perjury cause such judgments, and shall we not think that among other sins this our perjury unto God, in breaking our vow in baptism, bringeth upon us God's heavy wrath, by plague, famine and unseasonable weather? Wherefore let the consideration hereof persuade us to repentance, and to a more conscionable care of performing our vow unto God.

III. The grievousness of this sin of perjury, which the Lord here forbids, appears by these three sins which are contained in it: First, the uttering, or maintaining of a lie. Secondly, the calling on God to be a witness unto a lie; wherein men do, as much as in them lieth, set the devil himself, the father of lies, in the room of God, and so greatly rob Him of His honour and majesty. Thirdly, in perjury a man prays for a curse upon himself, wishing God to be a witness of his speech, and a judge to revenge if he swear falsely; so as herein a man is his own utter enemy, and as much as in him lieth, doth cast both body and soul to hell.

*Question*: Seeing this sin of perjury is so great, whether may such a man be put to his oath, as is certainly thought will perjure himself, if he be put to swear? I answer, men that put others to swear, are either private persons, or public magistrates; a private man for his own private cause, may not put such a man to his oath; for he should have greater care of God's glory, and of the other man's soul, than of his private gain; and therefore ought rather depart from his temporal right, than suffer his brother to so dishonour God, and to hurt his own soul. But if a magistrate be to put such a man to his oath, as is verily though will perjure himself, he may lawfully do it; but yet he is first, to advertise the party of the weight of an oath, and of the fearful sin of perjury; and then, if the order of law and justice so require, he may minister an oath unto him, leaving the event to God; for the execution of justice must not stay on man's misdemeanour, nor wait till they make conscience of sin; for if it did, no commonwealth could stand, no war could be made. Moses and the Levites executed vengeance upon the idolatrous Jews, without waiting for their repentance.

*But shall perform thine oaths unto the Lord*.

These words are not set down in any of Moses' books, but are a collection from the former law of Moses, gathered by the Jewish teachers; which collection, though it be not expressly set down, yet is it the very sense of the law; for if a man cannot without perjury break a lawful binding oath, then the law which forbiddeth perjury, bindeth man to perform all that he hath lawfully sworn unto God.

Here then in this collection of the Jewish teachers, is set down an excellent point touching the straitness of the bond of an oath. In every lawful oath, there is a double bond: First, it binds one man to another, for the performing of the thing he sweareth to do. Secondly, it binds a man unto God; for he that sweareth, invocates God as a witness and a judge of the truth in his assertion; and he stands bound unto God, till the thing sworn unto be performed, if it be lawful and possible. And herein the Pharisees are good teachers, and from this their collection, we learn sundry points:

First, that if a man take an oath, though he were constrained therein by fear, yet it must be kept, if it be of things lawful and possible; because in an oath a man stands bound unto the Lord; as if a man swear unto a thief for the saving of his life, that he will bring him some money, or other booty of his own goods; this he is to perform, because the loss is private; but if he were sworn further, not to detect the thief, that were a bond of iniquity tending to the hurt of the commonwealth; and therefore such an oath a man ought not to take; and if he do so swear, yet he must not keep it, but repent of his rash oath.

Secondly, if a man be brought to swear by error, being overtaken of another, yet if it were of things lawful, within his power, it must be kept; so did Joshua to the Gibeonites, and the breach thereof by Saul was grievously punished (2 Sam. 21:3), as we shewed before.

Thirdly, if a man swear unto a lawful promise, and it fall out that the keeping of his oath procure him great temporal losses; yet the oath must be kept because therein he is bound unto God. This David noteth for a property of him that must rest in God's holy mountain, to keep his promise

whereunto he is bound by an oath, though it turn to his own hindrance (Psa. 15:4).

Fourthly, here we may see that the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome is wicked and damnable. They teach that the bishop of Rome, by the power of the keys, may free a man in conscience from the bond of a lawful oath. Indeed if the bond were only between man and man, it were something; but being between God and man, he that will dispense therewith, must be above, or at least equal to God Himself. The Pharisees' doctrine was far better, who taught that men's oaths must be performed unto God, without dispensing therewith. And therefore our English priests who before have sworn to the supremacy of the state, and now are reconciled to the pope, are flatly perjured persons, and so to be held.

But howsoever the Pharisees make this one good collection, yet they err grossly in their further meaning and expounding of this law; for when as when God forbiddeth a man to forswear himself, hence they gather: First, that it was lawful to swear ordinarily in common talk, even by the name of God, so that they sware truly, and did not forswear themselves. That this was their meaning will appear in Christ's answer. Secondly, hence they gathered that the law spake nothing of indirect oaths; for they made two kinds of oaths: *direct*, by the name of God, and *indirect* by their creatures. And as they held that a man might swear directly by the name of God without sin in common talk, so they taught that swearing indirectly by the creatures, as by heaven, by the temple, the head, altar, and such like, was nothing; neither the breaking thereof was any perjury (Matt. 23:16). And like unto these Jews and popish teachers, who hold that men may not only swear by the name of God, but by holy things, as by the rood, the mass; saints and angels, if they be not abused.

"*But I say unto you, swear not at all*" etc (v.34)

Here Christ confuteth the false interpretation of the Jewish teachers. And His answer is propounded full generally: *swear not at all*; then particularly in the words following to the 38th verse.

I. The words of His general answer are somewhat hard, and perverted by many; therefore that we may come to the true sense thereof, two points are

to be considered: first, what it is to swear, then how far forth Christ forbiddeth swearing.

1. For the first, we shall best conceive of an oath by the parts thereof. In an oath be two things: *confession* and *imprecation*.

   1. Confession is threefold; though for outward form the words of an oath be few: (i) A man confesseth that that which he sweareth is true in his conscience. (ii) That God is a witness not only of the outward action and speech, but also of his particular conscience; and (iii) That God is an omnipotent judge of all, and of him that sweareth, able to justify him, if he swear truly, or otherwise to condemn him eternally, if he swear falsely.

   2. Imprecation, the second thing in an oath, is a prayer to God for two things: (i) first, that God would be a witness with him that sweareth, to testify that he sweareth truly, and according to his conscience; so Paul did (Rom. 9:1), *I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not; my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost*. (ii) Secondly, a man prays that God would become a judge to curse him with eternal wrath, if he swore falsely; (2 Cor. 1:23), *I call God for a record unto my soul*; and the form of swearing in the old time, was the using of this imprecation: *God do so to me and more also, if I do not thus and thus* (2 Kin. 6:31).

2. We see what it is to swear. Now we come to shew how far forth Christ forbiddeth swearing in these words: *Swear not at all*. The Anabaptists gather hence that all swearing is forbidden, and so did some heretics in the primitive church; yea, and some of the ancient fathers (that otherwise deserved well of the church) thought that the Lord in the Old Testament did only permit swearing, as He did some other things that were evil, which he approved not, and that now Christ did quite take away the same. But this opinion is false and erroneous; for swearing is commanded (Deut. 10:20) as a part of God's worship. Now if Christ should here forbid it, He should be against Himself, condemning that which He Himself approved. Again, the apostle Paul used it, as is plain to be seen in the most of his epistles; and (Heb. 6:16), *An oath for confirmation is called the ordinance of God, for the ending of all strife*. Others (as the papists) say that Christ here sets down a counsel of perfection, not forbidding all swearing, but rather wishing that

men could so live in faith, love and truth, that there should be no use of an oath. But this cannot be true; for Christ's words are not persuasive, but prohibitory, expressly forbidding swearing. And yet we must know that Christ's meaning is not here to forbid all swearing simply, but all swearing after the Jewish manner and custom; that is, in common talk and communication, as is plain in the last words of this answer, when he saith, *Let your communication be yea, yea*. For this is a rule to be observed in the interpretation of Scripture, that things generally spoken, must particularly be understood according to the circumstances of the present matter in hand; as when Paul saith (1 Cor. 9:22), that he *became all things to all men*; if it should be taken generally, we might say that with blasphemers he became a blasphemer, etc., but that speech must be restrained to the use of things indifferent; in all which he yielded to the weakness of all, that he might win some; and so here, *Swear not at all*, must be restrained to the Jewish custom which was to swear by the name of God in their common talk, and by other creatures, both which Christ doth utterly forbid.

1. Here first, we learn that ordinary swearing is unlawful, either by the name of God, or by other creatures. This is the common sin of our age in all sorts and degrees. Some swear by their faith; others by their troth, before God, by the cross of the coin (having money in their hands), by the fire that is God's angel (as they used to speak), others by bread, drink; and look how many occasions men have offered unto them, so many oaths have they framed unto themselves.

2. Secondly, here is condemned all minced oaths; as by my fay, maskins, and yea marry; for the ground thereof was this popish oath, by Mary.

3. Thirdly, here are condemned all gross oaths by the parts of Christ's body, as by His heart, blood, sides and such like.

Yea, men have their excuses for common swearing; as first, that they swear the truth, and nothing else. But the truth of their oath cannot dispense with the commandment of God, forbidding all swearing in ordinary communication. Others that be more simple, say, they swear by good things. But this makes their sin the greater; for the goodness of a thing doth aggravate the offence in the abuse thereof. Others say that they cannot be believed upon their bare word. *Answer*: But Christ's commandment must

not be broken to win credit in our speeches; that credit is dear bought, which is got by pawning the soul to the devil. God must be obeyed for the matter of our communication, though no man will believe us. Others, as soldiers and young gallants use to swear to testify their courage and gentry; these men shew that they love the praise of men more than the praise of God. But that will be found in the end but sorry reputation, which is gained by transgression; their glory will be their shame, and their end damnation (Phil. 3:19), nay, their base minds and cowardliness are herein evident, that they glory in their slavish bondage unto sin and Satan. These excuses will not free men from the guilt of condemnation at the day of judgment; for common swearing is a shameful taking of God's name in vain. Now the Lord hath said that He *will not hold them guiltless that take His name in vain* (Exod. 20:7). Those therefore that have this way offended, must betime repent of this impiety, and learn to fear the name of God, making conscience of an oath, and let their *communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay*, as Christ here commandeth. The wicked act of Jezabel covering bloody impiety under hypocrisy (1 Kin. 21:9) in proclaiming a fast, when she would have Naboth slain for blasphemy, shews that the custom of those times was to have public humiliation for such sins, lest the wrath of God should come upon our land. And when good king Hezekiah heard the grievous blasphemy which Rabshakeh uttered against the Lord (2 Kin. 19:1), he fell to his prayers, and to humble himself before God. Shall this good king do this for another man's blasphemy, and shall we not do the like for our own, but continue in swearing without all remorse? Our common swearers are devils incarnate, yea, worse than the devil himself, for the devils *believe God and tremble* (Jam. 2:19); but they tear God in pieces, and are never moved. If men abuse earthly princes in their names and titles, they are imprisoned, banished or hanged, and that justly; now shall this be done to them that impeach the dignity of mortal men, and shall not God's wrath be hot against that people who live in the continual blasphemy of His name? Let us therefore fear to open our mouths in any kind of common swearing, though it be by the basest creature that God hath made; for the least creature is better than we can be allowed to abuse by our oaths.

4. Lastly, here is forbidden all cursing of ourselves in our common talk, as when men say, *If it be not so, I would I were hanged; I would this bread might be my bane*, and such like; for every imprecation is part of

an oath; as we may see in the oaths specified in Scripture: (1 Sam. 25:22), *So and more also do God to the enemies of David* etc., and (2 Kin. 6:31), *If I do not so and so, God do so and so to me*. Now as we are not to swear in our common talk, so neither ought we to use imprecation therein; for being part of an oath, it ought not to be the matter of our common speech.

Here two questions must be scanned:

1. First, when a man may lawfully swear; and when not? For Christ's speech forbidding ordinary swearing seems to grant that there is a time when a man may lawfully take an oath. There be two times and cases wherein a man may lawfully take an oath: First, when the magistrate ministereth an oath unto a man upon a just occasion; for the magistrate hath the power of God in this case, and therefore when he justly requires it of man, then may he lawfully swear. Secondly, when a man's own calling general or particular, necessarily requires an oath; and this is in four cases: 1. When the taking of an oath serveth to maintain, procure or win unto God any part of His glory, or to preserve the same from disgrace. In this regard, Paul moved with a godly zeal, useth an oath in sundry of his epistles, for the confirmation of his doctrine, that the churches to whom he writes might be established in the truth, and so glorify God the more. 2. When his oath serveth to maintain or further his own or other's salvation, or preservation in soul or body; in this case (2 Cor. 1:23), Paul calls God for a record unto his soul that he came not to Corinth to spare them. And David to further himself in the way of salvation (Psa. 119:106), bound himself by an oath, that he would keep God's commandments. 3. When the oath serves to confirm and establish peace and society between party and party, country and country, kingdom and kingdom. Thus did Abraham and Abimelech sware each to other (Gen, 21:23); and Jacob and Laban (Gen. 31:53); and by virtue hereof do subjects bind themselves by oath in allegiance to their princes, and soldiers to their governors. 4. When a man by oath and not otherwise, may either free himself from temporal losses, or procure to himself temporal benefits which be of great weight and moment; for an oath for confirmation is among men the end of all strife. Now we know that much strife and controversy

doth arise about worldly affairs. And in this regard a man by oath may lawfully purge himself of infamy and slander. In these four cases, a man may lawfully swear, not only publicly before the magistrate, but also privately, so it be with due reverence and good conscience. But in common talk, or on light occasion, a man cannot lawfully swear, either by small or great oath, for that is to take the name of God in vain.

2. How must a man take an oath, when by just occasion he is called to swear? *Answer*: To this question the prophet Jeremiah answereth (Jer. 4:2), *Thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness*; where three virtues are required in an holy manner of swearing:

1. First, *truth*, and that respecting two things: as well the matter whereto we swear, for God may not be brought for a witness to a lie; as also the mind of him that sweareth; for his oath must be according to his mind, without fraud or deceit, and with intent to perform that truly which he promises thereupon.

2. Secondly, *justice* or *righteousness*, which also respects two things: first, the thing sworn to, that must be just and lawful, and according to God's Word; secondly, the conscience of the swearer; for a man must not swear for a trifle though the thing be true, but either by the authority of the magistrate, or upon some necessary cause of his lawful calling; and against this virtue do those sin that swear usually in their common talk, though the thing be true; for trifles and light matters are not a just cause of an oath.

3. Thirdly, *judgement*, as well of the oath, as of his own person. For the oath; he that sweareth rightly ought to know the nature of an oath, and be able to judge of the matter whereabout he sweareth, and also discern rightly of the persons before whom, of time, place, and other circumstances. And for his own person, a man that sweareth ought to see in his conscience that he is fit to take an oath, and thereby to worship and glorify God; for he that sweareth ought to have his heart smitten with fear and awe towards God, as in all other parts of his worship (Deut. 10:20), *the fear of God* and *swearing by His name* are

> joined together; and a profane man that hath no fear of God in his heart ought not to swear.

And thus much of Christ's general answer to their false interpretation.

"*Neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God, nor yet by the earth, for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king*" etc. (vv.34-36)

Here our Saviour Christ cometh particularly to forbid swearing in four several kinds of oaths used among the Jews, under which He includeth all indirect oaths by the creatures. And withal observe that he addeth several reasons in prohibiting these several kinds of indirect oaths; as that *a man must not swear by heaven, because it is the throne of God* etc. Now as I take it, Christ doth not directly forbid swearing by the creatures in this place; for His intent is to forbid ordinary swearing in common speech, whether it be by God, or by the creatures; which here he nameth, because the Jews counted them but light oaths. Yet here this point must needs be scanned: *Whether it be lawful at any time to swear by the creatures*. Sundry papists, and those of the best account both for learning and devotion, make two kinds of oaths in swearing by the creatures: first, when a man swears by the creature, and puts it in the place of God, making it a judge and witness to his conscience of the truth of the thing whereof he sweareth; and this do all condemn as wicked and unlawful, both Protestants and papists. Secondly, when the creature is named, but yet the oath is directed to God in the mind of the swearer, under the name of the creature, as the creature is in relation to God a sign of His presence. And this kind of swearing is taken for lawful, not only of all papists, but of many Protestant divines which be of good account in our age. Yet with reverence to them all, I see no reason in the Word of God to warrant this kind of swearing by the creature, with direction to God in the mind of him that sweareth. Indeed a man may name the creature in his oath (as Paul did, *I call God to record to my conscience*) and yet swear by God; for it is one thing to name the creature in swearing, and another thing to swear by the creature.

Reasons against this sort of swearing by the creatures are these:

1. First, an oath is a part of God's worship, as hath before been shewed. Now every part of God's worship must be referred to God directly; so we pray and give thanks to God directly, and not in the creature, and so we ought to swear; but in indirect swearing by the creatures, the oath is directly referred to the creature, and indirectly unto God, namely, in the creature; which is not lawful.

2. Secondly, a man must (Heb. 6:16) *swear by him that is greater than himself*, and therefore (v.13) *God sware by Himself, because there was no greater to swear by*; where it seemeth the Holy Ghost takes it for granted that there is no lawful swearing by the creatures; because they are not greater than man, and so there must be but one only direct kind of swearing, by God Himself.

3. Thirdly (Deut. 6:13), *Thou shalt swear by His name*. There it seemeth He prescribeth a form of swearing wherein the name of God in some plain manner is expressed; but in indirect oaths, another besides him that sweareth cannot tell whether he swear by God or not, because the oath is by the creature, and directed only to God in the mind of him that sweareth.

4. Fourthly (Matt. 23:21), *He that sweareth by the temple, sweareth by God*; whence I gather that an indirect oath is superfluous, because it is sufficient that a man swear by God only, and not by the creature also.

By these reasons I have been moved to dislike of indirect oaths. Now let us see what is said in behalf of them.

1. *First*, it is said (Gen. 42:16), that Joseph, a man commended for his faith, *sware by the life of Pharoah*; therefore man may swear by the creatures. *Answer*: It may well be expounded; not to be an oath, but an alleviation to this effect: *as surely as Pharaoh liveth*. But say it is an oath, yet this fact proveth not the lawfulness of this kind of swearing; for no man is so good but he may be tainted with the impieties of the place wherein he liveth, especially being so wicked a place as Pharaoh's court was.

2. *Second reason*: (2 Kin. 2:4), the prophet Elisha sweareth Elijah's soul. *Answer*: That place proveth not the point in hand; for the question is of indirect oaths, where the name of God is concealed. But in that place God's name is prefixed, *as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth*. Again, that phrase may be taken for a solemn alleviation only, as it is well translated: *as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee*.

3. *Reason 3*: (Song. 3:5) There (say they) Christ Himself sweareth by the creatures; *the roes and the hinds of the field*. *Answer*: Those words are not an oath, but an admiration; for Christ chargeth the enemies of His church not to trouble her; and He confirmeth His charge by a testimony from the brute beasts, which may be done without an oath; for it is all one as if He had said, If you do trouble my church, the roes and hinds of the field shall be witness against you, because you do that which they would not do, if they had reason as you have. Now the creatures may be made witnesses unto an admiration, as (Deut. 32:1), Moses calleth heaven and earth to winess; and so doth the Lord (Isa. 1:2). But when a man sweareth by a thing, the same is made a witness to his conscience, which no creature can be.

4. *Reason 4*: Paul (say they) (1 Cor. 15:31), sware by their rejoicing, which is a gift of God. *Answer*: Those words are not an oath, but an obtestation to testify the constancy which he shewed in his ministry, and they declared in the confession of their faith. Now a testimony may be drawn from a creature, as we shewed before. But (say they) the word there used is a note of an oath. *Answer*: Not always; for sometimes it betokens an asseveration, as in other authors might be shewed; so that I take it there ought not to be any indirect oaths wherein God's name is concealed, and the creature sworn by made a pledge of God's presence.

Now I come to the reasons for which Christ forbids these indirect oaths. The sum of them in general is this: *Because God's name, which must not be taken in vain, is set in every one of His creatures, even the least hair of a man's head* (for therein a man may see the wisdom and power of God),

*therefore we may not swear in our common talk, no not by the least creature that God hath made*.

Hence we learn sundry instructions:

1. First, that it is not lawful to swear by faith, troth, bread, drink and such like; for faith (to insist on one) is a gift of God, which beareth God's name in it; for the matter of our faith is Christ, so as when we swear by it, we swear by Christ, whose name we may not take in vain; and therefore we may not swear at all by any such oaths. Again, God hath set His name on every creature, He hath imprinted in them the signs of His power, wisdom, justice and mercy (Rom. 1:20), *The invisible things of God are seen by His works*; and (Acts 14:17), *Rain from heaven and fruitful seasons were witnesses unto the Gentiles of God's goodness unto them*; which serveth first, to condemn the world of great ingratitude; for we have set before our eyes, we daily taste and handle the good creatures of God; yet who beholds in them His wisdom, mercy and goodness, that thereby he might take occasion to pray His name? For men are like to brute beast who use the benefit of the creatures, but yet never think on God the Creator; and like unto the swine, who eateth up the mast, but never looketh up to the tree from whence it cometh; yea, some are so shameless that they deny God by their works, though not in word.

2. Secondly, this teacheth us carefully to meditate upon the creatures of God, labouring therein to see God's wisdom, justice and mercy, and the rest of His attributes; that thereby we may take occasion to praise His name (Psa. 139:14), *I will praise thee, for I am wonderfully and fearfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well*. Here the prophet doth profess: First, that he did meditate on the creatures of God seriously; then that his meditation made him to fear and to be astonished; and thirdly, to pray to God (Psa. 92:5,6), *Oh how glorious are thy works*; therein importing that he did meditate thereon; *but the unwise* (saith he) *knoweth it not, and a fool doth not understand this*; wherein he sheweth that it is a great point of folly to see God's creatures, and not to behold the wonderful power and goodness of God in them. (Psa. 145:5), *I will meditate upon all thy*

*wondrous works*; (v.10), *All thy works praise thee, O Lord*. His example we should follow. And whereas God's judgments are among us, we must labour in them to see God's indignation against our sins, and His mercy in chastening us for our amendment, that we might not be condemned with the world.

3. Thirdly, if every creature carry in it some stamp of God's name, then what should the reasonable creature do? Should not men much more bear God's image? Yes, verily, both in thought, will, affection and action. We must therefore seek to repair in us God's image decayed in Adam; and above all things take heed we carry not about us the image of the devil in any sin; for if we do, we are far worse than the dumb creatures.

4. Fourthly, whereas every creature bears about some part of God's image, this serves to strip the ignorant sort of their false plea; who think God will hold them excused because they are not book-learned. But they must know that they deceive themselves, for sith they are ignorant of the wisdom, mercy and power of God, and of many other things in God, which the very unreasonable creatures might have taught them if they had beheld the same and meditated thereon; they may justly fear, lest these silly creatures stand up in judgment against them at the last day.

5. And lastly, seeing God hath set His image in every creature, we must labour to use them all in an holy manner as meat, drink, apparel and suck like. We must beware we abuse them not unto our lusts any manner of way, for the abuse redounds unto the Lord whose name they bear, and we know God will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.

Now I come more particularly to the several reasons annexed to the several prohibitions.

I. The first particular prohibition is this: *Thou shalt not swear by heaven*; and the reason followeth: *for it is the throne of God*. This reason is to be scanned. A throne is a chair of estate wherein earthly princes use to sit in judgment, and shew themselves in glory and majesty. Now heaven is not

properly a throne but by resemblance, because that God doth in heaven and from heaven shew His glory and majesty unto men. In heaven the saints and angels behold the unspeakable glory of God. And from heaven doth God shew His exceeding power, even in spreading the heavens like a curtain above the earth, in setting therein the sun, the moon and stars, most glorious creatures; in giving particular motions unto them by sending rain from heaven with storms, lightnings and thunder. Again, He sheweth His justice from heaven, by pouring down His judgments thence: (2 Pet. 2:5,6) as the *flood upon the world of the ungodly; fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah*. As the apostle saith (Rom. 1:18), *The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*. Again, God's mercy and goodness is manifested from heaven. Thence cometh *every good gift* (Jam. 1:17); yea, thence our Saviour Christ descended for the work of our redemption. Thence also the Holy Ghost descended in Christ's baptism; and the Father's voice was heard from thence, pointing out that Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. And thence shall Christ come again in glory at the last day to be glorified in His saints; all which do magnify unto us the glory of the throne.

Is the throne of God in heaven, and not on earth? Then must we learn to conceive of God as of an heavenly King. In the chapter following, we are taught to call Him our *Heavenly Father* (Matt. 6:9), and therefore when we speak or think of God, or do worship unto Him in prayer or thanksgiving, we must not conceive of Him in any carnal sort, but in an heavenly manner. The second commandment forbidding the representation of God in any similitude, may teach us that we must not conceive of God after any earthly or carnal manner. Indeed the popish church approving of the images of the Trinity (as before was shewed) do thereby teach the people to conceive of God, as of an old man sitting in heaven, with a crown upon His head, because He is called the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:22); but all such carnal conceits of God are here forbidden.

That we may then conceive aright of God, two rules must be remembered: First, we must not frame in our minds any image of God at all as that He should be like unto man, or any other creature; but we must conceive of Him both in His works as our Creator, Governor and Preserver; and also in His properties, as most wise, just, holy, merciful, and such like. Secondly,

we must conceive that God is one in substance, and three in person; we must not confound the persons nor divide the substance, but conceive of one God in three persons, and three persons in one and the same Godhead. These two rules being well observed, will keep our hearts from those vain conceits of God which many frame to themselves when they think of Him in their minds.

Secondly, seeing God's throne is in heaven, therefore our conversation must be there also; for where God is and His throne, there ought our hearts to be. Now we shall have our conversation in heaven by doing two things: First, by a continual elevation of our minds unto heaven, morning and evening, and at all times when we have occasion. We are commanded to pray continually (1 Thess. 5:17), and that we do, so oft as in the duties of our ordinary calling, we desire in our hearts the blessing and assurance of God; for the sighs and groans of the soul are prayers approved before God; we must therefore lift up our heart to God, as David did (Psa. 25:1). Secondly, we must set our affections on God, as on heavenly things, as our love, our joy, and fear, yea, our care must be of coming to heaven; for where can we be in a more happy place than before God's throne in heaven, where God sets out His glory and majesty to His creature?

Thirdly, hence we may learn to conceive aright of the providence of God; for God sitting in His majesty in heaven, and being infinite in wisdom, power and greatness, doth by a most careful providence see, know and govern all things that are done upon the earth. This is notably set forth unto us (Psa. 11:4), *The Lord's throne is in heaven, His eyes will consider, His eyelids will try the children of men*. The words are very significant, importing that God from heaven doth most narrowly see into all men's dealings and affairs; which teacheth us when we shall be in any distress, either in body, minds, goods, or friends, to behave ourselves in an holy manner, for God sees our case; and therefore first we must make our moan unto Him, and humbly entreat for that grace and mercy at His hands whereof we stand in need. David maketh this a ground of much comfort in affliction (Psa. 102:19,20): *Out of heaven* (saith he) *did the Lord behold the earth, that He might hear the mourning of the prisoner, and deliver the children of death*.

Lastly, this serveth to terrify every sinner; for the Lord sits in heaven with a piercing eye, beholding all thy doings whosoever thou art; and therefore when a man sinneth, though he hide the same from men, yet the Lord sees him, and will reprove him and judge him. Let us therefore make conscience of all sin, and fear to do evil, either by thought, word or deed, seeing we are before the judge that sits upon this throne.

II. The second particular prohibition is against *swearing by the earth*; the reason is, *because it is the Lord's footstool*. The earth is the Lord's footstool, not properly, but by resemblance; because as the footstool is nothing in glory to the throne, no more be those glimpses of glory which God shews here on earth, comparable to that surpassing dignity and glory wherein God manifests Himself in heaven.

1. Is the earth the Lord's footstool? Then is He not included in heaven, but is present also upon earth. God is not in one place alone, but He is everywhere at one and the same time. Here then we have a plain proof of God's infinite greatness and omnipresence, in regard of His essence and Godhead; for Christ compares Him to a king, who is of that bigness that He fills heaven with His glory, and of that height, that the earth below is His footstool, according as He saith (Jer. 23:24), *I fill heaven and earth*. This point David proves at large (Psa. 139:7,8), *Whither shall I go from thy presence*? etc., shewing plainly that there is no place whereof it can be truly said that God in essence is not there present. The consideration whereof teacheth us:

1. First, to understand aright the saying of Paul (Acts 17:28), *In Him we live, move and have our being*. We are not in God as parts of God, for His essence is most simple; and yet it is true that we are in God, because His essence is everywhere; it is in us, forth of us, and about us; and being in us and about us, gives us living, being and moving.

2. Secondly, this teacheth us to conceive aright God's holy providence, to wit that God in regard of His substance, is in every place, giving being, life and moving to all things that be, live and move; preserving them and killing them at His pleasure, and doing whatsoever He will.

3. Thirdly, this consideration of God's essential presence, serves to kindle in our hearts that fear of God which is the ground of true obedience in all estates. If God shall lay upon us any affliction, either in body or mind, friends or goods, let us then consider the essential presence of God, laying that cross upon us, and it will strike into our hearts a reverend fear of God, and move us to patience, meekness and contentment; yea, it will cause us to humble ourselves under His hand; for the cause why men fly not to God by humbling themselves in their afflictions, is because they think God is far off. Again, if in prosperity we consider God's essential presence with us, giving unto us all good things, it will make us thankful; so much we do unto man, when we be in his presence that hath bestowed a favour upon us, we readily address ourselves to thankfulness; and shall we not do so to God? In a word, this holy meditation of God's presence will make us to humble ourselves unto God, and to rest contented with His good will and pleasure.

4. Fourthly, if God in essence be present everywhere, then it is needless to make choice of places in regard of holiness for the worship of God; for one place is no more near to God than another; which confutes the vanity of popish pilgrimages to chief places for religious worship; and it checketh also the blind opinion of many among us who think the church is the only place of prayer and other parts of God's worship; whereupon they never regard to pray in their private houses. But God is in thee, and in thy house, as well as in the church, and therefore thou mayest lift up pure hands unto God in all places, and must pray at home as well as in the church (always provided that thou honour God's ordinance in the public assemblies).

5. Fifthly, if God be everywhere, then we must labour to have hearts affected with this persuasion, that wheresoever we be, God is present with us. This lesson God taught Abraham (Gen. 17:1), *Walk before me, and be upright*; and this Enoch had learned long before (Gen. 5:24), and therefore *was reported of that he had pleased God* (Heb. 11:5). Now where this persuasion taketh place, it will strike the heart with a reverent fear and awe towards God, making a man thus to reason: God is present with me, how then should I do this evil in His sight? Oh that

this thought did run in our minds in the time of temptation, then by God's grace we should fear to sin, and endeavour to walk before God in all holy obedience, as His servants have done. Many are shameless in sinning, which comes from the want of this persuasion of God's presence, which should strike this fear into their hearts, as we may see (Gen. 20:11; Psa. 10:3,4,11; Psa. 94:6,7).

6. Sixthly, this knowledge of God's presence serves to quiet and strengthen their hearts that are troubled with fear of the devil, thus they must reason with themselves: The Lord my God is present with me, both in power and essence; He can bind Satan, and He will keep those that trust in Him from the snare of the hunter; wherefore then should I be afraid?

2. Secondly, is the earth the Lord's footstool? Then while we live here upon the earth, our lives ought to be a daily practice of humiliation and repentance. When good subjects come before the chair of estate, especially if the prince be present, then they bow their bodies, to testify their loyal subjection unto their prince. Shall man do this to man, and shall not we, whose dwelling is at the Lord's footstool, much more humble ourselves? When David's wroth was kindled against Nabal, Abigail, Nabal's wife, being wiser than her husband, went to meet David with a present, and as soon as she saw him (1 Sam. 25:23,24,28) *she lighted off her ass, and fell down upon her face, and bowed herself unto the ground, and fell at his feet, and besought him humbly to forget the trespass, and to stay his hand from blood*; so likewise when Jacob met his brother Esau (Gen. 33:3), *He bowed himself seven times*, to move him to compassion towards him and his family. How much more then ought we to bow ourselves before the Lord, who have ten thousandfold more deserved His wrath than Nabal did David's or Jacob Esau's? And besides, our humble walking before Him at His footstool here on earth, may give us assurance that one day He will place us on His throne in glory in the heavens. But if we walk proudly before Him in the practice of sin, being at His footstool, let us know that *He hath feet like unto fiery brass burning in a furnace* (Rev. 1:15), under which He will trample all His enemies, and make them His footstool (Psa. 110:1).

III. The third inhibition is from *swearing by Jerusalem*; the reason is*, for it is the city of the great king*; that is, the city of God, the King of Kings; for God had chosen the Jews to be His peculiar people, and Jerusalem for His holy city where He had His temple and sacrifices for His solemn worship. Now here observe that at this time the temple was made a den of thieves, and many of the Scribes, and Jewish teachers were notable heretics, erring against the foundation of religion; yea, the people were rebellious and wicked, as Stephen plainly telleth them (Acts 7:51); and yet Christ here calleth Jerusalem the city of God; and so the people God's people; though they for their parts had forsaken God. The reason hereof is this: because neither the Jews, nor any other do then presently cease to be the people of God, when they by sin cut themselves off from God and forsake Him; but then do they cease to be God's people when God forsakes them, and cuts them off from Him; like as in the state of matrimony, when either man or wife commits adultery, the party breaks the bond of marriage, and as much as in him lieth, cuts off himself from the other; but yet while the innocent party retains matrimonial affection towards the party offending, and gives not a bill of divorce, they still remain man and wife. This appears in these Jews, whom neither Christ Himself did then forsake when they rejected Him (for He prayed for them when they crucified Him), nor yet His apostles, till they saw in them manifest signs of incurable obstinacy (Acts 13:46).

This point must be remembered as serving to rectify our judgments touching the state of a church or people that have many grievous wants and faults among them, both for doctrine and manners; for though a people do what in them lieth, to cut off themselves from God, yet till God cut them off from Him, they cease not to be His people; and therefore we must not judge them to be no people of God till we see that God hath cut them off. And to apply this to our own church: put the case that we had forsaken God, and had amongst us all those abuses which some would fasten upon us, as making us to be no church; yet this proves us not to be no church, neither ought we for all this to be so reputed; for though we have deserved indeed that God should cut us off, yet seeing He vouchsafeth unto us the doctrine of life and the pledges of salvation, it cannot be truly said that we are no church. If it be said that by this reason we will make the church of Rome to be God's church, because they have some signs of God's favour, as baptism

and the Word, though grievously corrupted. *Answer*: Though I doubt not but God hath His company in the midst of popery, yet if we understand by the church of Rome, a company of men who profess and hold the pope for their head, and embrace the doctrine established by the Council of Trent, then (I say) they are no church; for Christ hath cut them off, and given them a bill of divorcement in His holy Word (Rev. 18:4), *Come out of her my people*.

Hence also we are taught to carry a charitable opinion of such particular persons as go on in sin without remorse; for though they for their part have forsaken God, yet we know not whether God hath forsaken them; He may in mercy call them to repentance, and therefore we must not rashly give sentence of judgment against them. *Question*: But what if a man give himself to the devil by covenant, as many have done, and do daily; may we not then give sentence against them, or they against themselves? *Answer*: No verily; for though this case be most fearful, yet they have not absolute power over themselves. Manasseh (2 Chr. 33:6,12), king of Judah, had most wickedly forsaken God, and bound himself in league to the devil; but yet when he humbled himself being in affliction, and prayed to God, he was received to mercy. Saul's case was fearful (Acts 8:3), while he *made havoc of the church*; and yet the Lord converted him when he went to persecute. This must not embolden any to go on in sin, for the Lord will not be merciful to such (Deut. 29:19,20).

IV. *Neither shalt thou swear by thine head*.

This is the last form of swearing forbidden by Christ. The reason is, *because thou canst not make one hair white or black*; that is, thou shalt not swear by thine head, because thou hast not power over thine own head, thou art not able to make thine head; nay, thou canst not make one hair of thine head; nay (which is less), thou canst not give to any hair his natural colour, by making it white or black.

Where observe the honour given to God not only to make the hairs of man's head, but even to give natural colour to every one of them. Man can not do the least of these things.

1. This teacheth us, first, that there is a particular providence of God, whereby He disposeth of all things, even of the least and basest things that

be in the world; for what is more base than the hairs of a man's head? And what is less to be regarded than the colour thereof? And yet the Lord's providence reacheth hereunto. This is a matter of endless comfort to God's children; for when we are once persuaded of the particular providence of God over so base and light things, we shall easily be resolved that all things which befall us in this life, whether in prosperity or adversity, come by God's special providence; which will move us to a patient bearing of all miseries, and to contentment in every estate, because it is the Lord's sending; yea, this will be a notable comfort in any affliction to know that God is the author thereof.

2. Secondly, Hath not man power over the least creature, no not over the hair of his head? Then doubtless he may not lawfully swear by any creature, though he have relation to God therein; for if he might lawfully swear by a creature, it were because he might present that creature unto God, as a pledge of his presence, wherein he desires God to punish him, if he fail in his oath. This is granted of those that defend this form of swearing; but a man may not lay down any creature as a pawn before God, and appoint the Lord to punish him therein; because the creature is not in man's power; every creature is the Lord's, and we may not appoint Him how He shall punish us for our perjury. If it be said that the oath made by the creature is a binding oath, which must be kept, for Christ calls it an oath (Matt. 23:20), and therefore a man may lawfully use it. *Answer*: The reason is not good; for the oath bindeth and must be kept, because indirectly a man swears by God, and so in substance it is an oath; but yet the manner of it is unlawful, because an oath being part of God's worship, ought to be directed unto God immediately. When an infidel swears by his false gods (as Laban by the god of Nahor (Gen. 31:53)), that is an oath, and it binds his conscience, because in his intent he sware by the true God; and yet the form of it is unlawful, because he puts that in the room of God, that which is not God.

3. Thirdly, is the hair of the head the creature of God, and the natural colour His workmanship? Then all abuse hereof must needs be unlawful; as, first, the custom of those men or women who, being ashamed of God's workmanship in their own hair, do beautify their heads with bought hair, sometimes of dead persons. This is an odious thing, and such persons take God's name in vain, as much as they which swear by their head at every

word; for be they what they will be, God in some sort hath set His own name in the natural colour of their hair, which none ought to be ashamed of. Secondly, the painting of faces, and colouring of the hair, is another abuse of God's name set therein. This practice was abhorred of the heathen, who in their writings have branded Poppea Nero's wife, because she used an ointment made of asses' milk to make her face fair and bright. What then shall we say of our ladies and gentlewomen, who paint their faces with Spanish white, and colour their hair? These doubtless believe not God's Word, which *preferreth the fear of God before favour and beauty* (Prov. 31:30). But yet methinks they should be ashamed to be followers of Jezabel (2 Kin. 9:30). Thirdly, the wearing of long hair is another abuse thereof in the younger sort. It began indeed among the aged, but now it is become a trick of youth, and is the badge of a proud heart; for how can they say they glorify God thereby, when the apostle saith (1 Cor. 11:14) *it is a shame for a man to have long hair*. Well, sith God hath set His name therein, we must beware how we make it an instrument of sin. If it be said to wear long hair is our English fashion; I answer, but indeed it is a foreign trick, and therefore as unlawful as foreign attire, which God condemns (Zeph. 1:8). Our ancient English fashion (except it were among the aged) was to wear short hair; and in every country, the most ancient and grave fashions ought to be followed; not only in the use of the hair, but in apparel also, that therein men may shew the grace of their heart; for man's attire is God's ordinance, borrowed from His creatures, wherein God hath set His name; and therefore we ought not to deface it, with the stamp of pride and vanity; but rather shew therein, that liberty and modesty, that may honour God's name.

# 5:37

"*But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil*." Matthew 5:37

This verse containeth two parts: A rule for the framing of our speech in common talk; and a reason thereof.

I.

The rule is this: *Let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay*; where He sheweth that though men may not swear in their common talk, yet they may use a simple affirmation or negation to the thing they speak. This rule is diversely expounded; some take it to respect the truth of our speech, as if Christ had said: Whatsoever you affirm in speaking, affirm it truly; and whatsoever you deny in speaking, deny it truly. But by the circumstances of the place, it rather seemeth that Christ here propoundeth a rule for the very form of our common talk to this effect: If you would affirm anything in your ordinary speech, let your affirmation be yea; and if you would deny anything, let your negation or denial be no, and in your ordinary communication say no more, though you be urged thereto. So must we take *communication* for ordinary talk; for in some cases it hath been lawful to swear, as hath been shewed.

1. First, by this rule is condemned the adding of invocations to our common affirmations or negations; as *O Lord, yea; nay, good God*, and such like. In some cases, and at some times these may be used; but in ordinary and familiar communication, these invocations are abuses of God's name. An earthly prince will not suffer his name to be tossed in every man's mouth; and much less will the Lord, who herein is jealous of His glory.

2. Secondly, here note that *asseverations* [*solemn declarations*] may not be ordinarily used in common talk, as *verily, yea; no in truth*, and such like; these are more than simple affirmations and negations, and therefore in common speech may not be used. Our Saviour Christ, the pattern of piety,

never used them but in weighty matters, which were careful to be remembered; and then He said, *verily, verily, I say unto you*.

3. Thirdly, here is condemned the use of *execrations*, when we affirm or deny a thing in our common talk; as to say, *yea, or else I would I were dead*, and such like.

4. Fourthly, *ordinary swearing* is here again plainly forbidden, whether it be by the name of God, or by any other creatures. Some to avoid swearing (as they think), in their common talk, for yea, and nay, use to say, *by yea*, and *by no*; but herein they offend; for these phrases are oaths, as well, *by faith*, and *by troth*; and in a word all speeches in common talk, added to confirm our speech above yea and nay, are abuses against this rule of Christ, for ordinary communication.

II.

*For whatsoever is more than these*, that is, whatsoever exceedeth a simple affirmation or negation in common speech, *comes of evil*; that is, of the evil one, the devil; so (6:13), *Deliver us from evil*; that is, from the devil, that evil one. This is a most excellent reason to move men to put in practice this rule; for all abuses of oaths, asseverations, invocations and deprecations, in common speech, are abuses of God's name, and they come from the devil; he is the schoolmaster that teacheth men to use them.

*Question*: Whether doth every temptation come from the devil? *Answer*: Every temptation to evil is of the devil; so much this text proveth, and (Matt. 4:3) the devil is called *the tempter*, because he gives himself to tempt men, by all means, at all times. True it is that some temptations come from our corrupt hearts, but yet the devil hath an hand in them to further them.

*Question*: How can this be, seeing that the devil is but one, and can be but in one place at once? *Answer*: There is indeed one head of wicked spirits called Beelzebub, and the devil, who hath innumerable wicked angels ministering unto him, as may be gathered (Matt. 25:41), where hell is said to be *prepared for the devil and his angels*; and it is not unlikely, but that they are more in number than all the men upon the earth; for where can any man be in this life, but some wicked spirit will be ready to tempt him unto

sin? Doth he not provoke the filthy person to uncleanness, and every man to such sin whereunto he is most inclined? And say the evil motion ariseth from our own corruption, yet the devil's help is never wanting to bring it into action.

This serveth to confute the folly of our common people, who never fear the devil, but when he appears unto them in some shape; they think he is never near them, but when they see him. But they must know that the devil by his wicked spirits, is always about them day and night, and in all places; and therefore they must learn more to fear his temptations, than his appearances; for that is not so terrible to the sight, as his temptations are hurtful to the soul. Secondly, this presence of the devil with every man, to tempt him at all times, must teach us to keep strait watch against all sin, and the occasion thereof. We are easily persuaded to watch against thieves that would deprive us of our temporal goods, or natural life. Now the devil, our spiritual enemy, is daily about us, to seek the ruin of our souls, and therefore we must always have an eye to his temptations. And indeed, if we would well consider his presence, and malice against us, it would make us watch and fear, lest he should take us in his snare.

But why is the devil called *the evil one*? *Answer*: By a kind of excellency of speech, for these reasons:

First, because he is evil in excess, his sins are in the highest degree; for it is likely that his first sin was directly against the Holy Ghost, which may be one reason why God chose not angels, but men, on whom He would shew mercy after their fall. Secondly, because he commits wickedness and evil without ceasing, and therefore is compared to an *hunger-bitten lion, who goeth about continually, seeking whom he may devour* (1 Pet. 5:8). The most wicked man that is, or ever was, will sometimes do good. Pharaoh humbled himself (Exod. 10:16), and confessed his sins to Moses; and Saul (1 Sam. 15:30) desires to worship God with Samuel. Herod (Mar. 6:20) also heard John Baptist gladly, and did many things according to his ministry. But the devil here differs from all wicked men, in that he doth practice nothing but wickedness; he is always murdering, and never ceaseth to seek men's destruction. Thirdly, because he practiseth sins of all sorts and degrees, in himself and by his ministers; for the sins that be in the world, be

all from him, either originally or by furtherance. The vilest man that is, doth abstain from sin sometimes; yea, by nature he hateth some sins; the proud and prodigal man cannot abide covetousness; and the drunkard may abhor idolatry; but the devil continually practiseth sins of all sorts; and therefore is justly called the evil one.

Here then we may see a reason why we are called the children of wrath, and of the devil by nature; namely, because by nature we carry in us, and about us, as lively an image of the devil in sin, as any child doth of his natural father. For first, in our conception we are guilty of Adam's sin, in eating the forbidden fruit. Secondly, our nature is stained with original sin, which is (not a practice, but) a proneness to all manner of mischief and wickedness that is committed in the world. Seest thou a man kill his father or mother, or betray his master, as Judas did to Christ, though it may be thou abhorrest such sins, yet doubtless the seed thereof is in thee. Yea, if God in mercy did not keep us from it, our corruption would carry us to the blasphemy against the Spirit. And thirdly, from this natural corruption, do arise innumerable evil thoughts, words and deeds, in the course of our lives, in all which we bear the image of the devil, till God bring us to repentance; and therefore justly may we be called the children of wrath, and of the devil by nature, having the same corruption in us that is in the devil, though not in the same degree and manner.

Hence we learn, first, to be ashamed and confounded in ourselves, yea, to hang down our heads; for what cause hath he to be puffed up with self-love, that is by nature in himself like unto the devil? Secondly, this teacheth us above all things, to labour to have the image of God renewed in us, in righteousness and true holiness, which was lost in Adam, that so the devil's image, in sin and wickedness, may be defaced. Thirdly, this must cause us to make no account of any worldly thing that pertains to us; but all our joy must be in Christ; He must be our wisdom and righteousness, our riches, and all things else, because by Him we are renewed from the devil's likeness to the image of God.

# 5:38-42

"*Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away*." Matthew 5:38-42.

"*Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*." Matthew 5:38

Here Christ returns to the commandments of the second table, intending to restore the same to their proper sense, and withal to confute the erroneous interpretation thereof given by the Jewish teachers. And first he cometh to a particular judicial law of Moses pertaining to the sixth commandment, touching the requital of like for like; in which, as in the former, he first sets down the words of the law of Moses, but yet to be understood with the erroneous interpretation of the Scribes and Pharisees (v.38). Then He gives the right sense of that law, and withal confuteth the false interpretation of the Jewish teachers (vv. 39-41).

I.

For the first, the words of Moses' law here set down, *An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth* (Exod. 21:24), whereto, as to the former, Christ prefixeth this preface: *It hath been said*, thereby giving us to understand that He is about to lay down the law of God in the false sense of the Jewish teachers. For the better perceiving whereof, we must observe the true meaning of that law, *An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*; wherein the Lord requireth requital of like for like, not by every private man, but by the public magistrate. As if a man did put out his neighbour's eye, then the magistrate should put out his eye; and strike out his teeth that strikes out his neighbours teeth. This appears to be so, because revenge is directly

forbidden to every private person, and plainly appropriated to the judge (Deut. 19:18-21). But the Jewish teachers expounded this law of private revenge as though God had said to every private man, If thy neighbour pluck out thine eye, pluck out his again, and if he strike out thy tooth, strike thou out his tooth. This is the false interpretation of the Jews.

*Question*: How could they so far overshoot themselves in so clear a case, seeing in all the books of Moses, it is plainly referred to the magistrate? *Answer*: There may be two reasons given thereof: First, it is a natural opinion that a man may revenge himself in his own cause privately, and not wait for recompense of the magistrate; and answerable hereunto, there is a mighty strong desire of revenge in every man's heart by nature, when he is injured. Now it is likely that these Jews followed their corrupt nature, and heady affections, in the interpretation of this law. Again, the Jewish people were mightily given to revenge by their natural disposition, as may appear by the law of the cities of refuge, and by mentioning of the revenger of blood; which plainly imports that the Jews would have blood again of him that shed blood, whensoever they met with him. Now the Jewish teachers framed their doctrine to the common disposition and behaviour of their people, and so falsified the truth of God, as many times it falls out that the common practice of men makes sin to seem no sin.

1. In the person of these Jewish teachers, we may see the policy of the devil, whose intent is, and hath been in all ages, to overturn religion; and to this end, he endeavours to cause men to temper religion to their natural disposition and common opinion in outward manners; whereby he overturneth both religion and people. This appears in other points among the Jews, as well as in this case of revenge. They were a people given much to covetousness, as may appear by the law of toleration for taking usury of strangers, and by their hardness of heart, so much reproved by all the prophets. Now the devil perceiving this to be their natural disposition, makes God's doctrine of salvation seem to them a doctrine of earthly benefits; for he caused them to dream of an earthly king for their Messiah, and of an earthly flourishing kingdom under him. Thus also hath the devil dealt with all other heathen people. The Romans in Italy have been ever grossly addicted to superstition, sorcery and idolatry, as heathen writers do testify. Now though God vouchsafed them His true religion in the primitive

church, yet the devil perceiving their natural disposition to superstition, hath so tempered the truth of God among them, with a natural and superstitious religion, that now they abound as much in idolatry and superstition as ever they did when they were heathen. The like malicious practice doth the devil shew among the Protestants, where the gospel is truly preached; for though he cannot (as he desires) corrupt religion in the mouths of the teachers; yet he weakens it greatly in the hearts of men, both teachers and hearers, causing them so far forth only to receive it, as it is suitable to their nature and disposition; but where it crosseth their humours, there to leave it. Is not this evident? For he that embraceth the truth with his heart will frame his life according to it, but generally the entertainment of religion is only formal; for though men profess it, yet they live in their sins, they make it to jump with their natural disposition having indeed a shew of godliness, but they want the power thereof, and so in them religion is vain (Jam. 1:26). Whereby we must be advertised to take heed of this policy of the devil, and whereas he labours to transform religion to men's dispositions, we on the contrary must endeavour in all things to transform ourselves into religion, obeying that form of doctrine whereunto we are delivered (Rom. 6:17).

2. Secondly, in these Scribes and Pharisees we observe the property of a bad teacher; namely, to transform himself and his doctrine to the customs and manners of the people, whenas the people should be transformed into His doctrine and practice, according to godliness. Hereof the Lord admonisheth Jeremiah (Jer. 15:19), *Let them return to thee, but return not thou to them*; for it was the practice of the false prophets in his time thus to strengthen the bands of the wicked (Jer. 23:14); and it is a common fault in many teachers that they frame themselves, both for doctrine and practice to the custom and manners of the people; but this is the devil's policy, whereby he overthroweth religion, and destroyeth men's souls.

II.

"*But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also*." (v.39)

In this, and the three next verses, Christ confutes the false interpretation of this law. The sum of His answer stands in two points: the first is an

inhibition: *resist not evil*; which is explained by three examples in the words following; the second, is a commandment to requite good for evil (v. 42).

1. For the first, by *evil* is meant, the injury or wrong that is done to man; or more properly, the *evil* one, that is the evil man that doth the wrong. *Resist not*; that is, rise not against the evil one, to requite like for like, according to the injury he hath done unto thee. So much the word signifieth. Now Christ forbiddeth not resisting evil by a lawful defence, but by way of private revenge; for He speaketh to His disciples, and to private men, saying, *I say unto you which hear* (as St Luke hath it, Luke 6:27). Yet further to clear this interpretation, we must know the scripture mentioneth two kinds of revenge, public and private. Public revenge is when the magistrate according to justice, and the law of God, punisheth an evil person that wrongeth his brother. Private revenge is when those that are no magistrates will revenge themselves on such as do them wrong. The public revenge is allowed by St Paul, calling the magistrate (Rom. 13:4), *God's minister for the executing of revenge upon evildoers*. Private revenge is forbidden by the same apostle (Rom. 12:17), *Revenge not thyself*. Now by this doctrine it is plain that our Saviour Christ here forbidding revenge, meaneth not public, but private revenge.

    1. First, here we see those men confuted who think it unlawful for a Christian to be a magistrate, to execute revenge upon malefactors by the sword, or to make war against the common enemies. These men are deceived, by mistaking this text, which forbiddeth only private and not public revenge.

    2. Secondly, here we see that all private revenge is flatly condemned as a sin against the sixth commandment. This point must be remembered, because it is our natural opinion, and our hearts desire to requite like for like in private causes, when we are injured.

Now that we may see more into this sin, we are to know that private revenge is twofold: inward and outward. Inward private revenge is a purpose in the heart to do a man an evil turn. This is commonly called the bearing of a grudge, and it is here condemned. Outward revenge is when the spite of the heart comes into action, either by word or deed. By word, when a man gives out threatening speeches; as that he will *sit on his skirt* or *be*

*even with him, if it lie in his lot*, and such like; or useth cursing speeches, as *a plague take thee*, *a murrain or pestilence light upon thee*; or raileth or chideth, calling another *knave, villain* etc. By deed and action, men shew outward revenge, when they be at a word and a blow, using to fight and to strike one another by way of private revenge. Hereto also we may refer an ordinary bad practice of some magistrates and superiors, though (it may be) few think it to be a fault; to wit, when the magistrate doth aggravate the punishment upon a malefactor, for some private grudge he beareth to him; for then he useth private revenge. As also when parents or masters correct their servants and children in fury and rage; for though they be public persons in this regard, yet to give correction in a choleric mood, is to ease the heart by way of revenge.

Here then we must learn that we may not requite evil for evil, in thought, word or deed, to those that do wrong, any manner of way, but must rather suffer injury, and refer the revenge unto God that judgeth righteously. And because this duty goes against our natural disposition, I will use some reasons to persuade our hearts to yield unto it.

1. First, the apostle teacheth out of Deuteronomy (Rom. 12:19), that *vengeance is the Lord's*. If then we have private revenge ourselves, we rob God of His right, and so sin against the first commandment.

2. Secondly, in the next words, he addeth, *and I will repay, saith the Lord*; where God takes upon Himself to be our debtor in the case of injustice, and therefore when we are wronged, we must not be rash to revenge ourselves, but must wait with patience upon the Lord; laying down our injury at His feet; for He will repay in due time, to them that have wronged us.

3. Thirdly, consider the examples of worthy men in this case; for our Saviour Christ never sought revenge, but bare wrongs patiently, committing also to Him that judgeth righteously, leaving us an example to do likewise (1 Pet. 2:20-23). Yea, when He was cruelly and unjustly crucified, He prayed for His persecutors (Luke 23:34). Steven also prayed for them that stoned him (Acts 7:60); and David, though a king, would not suffer revenge to be taken on Shimei that cursed him (2 Sam. 19:23); neither would he ever touch Saul, who sought his life,

though he had him often in his hands (1 Sam. 24:5-10); nay, but his heart smote him for cutting off the lap of his coat; so far was he from seeking revenge.

4. Fourthly, in the fifth petition, we pray, *Forgive us our sins, as we forgive our trespasses*; but if we carry grudges in our hearts, we pray God not to forgive us, but to condemn us; for we will not forgive, but be revenged on them that offend us. Now this is a most fearful case, that a man should pray for vengeance upon himself.

5. Fifthly, it is not meet in common reason, that the same party should be the accuser and the judge; and yet, if a man might revenge himself, this should be so; and therefore if we would be Christ's disciples, we must arm ourselves with patience, in suffering wrong, and refer revenge to God that judgeth righteously.

Yet, some will say, If we always put up and suffer wrong, we shall never be at quiet, but shall be abused. *Answer*: Though in our own person we may not revenge ourselves, yet we may crave the help of the magistrate, either for the preventing, or for the punishment of wrong done unto us; for the magistrate is God's lieutenant, to relieve the oppressed, and to execute vengeance on malefactors. Thus did Paul (Acts 23:17) send to the chief captain, to prevent a conspiracy that the Jews intended against him, and (Acts 25:10) appealed to Caesar, to avoid the danger of the Jews at Jerusalem; and yet when wrong is done unto us, we must bear it patiently, without seeking private revenge, although the wrong were doubled or trebled upon us.

3. Thirdly, our Saviour Christ, in calling the wrongdoer an *evil one*, giveth us to understand that it is the property of an evil man to do wrong unto others; and this title is given to the wrongdoer, to teach us that we must suffer wrong patiently, though he be an evil man that offereth it unto us. It is the property of a good man to do good continually, but to do wrong is the mark of an evil man, who herein is like the devil; which must teach us not to do wrong to anyone, in his body, goods, or name; either by word or deed; but rather apply ourselves to do all the good we can to everyone within the company of our calling. Hereby we shall see what our estate is, for if in our

callings we set ourselves to wrong others, either by word or deed, we are in the sight of God, evil men. Such are our usurers and extortioners, and all those that use fraud and deceit in their callings. But if we would shew ourselves to be good men, approved of God in Christ, then we must reserve our bodies and souls, and all that we have, to the good of others. Although men by nature be like to savage beasts (Isa. 11:6,7), as lions, wolves, cockatrices etc., whose property is to devour and hurt other creatures, yet when it pleaseth God to receive them to mercy, and to place them in His kingdom, then they lay aside their cruel nature, and live peaceably one with another; for *in the mountain of God's holiness, none shall hurt or destroy* (v.9). It is a prophecy of Christ's kingdom, that therein the sword and the spear, which be weapons of war, shall be turned into scythes and mattocks, which are instruments of common good in time of peace; whereby was signified that when men are converted, and become true children unto God, they lay aside all malice, and give themselves to do good, and become serviceable unto all for the good of all. This was notably verified in Paul (Acts 9:21), who of a persecutor became a preacher; yea (1 Cor. 9:22) he *became all things to all men, that by all means he might win some*. And thus doing, we are like to our heavenly father, who doth good to all; but if we give ourselves to wrongdoing, we are evil ones, and herein like to the devil himself.

4. Fourthly, Christ here forbidding private revenge, which is unlawful, doth hereby establish that revenge which is lawful and just. Now *lawful revenge* (to speak somewhat hereof) *is the work of a just and lawful power requiring evil for evil*. This just revenge is twofold: divine and human. *Divine revenge* is the work of God's absolute power taking vengeance upon offenders. Of the lawfulness of this revenge in God, there is no question; only this we must remember: that God executes this vengeance daily, in the manifold miseries of this life, and likewise in the just condemnation of the impenitent after death. Indeed as a father He chasteneth His church and children, for vengeance in Christ becomes nurturing; but as a severe judge He plagues the wicked, pouring vengeance upon them, both temporal and eternal. *Human revenge* is the ordinance of God, whereby men being thereunto called by God, do execute vengeance in the name of God; and it is

twofold: extraordinary and ordinary. *Extraordinary* is when men are extraordinarily stirred up by the Spirit of God to execute vengeance upon offenders in the name of God. Thus Phineas slew Zimri and Cosbi (Num. 25:7-9); and thus many of the Judges of Israel, especially Ehud (Jud. 3:27) and Samson (Jud. 14:19, and chap. 13), took revenge on the enemies of God's people. Thus Elijah the prophet slew Baal's priests (1 Kin. 18:40), and destroyed their two captains and their fifties with fire from heaven (2 Kin. 1:10,12). Thus Peter killed Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), and Paul struck Elymas with blindness (Acts 13:10). This kind of revenge is now rare, for we are not to look for extraordinary instincts. We know Christ rebuked His disciples (Luke 9:54,55) for seeking to execute this extraordinary revenge upon the Samaritans. And therefore when we have a conceit hereof in ourselves, we may justly suspect what spirit it is that moveth us. *Ordinary revenge* is that which men ordinarily put into execution in the church and commonwealth, according to God's will, being thereto called by God. And it is twofold: lesser or sovereign. *Lesser revenge* is the inflicting of lawful correction upon offenders in word or deed, not reaching to the case of life and death. This kind of revenge is committed to parents over their children and masters over their servants, to schoolmasters over their scholars and tutors over their pupils. *Sovereign revenge* is that whereby the magistrate may lawfully punish men according to their offences in body, goods or life itself. This I call sovereign, not simply, but because it is the highest that agreeth unto man, being of life and death. This revenge is executed partly in peace and partly in war. *In peace,* by the confiscation of goods, by imprisonment, banishment and (if the offence deserve it) by taking away of life, for the good of the public state. *In time of war*, whenas (not for every case) but for the just repelling or requiting of wrongs, war is made against the enemies of the state. Now though it belong to the magistrate only, to execute public revenge, yet every private man may have the benefit hereof, and may upon just cause use the magistrate's help for his revenge; as first, if his cause be weighty wherein he is wronged; secondly, if it be necessary; and thirdly, if it be for his just defence, for the common good, and the punishment of the offender; and the magistrate in these cases may lawfully, nay, he must

put in execution revenge for private men; for without this, neither church nor commonwealth, nor any society could stand.

Thus we see what just revenge is. Now considering it is the ordinance of God, this must admonish us to eschew all outward offences, that we may so escape the just revenge of the magistrate; and also to make conscience of all sins, that so we may avoid the vengeance of God. And thus much of the general rule.

Now because this general rule might seem to be hard, therefore Christ explains the same in three particular examples, wherein He shews how men are to behave themselves when they are wronged. The first example is in these words:

1. *Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also*

Under which are comprehended all injuries done to men's bodies, not only by blows and words, but also in the contempt of their persons, signified by striking on the right cheek; for usually men strike with the right hand, which directly should alight on the left cheek, and if the right cheek be smitten, it is commonly with the back of the hand, which is a blow with contempt. Now, say a man is abused in his body, even by blows of contempt, yet he must not revenge himself, but *turn the other cheek also*; which words must not simply be understood but by comparison thus: *Rather than thou revenge thyself, and resist the evil one that hath stricken thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other*; for this particular example comprehendeth in it the general rule of not resisting evil by private revenge; and that it may not simply be taken may hereby appear: first, because Christ should then command the sufferer to give further occasion of wrongdoing to the evil man, which is not His meaning; again, Christ Himself who gave this rule, did not so practice it, when He was smitten by the servant of the High Priest (John 18:22,23).

1. First, by this example, Christ condemneth the common practice of challenging the field for personal wrongs, and of taking that challenge when it is given; as also the fighting the single combat; for Christ teacheth that a man must take many wrongs before he seek to revenge

himself by any such course. If it be said that it is a disgrace to refuse a challenge; we must know that true grace and credit standeth in yielding obedience unto God, and not in sinning against Him for the saving of our reputation with men.

2. Secondly, the common practice of fighting and quarrelling is here condemned. Many hold it unlawful to give the first blow, but yet if another strike them, they think they may strike again. But this Christ here condemns, and His own example is against it; for when He was smitten before the High Priest (John 18:22,23), He smote not again. When Paul was smitten (Acts 23:2,3), he only defended himself in word, but smote not again. And Christ checketh Peter for taking the sword (John 18:10) to resist the officers that apprehended Him in the garden; indeed He permitted His disciples to wear weapons, yet not for revenge, but for their just defence only.

3. Thirdly, Christ here condemneth their opinion that make it a matter of praise for a man that he will not turn his face from a man. It is indeed the praise of the magistrate to be courageous, and not to fear the face of man. But yet a private man, be he never so strong, ought to turn his face from the adversary, unless it be in the case of his necessary defence; for a man must suffer double or treble wrong rather than revenge himself. If any shall think this to be a great disgrace, still he must remember that our chiefest honour consisteth in approving ourselves unto God by obeying His will, who here commandeth us rather to turn our backs and flee, than to resist in our own revenge.

*Question*: But what if a man be assaulted, either on the highway, or in his house; may he not then resist to save his life and goods? *Answer*: In such a case, he may do two things: First, he may to the uttermost of his power, defend himself and his goods; for the text speaketh not against defence, but against revenge. Secondly, if a man can see no way to escape, either by flight, or calling for help of the magistrate, then he is to stand so far in his own defence, that he is rather to kill than be killed; for in this case, God puts the sword into a private man's hand, and makes him a magistrate, to execute revenge upon his adversary; and thus might a man lawfully kill a thief in the night without the guilt of blood (Exod. 22:2).

4. Fourthly, hence observe that no private man may lawfully kill a prince, though he should tyrannically destroy both church and commonwealth; for this rule must square the actions of private men, they must rather bear double and treble wrong, than by way of private revenge resist the evil one. The revenge of evil magistrates must be referred to God, to whom it justly belongeth, as David did (1 Sam. 26:10; Psa. 43:1).

5. Lastly, in this first example of particular injury, we may see one property of an evil man; namely, to be given to fighting, quarrelling and contending. Such an one may think himself a goodly fellow, but yet he that uses his strength to ordinary quarrelling, and wrongdoing to others, is here made an evil one by the sentence of our Saviour Christ; and therefore such as excel in strength, if they would be approved of Christ, must make conscience of quarrelling and fighting, and offer violence to no man.

2. "*And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also*." (v.40)

Here Christ propounds the second example of wrong done to men, wherein He forbids the party wronged to revenge himself; to wit, being injured in his goods, either privately, or under colour of law, for both these may here be well understood. By *coat*, is properly meant the inner garment; and by *cloak*, the outward; but here the words are not so strictly to be taken, but indifferently for any divers garments; for in Luke they are thus set down: *And him that would take away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also*. And Christ's meaning is this: If one unjustly contend with thee, to take from thee one garment, let him have another also, whether coat or cloak, or such like thing. And yet this commandment is not simply, but comparatively to be understood; to wit, rather than a man should seek private revenge, he must not only suffer the loss of one garment but of more, and so of other temporal goods.

Out of this example, we may learn these instructions:

1. First, that Christians must be quiet and patient, and not give to contend; whether it be privately, or openly by suit at the law. This contention Paul reproved in the Corinthians (1 Cor. 3:3), and chargeth

the Phillippians that nothing be done among them by contention (Phil. 2:3); which is a notable rule; for though men be at difference, yet there ought to be no contentions either in word or deed, all things ought to be done in love, and so strife shall cease; that wrangling spirit is not of God, whereby men strive to put down others in words. When a man hath spoken his mind, he ought to cease, for multiplying of words is against Christian civility, and everywhere condemned in the holy Scripture.

2. Secondly, here is condemned, not the lawful, but the common use of lawing, whereby men for every trifle will trouble the courts. This argues a contentious spirit, and a mind that is given to revenge, which beseemeth not Christians, as Paul sheweth (1 Cor. 6:1,2,5,6); and yet it is the common practice in these our days, from whence come such unchristian speeches as this: *I will be revenged on him, or else I will spend all that I have*. But the truth is that rather than a man should go thus to law, he ought to suffer double and treble loss.

3. Thirdly, here Christ teacheth that in all our dealings we must have a principal regard unto charity, and rather seek to maintain this grace in our hearts, than our outward worldly goods.

4. Fourthly, we are here taught to prefer our own peace and quietness before our temporal goods; yet not simply, but in this respect: that hereby we may have fitter time with quietness to employ ourselves in the worship of God, and so edify ourselves in holiness and piety. This duty concerneth them especially which have much dealing in the world, and thereupon many occasions of anger and vexation; for such unruly passions make a man unfit for God's service; it is the meek and lowly heart that receives the blessing from the Lord (Matt. 11:29).

5. Lastly in this example, is set down unto us a second property of evil men; namely, to be given to wrong their brethren in their goods, either privately, or under colour of law. Such a one was Zaccheus before his calling, when he gathered tribute and custom for the Roman emperor, he used forged cavillation for his own gain (Luke 19); and these our days abound with those that enrich themselves by pilling and polling

of their brethren; but all such are unjust and evil persons, by the judgment of our Saviour Christ.

3. "*And whosoever will compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain*." (v.41)

Here Christ propounds the third example of wrongdoing, by superiors towards their inferiors, wherein the party wronged is likewise forbidden to make resistance by way of private revenge. For the understanding whereof, we must know that as in our commonwealth we have postmasters, so in other countries, especially in Persia, there were like officers, who by authority from their kings or emperors, might take men's cattle, nay, men themselves, and use them for travel and carriage at their pleasure. And it is likely that the Jews had got this custom among them after their captivity, as may in part appear (Matt. 27:32) by their compelling Simon of Cyrene to bear Christ's cross when they met him. Now Christ speaks here of the abuse of this authority; saying that *if a man compel thee wrongfully, under colour of the magistrate's authority, to go with him one mile, go with him twain*; that is, rather than by resisting thou shouldest revenge thyself, go with him two miles; whence He gives to all inferiors a commandment to bear patiently the wrongs that are done unto them by their superiors, and rather to suffer a double wrong than to seek to revenge themselves by private resistance.

Here then we see a just ground of reproof of inferiors for sundry practices of impatience towards their superiors; as first, when a man is attacked by an officer, to make violent resistance. This practice swerveth from the rule of Christ; for say thou art attacked wrongfully, yet thou oughtest to acknowledge God's ordinance in magistracy, and to obey the same, without offering private revenge. Secondly, it often falls out that landlords, and men of wealth, oppress the poor, by enclosing of common lands, and such like; now hereupon the poorer sort use to rail against them, and to curse them; but this practice is also here forbidden by our Saviour Christ; for albeit the rich men sin grievously in oppressing the poor, yet the poor must suffer rather double or treble wrong, than by cursing speeches seek private revenge.

Again, in this example, we may see a third kind of wicked men; to wit, all such as being superiors, do wrong and violence to their inferiors; as cruel magistrates, oppressing landlords, cavilling officers, usurers and such like. These are here called evil ones by our Saviour Christ; and therefore they must learn to shew mercy, and leave off wrong and violence, if they look to escape to be judged as evil ones at the last day.

Thus we see the three particular examples of wrongs wherein men may not revenge themselves privately. Now from them all jointly considered, we may note two points:

1. First, that the calling of a Christian is a state of suffering (1 Pet. 2:20,21), *If ye take it patiently when ye suffer wrong for well- doing, this is praiseworthy; for ye are hereunto called*; and therefore, if we would declare ourselves to be the true members of Christ, we must shew forth patience in bearing wrongs, without seeking revenge. This was Christ's lesson to His disciples, for having told them of afflictions to come, He bids them (Luke 21;19), to *possess their souls with patience*. So when the Spirit of God sets down the afflictions of the church, He adds this as an item (Rev. 13:10; 14:12): *Here is the patience of the saints*. We therefore must labour to repel all malice and rancour when we suffer unjustly, remembering this rule of Christ: that rather than we offer private revenge, we must suffer the doubling and trebling of the wrong. It is true indeed that this is hard for flesh and blood to do; but if we be but flesh, that is, natural men, why do we profess ourselves to be Christians? For *he that hath not the Spirit of God, is none of His* (Rom. 8:9). And if we be in the Spirit, we must obey the motions thereof, and learn of Christ, who was meek and humble, and following Him, we shall find rest for our souls.

2. Secondly, when Christ sets down these three examples of suffering wrong, He applies Himself to the present outward estate of the Jews. Which was this? For one man to suffer wrong of another in his body, and in his goods, and yet to rest contented, without relief or amends. Now the cause of this their miserable condition, was their servitude to the Roman emperor, who a little before Christ's coming, had removed the sceptre from Judah, and made Judah a province tributary unto

Rome, so as they were not ruled by a prince of their own, but by a foreign enemy's deputies.

In this estate we may see the miserable condition of any people that are in bondage to a foreign enemy. Their lives are every way miserable; for besides their personal bondage, they are constrained to suffer losses and wrongs in goods, in their names, without all remedy or relief. The consideration hereof must teach us: First, to be heartily thankful unto God for the happy outward peace which with the gospel of God's grace we now enjoy under our sovereign, being free from subjection unto any foreign power. Secondly, to pray earnestly unto the Lord for the good estate, life and health of our prince, by whom under God we enjoy such joy and prosperity; as also for the continuance of God's holy hand of protection to preserve the whole land against all foreign power whatsoever. Thirdly, to repent unfeignedly of all our sins, that so we, turning unto God from them, He may continue unto us those happy days of peace wherein we have freedom from subjection to foreign tyranny; for our sins are our greatest foes, they lay open the ports of our lands, and the gates of our cities to the spoiling enemy; they will pull down our strong walls, and take away the strength of our armed men. No enemies can do us so much harm as our own sins; and therefore we must humble ourselves for them, and if we have not repented, now we must begin; and if we have begun, we must proceed and renew the same more and more. If we had felt the misery of subjection to foreign power, as these Jews now did, it would touch us; and therefore before these evils come upon us, let us meet our God by true repentance, that so He may keep from us this fierce wrath.

2. "*Give to him that asketh; and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not away*." (v.42)

Christ having forbidden private revenge, doth here command the requital of good for evil, in two particular examples of well-doing taken from giving and lending; by both which, though not expressly, yet in sense and meaning Christ would teach us His hearers thus much: *Let that man be what he will, do thou good unto him for evil*.

1. For the first, *Give unto him that asketh* etc. These words must not be taken simply, but in this sense: *Give unto him that asketh on a just*

*cause being poor, though he cannot requite thee again*, nay, though he had done thee wrong, and were thine enemy. This exposition is plain (Luke 6), for having set down his commandment for giving (v.30), he renders this reason thereof in effect: Because they cannot requite thee again (v.34), which plainly imports that it must be to the poor.

1. Here now first observe the form of Christ's words: they are commanding, *Give to him* etc.; whence I gather that a man is bound in conscience upon the pain of death to give alms and relief (Matt. 25:41,42). Christ adjudgeth some to hell for the neglect of this duty. Now there could be no such curse if there were no commandment that did bind their conscience to do that, for want whereof they are condemned. Again, in the sixth commandment, we are bound to do all duties that may preserve our neighbour's life, of which sort is giving relief unto the poor, without which they cannot live. If it be said that Daniel (Dan. 4:27) made almsdeeds no commandment, but a matter of counsel unto Nebuchadnezzar; I answer that things commanded may be propounded by way of counsel. So doth Christ to the church of Laodicea ( Rev. 3:18) *I counsel thee to buy of me gold* etc. Again, Daniel used this form of speech to the king: *Let my counsel be precious unto thee* (Dan. 4:27); not because it was no commandment, but because he would so temper his speech that it might better take place in the stout heart of this proud king. And when as Paul (2 Cor. 8:8), speaking of alms saith, *I speak not by commandment*, it is to be understood not simply of alms-giving, but of the measure thereof, as the former verse doth plainly shew.

Here then we see those men confuted which say that they may do with their own what they will. This is not so, for men's goods are not their own simply, but God's also; and they indeed are but the Lord's stewards to dispose of them as He commands. Now His will is that part thereof should be given to them which want.

Secondly, we see here also that those men sin grievously who are so covetous that they will give nothing to the poor. Sell they will, and lend also, upon a good pawn, for their own advantage; but by free gift they will part with nothing. These are miserable persons, who do what they can to

condemn themselves; for God's commandment binds men in conscience to give unto the poor, and that freely. Yet here we must know that not only they who give freely do a work of mercy; but also they who lend and sell, whenas their lending and selling will as much profit the poor as giving. This in effect is alms-deeds here also commanded; and therefore Joseph is commended, not only for giving, but for selling corn to the Egyptians and others in time of dearth.

Thirdly, this being a commandment binding conscience, must stir us up to do all good duties of relief with cheerfulness, that so meet and decent provision for the poor may not only be begun, but also continued; for it is acceptable unto God.

2. A second point here to be observed is, what kind of commandment this is: *Give to him that asketh*. God's commandments be of two sorts: affirmative and negative; and in the moral law the one is always comprehended in the other. Now this commandment is affirmative, which must be noted, because negative precepts lay a straiter bond upon the conscience than the affirmative; and therefore are the precepts of the moral law for the most part propounded negatively; for the negative precept binds a man to obedience always, and to all every time; as when God saith, *Thou shalt not kill*, a man is never exempted from obedience hereunto; but an affirmative commandment, though it bind always, yet not to all times, as this of Christ for giving alms, it binds not all men, but only those who are enabled to give; yet not the rich to all times, but then only when just occasion of giving is offered. And the same may be said of every affirmative commandment, as of keeping an holy rest unto the Lord, it binds a man for ever, but not at all times, only for the seventh day, and such like.

Yet further to lay open this commandment touching alms, we will herein handle eight points:

1. Who is to give

2. What is to be given

3. To whom must we give

4. In what order

5. How much

6. In what place

7. At what time

8. In what manner we must give

9. For the first: *The person that is to give* is not everyone, but such as God hath set apart for this duty; for (Matt. 25:42,43), some are there made to receive, as the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick etc., and others are made fit to give clothing, food, comfort, and such like. And St John telleth us who is made fit to give (1 John 3:17), namely, *He that hath the goods of this world*; not only he that hath abundance, but even he that hath but a small portion of worldly goods; and therefore the thief that stole for want is forbidden to steal, and commanded to labour, *that he may have to give to him that wanteth* (Eph. 4:28). And the poor widow is commended of Christ (Luke 21:2,3), that *of her penury gave to the treasury but two mites*. Now in a giver there must be two things: first, a right unto the good he giveth; for a man may not give that which is not his own; secondly, a present full propriety in the things he giveth (unless it be in the case of necessity); and by this are children and servants excluded from giving, unless they have some things of their own, or do it by command.

*Question*: Whether may the wife give relief unto the poor without the husband's consent? An ancient answer is this: that many wives in giving are Abigail's in regard of their husbands, who are like unto Nabal; and therefore they may give. And yet some other ancient divines add this: that the wife cannot give, where all consent of her husband is wanting, because both she and all her possessions belong unto him principally; yet here we are to know that there is a double consent of the husband; (1) *expressed in open words*, whereupon there is no question but that the wife may lawfully give; and (2) *secret*, which is threefold: First, when the husband doth not dissent; secondly, when he gives consent generally; as when he allows her to give, but names not any particular; thirdly, when the wife hath a probable

conjecture and presumption that if her husband did know, he would allow of her giving. And in these cases of secret consent, the wife may also give. But if she have not his consent any of these ways, she may not lawfully give, unless in these cases: (1) that she hath something private of her own, either by exception before, or by grant after marriage; (2) that her giving serves to preserve the life or good estate of her husband and family, as Abigail's did when she gave to David; (3) that the necessity of the receiver requires present relief; for extreme necessity dispenseth with propriety.

2. *What is to be given*? Namely, alms. Here two questions are to be scanned: (1) What is alms; (2) Whereof alms are to be raised.

1. For the first: *Alms is a free gift, tending to preserve the temporal life of our neighbour*. First, I call it a *gift*, understanding it largely, because forgiving to them that are not able to pay, is an alms deed. Secondly, I say *free*, to distinguish it from subsidies to princes, and tithe-giving for the stipends of the minister, and such like. These are gifts, but no free gifts; for the people receive protection from the magistrate for their subsidies, and instruction from the minister for their tithes. Thirdly, I say, the end of alms is *to preserve temporal life*; to distinguish it from spiritual gifts, which concern the soul. The papists make all works of mercy whether they concern the body or soul, to be alms; but alms properly are gifts that tend to preserve this natural temporal life.

2. *Whereof are alms to be raised*? First, of our own goods; for a man ought not to give that which is another man's; and therefore those that owe more than they are worth, cannot give alms, but are rather fit to receive; for all that they have in right and conscience belongs to some others. Secondly, our alms must be our firstfruits; things wholesome and good, and such as are fit for the person relieved. They must not be the refuse of our goods, which we know not else what to do with. (Neh. 8:10), *Part of the fat, and of the sweet must be sent to them for whom none is provided*. Thirdly, alms must be of goods lawfully given; for evil-gotten goods must be restored, either to the owner (if he be known), or to some of his kindred, or to the magistrate; which shews that the usurer ought rather to restore, than to give alms of his gain of usury. Fourthly, our alms must be given of our own, with difference

and discretion. Every man's goods for the most part may be distinguished into four degrees: First, some are necessary to preserve life, without which a man and his family cannot live. Secondly, some are necessary to man's estate, as those goods which a man putteth in practising the duties of his calling; such are books unto the student, and tools unto the tradesman. A third sort are such as are requisite for the decency of a man's estate, and such are those that make a man walk in his calling with comfort, ease, profit and delight. The fourth sort of things are superfluous; that is, all that portion which a man may want, and yet have things necessary for this life, and estate, and for the decency thereof. These two last degrees are in Scripture called *abundance*. And answerably, there are two degrees of poverty: the first is *common want*, when a man can live without receiving alms, but yet very hardly; the second is *extreme want*, when a man without relief cannot possibly maintain life. Now in common want we must give of our abundance; that is, both of our superfluity, as also the riches that serve for decency. (Luke 3:11), *He which hath two coats, let him part with him that hath none*. Now he that hath two coats, is not he that hath a coat and a cloak, for so had St Paul (2 Tim. 4:13), and yet he retained them lawfully for his use; but Christ's meaning is that he which hath things necessary, and besides something over, serving for decency and superfluity, must give thereof to him that lacketh. And in extreme necessity, he must give of those goods which pertain necessarily to his life and estate; for our neighbour's life must be preferred before our own temporal goods and outward estate. Paul (2 Cor. 8:3) testifieth of the Macedonians that in the extreme necessity of the saints, they gave *to their power, yea, and beyond their power*. Upon this ground the Christians in the primitive church (Acts 4:34,35) sold their possessions for the relieving of the poor brethren in extreme want; rather diminishing their own temporal estate, than suffering the poor to want that were in extreme necessity. This rule ought always to be regarded and practised, especially in times of want. As for those that make advantage of a dearth, and enrich themselves by God's judgment on the poor, they are most miserable and wretched people, quite void of every spark of that gracious disposition which was in Christ, who being *rich*, even king of heaven and earth, *made Himself poor, that through His poverty, He might make others rich* (2 Cor. 8:9). It is the

will of God that we should bear one another's burdens, and help to lift up the poor that are pressed down with the judgment of God; which we shall do, when we give not only of our abundance in common want, but even of our necessaries in the extreme want of the poor.

3. *To whom must we give*? *Answer*: To the poor. This needs no proof; yet in these poor, two things are required: First, they must be truly poor; that is, such as are indeed either in common or extreme want. And of such St John saith (1 John 3:17), *If any have this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, if he shut up his compassion from him; how dwelleth the love of God in him*? Secondly, they must be such as cannot help themselves (Lev. 25:35), *If thy brother be impoverished, and have a trembling hand, thou shalt relieve him*. The man of *a trembling hand*, is one that is not able to maintain himself. Of this sort are orphans, widows, the aged, sick, blind, lame, maimed in service, and such like; all these must be relieved. But the case stands otherwise with that kind of poor, which we call *lusty beggars*, who are able to provide for themselves, if they would take pains. St Paul's rule belongs to them (2 Thess. 3:10), *If they will not work, they must not eat*; that is, they must not be maintained on the alms of the church.

*Question*: What must such lusty poor do? *Answer*: They must be employed in some lawful calling, wherein they may labour to get their own bread, and not eat the common food of those that are poor indeed. For the church and commonwealth are as a man's body, wherein every member hath his several office, for the good of the whole body. And indeed every man should have not only a general calling of a Christian, but a particular calling also, wherein he must employ himself for the common good. It is against the Word of God, and the light of nature, that any should live having nothing to do. Adam in his innocency was enjoined to work in the garden; and our Saviour Christ before His baptism (Luke 2:51 with Mark 6:3), lived under his parents in a particular calling, till He was thirty years old; whose examples we must follow.

*Question*: What is our duty towards these lusty beggars? *Answer*: From Paul's rule (2 Thess. 3:10), we may gather that we must not ordinarily and of custom relieve them. Indeed upon present necessity they are to be

relieved, but yet with this advertisement, that they look not for it again, but that they provide for themselves by labouring in some lawful calling; for this common relieving at men's doors, makes so many idle vagabonds and rogues as there are.

4. *In what order* must we give our alms for distinction of persons? *Answer*: Touching order in relieving, the Holy Ghost hath laid down three rules: First, by St Paul (1 Tim. 5:8), *He that provideth not for his own, and namely for them of his own household, is worse than an infidel*; whence this order may be observed, that (1) a man must give to them that be of his own household and family; (2) to his own blood, kindred and alliance; (3) unto strangers. The second rule is this (Gal. 6:10): Do good unto all, but specially to the household of faith: first, believers must be relieved, and then all others, good or bad. The third rule is given by Moses (Deut. 15:10), *We must first relieve our own poor*, that is, such as live among us, *and then give unto strangers*, if our ability will afford, and their necessity do require.

5. *How much must we give*? Touching the measure of our alms, there is no particular commandment in Scripture; but yet these general rules may thence be gathered: First, that a man is not bound to give all that he hath (Prov. 5:15,16), *Drink the waters of thine own cistern, and flowing streams out of the midst of thine own well; let thy fountains disperse themselves abroad*; where under an allegory borrowed from waters, the Holy Ghost directeth a man for the disposing of his riches; namely, comfortably to enjoy his own goods, and yet to bestow some part thereof on them that want; and (Luke 3:11), *Let him that hath two coats, give* (not both) *but one to him that wanteth*; where we see them justly rebuked that in prodigality do riotously lavish and spend all that they have; for if a man may not give all, much less may he spend all wilfully. Secondly (2 Cor. 8:13), A man must not so give to others that he himself be grieved, and they be eased altogether. Thirdly, alms must be according to the giver's ability, and withal answerable to the necessity of the poor, whether in food, raiment or harbour. So Paul saith, speaking of common relief (2 Cor. 9:12), *the ministration of this service supplieth the necessity of the saints*. And St James requires that in relief such things be given (Jam. 2:16) *as be needful to the body*.

And (Deut. 15:8), *If thy brother be poor, thou shalt open thy hand unto him, and lend him sufficient for his need which he hath*.

6. *In what place* must alms be given? Touching the place we must know this: that it is a disorder not beseeming God's church, to give relief to wandering beggars at our doors. This may appear by these reasons: (1) It is God's commandment (Deut. 15:4), that *among his people there should be no beggars*. If any man ask, how the poor were then relieved? I answer, God took sufficient order for their provision; for first, the husbandman (Lev. 19:9) must not gather his grapes clean, nor yet his cornfield, but leave the after-gathering and gleaning for the poor. Secondly, besides the (Num. 18:26) tithes for the priests and Levites, every three years (Deut. 14:28,29) tithes were to be gathered and kept for the poor and for strangers. Thirdly, every seventh year the land was to rest, and all that is brought for that year, with the fruit of the vineyard and olives, was for the poor (Exod. 23:11). Again, in the New Testament the apostles ordained that in every church there should be deacons, that is, men of wisdom and discretion, who were to gather for the poor, and likewise to dispose of that which was given, according as every man had need; in which very order of provision for the poor, the Lord forbids all wandering begging. (2) These wandering beggars are the shame and reproach of the people where they are suffered; for it argueth want of care of good order in governors, and want of mercy in the rich, that they gather all to themselves, without regard how the poor should live. (3) In relieving these wandering beggars, there is this double want in the giver: he cannot tell what to give, nor how much; because he knows not the state of the party that beggeth. Now in alms-deeds there ought to be a double discretion: the giver ought to know both his own ability, and also the necessity of the receivers. (4) Common relieving at men's doors makes many beggars, and maintains a wicked generation; for these wandering beggars are for the most part flat atheists, regarding nothing but their belly, separating themselves from all congregations; and from begging, many fall to stealing; or else they take such pleasure therein that they will never leave it, no not for a year's rent. This is known to be true by experience. All which things duly considered, must move the magistrates and every other in their place, to see that better order be

observed for the poor than door-relieving to all that come. And sith good laws are made in this behalf, men ought in conscience to see the same observed and kept; neither can any man without sin transgress the same. Indeed, if good order were not provided for the poor, it were better to relieve them in their wandering course, than to suffer them to starve; for so dealt Christ and His disciples with the poor, when good order failed among the Jews, they relieved them in the highways and streets.

7. *At what time* must alms be given? *Answer*: Hereof the Scripture speaketh little, yet this may be gathered thence: First, that relief must be given when present occasion requireth; therefore Solomon saith (Prov. 3:28), *Say not to thy neighbour, Go and come again tomorrow, if thou now have it*. Secondly, that the Sabbath day is a fit time for the giving of release for the poor; for the apostle (1 Cor. 16:2) commandeth the Corinthians that each one should lay aside upon that day, according as God had prospered him the week before, that which he would give for the poor; where by the way, it may be observed that daily giving at men's doors was not allowed by the apostles. Also touching tradesmen this may be added: from this, that the apostle makes contribution for the poor a Sabbath day's work; that whereas they use to employ part of the Lord's day, both morning and evening in serving their customers for their own private benefit, this cannot be warranted; only this they may do; upon the Sabbath they should sell unto none, but to such as buy of necessiy, and then they may not make a private gain of their sale, but must turn that work of mercy for the poor, either selling without gain, if it be a poor body that buys; or giving the gain of that which they sell to the rich, for the relief of the poor. This indeed will hardly be obtained at tradesmen's hands, but yet they must know that the whole Sabbath day is the Lord's, wherein He will be worshipped with delight, neither ought men to do therein their own works, nor seek their own wills, nor speak their own words (Isa. 58:13).

8. *In what manner* must alms be given? *Answer*: Hereof more is to be spoken in the chapter following; yet from this text these things may be observed: First, that alms-giving must be free; the giver must neither

look for recompense at the hands of man, nor think to merit anything thereby at the hands of God. That popish conceit deprives a man of the true comfort of the Spirit in this work of mercy; none but Christ by His obedience could ever merit at God's hands. Secondly, our hearts in giving must be touched with charity, and the bowels of compassion. We must give with cheerfulness; for *without love, all that we give is nothing* (1 Cor. 13:2), and *the Lord loveth a cheerful giver* (2 Cor. 9:7). Now if we conside the poor as our own flesh, and see God's image in them, this will move us to pity. Thirdly, in the person of the poor we must consider Christ Jesus, and give unto them as we would give unto Christ. This will move us to give, and that cheerfully; for in the day of judgment Christ will make it known that He comes for relief to the rich in the person of the poor; to the merciless He will say (Matt. 25:45), *Inasmuch as ye did it not unto them, ye did it not unto me*; but to the merciful thus: *Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me*. Fourthly, our alms must be given as a pledge of our thankfulness unto God for the blessings we enjoy; for all we have cometh from God, and *of His hands it is, whatsoever we give* (1 Chr. 29:14). Now He professeth that when men do good, and distribute to the poor, He is well pleased with such sacrifices (Heb. 13:16).

3. Having seen what this duty of alms-giving is, and how it must be performed, we must now stir up ourselves to put the same in practice. And to move us hereunto, consider the reasons following:

1. We all desire to be counted righteous. Now if we would be such indeed, we must visit the fatherless and widows, we must do good, and give alms to the poor; for this is pure religion and undefiled before God, as St James saith (Jam. 1:27). To come to the church and hear the Word, and to receive the sacraments are good things; but without mercy to the poor they are not regarded, but hated of God (Isa. 1:13-15).

2. If a man should offer unto us a piece of ground to manure and till for our own reaping, we would take it kindly and bestow both pains and seed upon it. Behold the poor are sent of God to the rich, as a piece of

ground to be tilled; and when they give to the poor, they sow upon the ground, Now as Paul saith in this case (Gal. 6:7), look as a man soweth, so shall he reap. We therefore must sow liberally, that we may also reap liberally.

3. (Prov. 19:17) *He that hath mercy upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord*. We would easily be moved to lend, if we had an honest man to be surety unto us, for returning of our own with advantage. Well, the Lord offers Himself to the rich to be surety for the poor. Who then will fear to lend, having so good a debtor?

4. If these promises will not move us, let us consider the fearful curses threatened against the merciless and hard-hearted; for *as he that giveth to the poor shall not lack, so he that hideth his eyes from them shall have many curses* (Prov. 28:27). And *he that stoppeth his ears at the crying of the poor, he shall cry and not be heard* (Prov. 21:13). And the woeful sentence of condemnation shall be pronounced upon the wicked for the neglect of this duty (Matt. 25:41).

4. Further, from the words, *Give to him that asketh*, we may learn that it is the will of God that among His people there should be a propriety of goods, and that all things should not be common in that behalf; for the Lord would have some to have to give, and some to want that they might receive; which would not be, if all things should be common both for use and propriety, as some have fondly imagined. If any man think it was so in the primitive church, because it is said (Acts 4:32), *they had all things common*, he is to know that the community was in such things only, as men had then freely given for the common good. And yet even then, none was compelled or bound in conscience to give all his substance in that sort; for there (Acts 5:4), Peter tells Ananias that his possession, while it remained unsold, appertained to him; and after it was sold, the price thereof was in his own power to dispose of as he would. *Objection 2*: All things belong to believers, as Paul saith, *All things are yours* (1 Cor. 3:21), and therefore ought to be common. *Answer*: The apostle meaneth that they had right in Christ to all things, and did enjoy them by hope; but yet the fruition of them in actual propriety is not had before the day of judgment.

5. Again, if giving to the poor be a duty of everyone, whom God enables hereunto, then no man may voluntarily disable himself from it; whereupon the popish practice of undergoing voluntary poverty falls to the ground as unlawful; for thereby they disable themselves unto this duty. Indeed the papists make this a state of perfection, but David judged begging to be a curse (Psa. 109:10), else he would not have spoken of freedom from beggary as of a blessing, which he doth (Psa. 37:25), *I never saw the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging*.

6. Lastly, in this commandment see the error of those men that give themselves wholly to gather riches to themselves, being like to the mole which is always digging in the earth; for God requires that a man should give as well as get, nay he must get to give, and not to keep; for God is more glorified by giving, than by keeping; and herein His children resemble their heavenly Father, who receiveth nothing of any man, and yet *giveth liberally to everyone that asketh, without reproaching any* (Jam. 1:5).

2. *And from him that would borrow of thee, turn not away*.

These words contain Christ's second precept touching requiting good for evil, taken from lending and borrowing. To know the meaning of this rule, three points are to be handled: (i) What it is to lend; (ii) To whom men must lend; (iii) In what manner.

1. For the first, what lending is, is well known by common experience. It is a civil contract or bargain, in which money, corn, or such like goods, pass from man to man, both in regard of use and title; yet so as the borrower is bound in conscience to return the thing lent unto him, or else that which in value is equal unto it.

2. *To whom men must lend*. This circumstance is not here expressed by Matthew, but must be supplied out of Luke (Luke 6:34,35), where Christ forbids them to lend *as sinners do, to receive the like again; but* (saith He) *love your enemies, and do good, and lend looking for nothing again*; where it is plain that lending must be to such as are truly poor, and not able to lend again like for like. For the better understanding whereof we are to know that in human societies there be

three sorts of men: First, such poor as are unable to provide for themselves things necessary, by reason of some impotency, as sickness, age, lameness or such like; and these are commonly called beggars. A second sort are these, which being poor have yet a trade, wherein they can provide for themselves some part of their maintenance, and yet by reason of their poverty, still want some things necessary, which of themselves they cannot procure. The third sort are rich men, such as have worldly goods in abundance, not only sufficient for their necessaries, but much overplus. Now to each of these belongs his peculiar duty. To the first sort of poor that have the *shaking hand* (as Moses speaketh, Lev. 25:35), alms are due, and they must be relieved by giving freely, as we have shewed in the former precept. To the second sort of poor belongs lending properly, specially then, when their necessity requires. To the rich, neither gift nor loan is due; but on the contrary, they ought to give and lend to the poor, maintaining themselves by the honest labour and industry of their lawful callings.

3. *In what manner must men lend*? *Answer*: With a willing mind, without any shew of grudging, either in speech, or by turning away the head or body; as it is here said, *From him that would borrow of thee, turn not away*; which property in the lender is yet further expressed by Luke saying, *Lend, looking for nothing again*; where Christ doth not simply forbid men to look for that which they lent; but His meaning is, to shew with what affection and disposition of heart men ought to lend; namely, having respect only to the good of the party borrowing, and not to the restitution of the thing lent; as when a poor man comes to borrow, we must reason thus with ourselves: This man is poor, and it may be will not pay me again; not thus: This man is painful although he be poor, and is like to pay me again, and therefore will I lend. This (saith Christ) is the practice of sinners, who lend, because they look to receive the like. Be thou therefore moved to lend upon a good desire to help the poor, and let not thy mind be running upon the loss or safe return of the thing lent. Thus is that clause of Christ, *looking for nothing again*, to be understood, and not to be applied to the gain of usury, whereat Christ aimeth not in this place.

1. First, here observe that to lend unto the poor, is a commandment of God binding the conscience of the rich; it is not left free to the rich man's choice, whether he will lend or not, who are so far from lending to the poor that they hoard up their store till a time of death, that then they may enrich themselves by poor men's want; and thus they increase God's judgment upon the poor, and as it were (Isa. 3:15), *grind their faces*, and (Amos 9:11) *tread upon them*, as the Holy Ghost speaketh. But they shall one day find that they ought to have lent unto the poor in their necessities; yea, and when the hand of God in common want lieth more heavily upon the poor, they ought then to open their hands more liberally towards them. It is a usual and common practice, that when a man begins to decay in his estate, no man will lend him anything; but because he begins to decay, therefore they withdraw their help, lest he should not pay them again. But this ought not to be so; it is Christ's commandment that the rich by lending should sustain such an one, as by reason of want is ready to fall into decay.

2. Secondly, this command of Christ binds the rich, not only to lend, but to lend freely without taking any increase; for they must lend, not looking for any again; yea (Exod. 22:25), the Lord expressly forbids to take increase of the poor; where we see the common practice of usurers condemned to the bottom of hell, who lend unto the poor upon bonds for increase; these are they that live on the blood and life of the poor, whose sin is everywhere condemned, and ought to be hated as bloodshed itself. But the rich will say that they are entreated so to do, and are greatly thanked for so lending. *Answer*: This excuse will not serve the turn; for Saul's armour-bearer was a murderer for killing his master, though Saul earnestly besought him so to do (2 Sam. 1:9,16).

3. Thirdly, here further learn that a man must lend, and yet not always take again the principal; indeed he may require and receive his own, else there should be no lending but all giving, which two are here distinct; but yet when the poor that borrowed is fallen into further poverty, the rich must turn his lending into giving, and forgive the principal or part thereof, as their several estates shall require (Deut. 24:10-12). A man may take a pledge for his debt of the poor, but yet if

the pawn be a thing necessary to the poor man's life, he must not take it, or at least not retain it till the sun setting.

4. Fourthly, some may here ask (seeing Christ bids us lend looking for nothing again), whether may a man at no time with good conscience receive increase for his lending? *Answer*: Lending is twofold: of due, or of courtesy. Lending of due is the loan of the rich unto the poor, when his necessity compels him to borrow; and for this a man cannot with good conscience take any increase. Lending of courtesy is when one rich friend lends unto another. This is not forbidden in the Word of God, but is left to a man's own liberty and discretion, neither hath it any promise of reward. Now in this case of courtesy, I do not find in Scripture that all taking of increase is simply condemned; nay, in some cases, both the law of nature, and the laws of all countries do allow it. As first, when the increase is given only in way of thankfulness, as a blessing to requite in kindness a good turn received; for ingratitude is abhorred of all; and the law of nature requires to do good for good; and all divines, both Protestant and papists, do allow this kind of increase. Secondly, when a man sustaineth damage by his lending, he may receive increase by way of satisfaction for his loss. Thirdly, when a man is contented to adventure his principal in the hand of him that borroweth it, then also may he take increase; like as a man may receive hire for his horse, or for the use of any other goods, standing to their loss (Exod. 22;14).

Thus we see what the will of God is for giving and lending unto the poor. Now hence the poor may receive instruction. First, hereby all may learn that God will have some poor among His people to receive and borrow of the rich; which may serve to persuade the poor to be contented with their mean estate, esteeming it to be the best for them, because God in His wisdom and providence hath ordained it. Secondly, the poor must take occasion from their outward poverty, to seek to be rich in God through grace (Jam. 2:5), *Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, that they should be rich in faith*? Herein they may match, and go beyond the richer sort; which is a matter of great joy (Jam. 1:9), *Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted*; that is, with God, who counts them rich (Rev. 2:9). Thirdly, hence the poor must learn to carry themselves submissively towards the

rich, of whom they receive great help and comfort by their giving and lending (Prov. 18:23), *The poor* (saith Solomon) *uttereth supplications*; noting their humility, which reproves many poor, who are so proud-hearted and ungrateful that they will not afford the rich a good word. But this beseemeth none, much less those that are to live by the rich (Psa. 101:5), *Him that hath a proud look and high heart, I cannot suffer*.

# 5:43-48

"*Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy*. But I say unto you, *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*." Matthew 5:43-48

"*Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies*" (v.43)

In this verse, and the rest to the end of the chapter, our Saviour goeth about to purge the general commandment of the second table, touching the love of our neighbour, from the corrupt interpretation of the Jewish teachers, and to restore it to his true and proper meaning. And as in the former, so here, He first lays down their false doctrine touching this commandment (v.43). In laying down their false interpretation, He propounds the law of Moses touching brotherly love (Lev. 19:18), *Thou shalt love thy neighbour*; which must here be understood in their false sense, who by *neighbour*, meant a friend; as if God had said, thou shalt love thy friend. Then he adjoineth their tradition gathered from the law of God misconceived; namely, to *hate a man's enemy*.

In these Jews we may observe two manifest abuses of Scripture which ought not to be in any teachers; to wit, *misinterpretation* and a *false collection*.

1. The Word they misconstrue, is *neighbour*, which in the Old Testament is taken two ways: either strictly and more properly for a familiar friend and acquaintance, in which sense it is commonly taken; or more generally, for

anyone that in any kind of society is near unto us, as by consanguinity, habitation, office, traffic, or being only in the same place with us; for so is the Samaritan said to be neighbour to the man that fell among thieves, because he found him *lying in the way where he travelled, and had compassion on him* (Luke 10:33). Now the Jewish teachers leave the general signification of the word, which expressed the true meaning of the Holy Ghost, and take the special signification, and so restrain this law of love to friends only. Whereby we see how necessary it is that the tongues wherein the Scriptures were penned should be well known and understood; for the mistaking of the signification of a word by the Jewish teachers, caused a manifest error to be taught among them for truth. And this maketh greatly for the honour of the schools of learning, where the studies of the tongues is professed. And herein also another thing may be noted in the Jewish teachers, that in the time of Christ they were ignorant in their own tongue, and therefore no marvel though at this day they know not the proprieties thereof, seeing their commonwealth is decayed, and they dispersed among all people.

2. Their second fault is a false collection and consequent, that because a man must love his friend, therefore he must hate his enemy. This is against the rules of logic; for unless the contraries be equal, a consequent will not thence follow in this sort.

Here then observe the necessity of the study of human arts, and among the rest, especially of the art of logic, whereby we may discern between true and false collections. Again, here observe an infallible note of a false teacher; to wit, to temper the Word of God to men's natural affections, and so to expound it as they may both stand together. The Jews were a people that loved their friends entirely, and hated their enemies bitterly. Now answerably do these teachers expound this law, whereby they overturn both the law of God, and the salvation of the people. Thirdly, mark here the fruit of corrupt doctrine, namely, to corrupt good manners. The Jews were a people that did much brag of their ancestors and privileges, and in regard of themselves condemn all foreign nations; yea, they hated them, and therefore they were hot in contention with Peter for going to Cornelius a Gentile (Acts 11:2). Now this their malice proceeded partly from nature and partly from the false doctrine of their teachers, which was that they might hate

their enemies. The like may appear in many practices of popery to this day; for when that superstition was aloft, the people were taught a distinction of times and places, in regard of holiness, the fruit of which doctrine sticks fast in the hearts of many unto this day; for they think churches and chapels to be more holy than other places, and therefore some will not pray but when they come into some such place. And do they not make great difference of dates and times? All which are fruits of popery. In regard whereof, we see it is necessary that the purity of religion in faith and manners should be strongly maintained by the sincere ministry of the Word; for many disorders in men's lives come from the unsound handling of the Scriptures. Whereby, we may see God's unspeakable mercy and goodness towards us, in vouchsafing us an holy ministry, wherein the purity of doctrine is, and hath been long, and may be still through God's mercy maintained and published. This ought to move us to all thankfulness unto God, and to endeavour to shew the fruit of this true religion in all holiness and piety, both of heart and life towards God and man.

"*But I say unto you, Love your enemies: Bless them that curse you: do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which hurt you, and persecute you*." (v.44)

Here our Saviour Christ propounds His answer unto the former false doctrine of the Jewish teachers, for the hating of an enemy. Wherein first he lays down a general rule, containing the sum of His whole answer, saying, *Love your enemies*; then He expounds that rule in the sme verse; and after proves it (vv. 45,46). Of these in order.

I.

For the first, *Love your enemies*. In this rule, two things must be known: (1) What is an enemy? (2) What it is to love an enemy. Both these are evident in the words following, wherein Christ expounds this rule: *Bless them that curse you* etc. An *enemy*, then, is anyone that of hatred doth wrong to his neighbour, either in word, by cursing or evil speaking; or deed, by striking and persecuting him. But what is it to love our enemy? *Love* properly is an affection of the heart, whereby one is well pleased with another. But here more generally, love comprehendeth these two things: First, to be lovingly affected in heart towards an enemy; secondly, to use an enemy lovingly in

speech and action. So it is taken (1 John 3:18), *Love not in word and tongue only, but in deed and truth*. And (Rom. 13:10), *Love is the fulfilling of the law*. For the first, love in the heart comprehendeth all good affections that one man beareth to another; as mercy, compassion, meekness, and desire to do unto them what good we can; as it is more plainly expressed (Luke 6:36), *Be ye therefore merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful*. And for the second, that kind usage which love expresseth in word and deed, is here set out unto us in three branches: First, *bless them that curse you*; where is commanded all good speech, both unto our enemy, and of our enemy. The second, *Do good to them that hate you*; where is prescribed all loving usage in action, by affording them help, relief and comfort, any way we can. The third, *Pray for them that persecute you*; that is, for their good estate in this life, so far forth as it serveth for God's glory, and for their conversion and salvation in the world to come.

See the evidence of these things in examples: For *the affection of the heart*, take Christ's example, who so loved His enemies, that He was contented to shed His own heart's blood for them, and to suffer the pangs of hell upon the cross for their salvation. For *love in courteous speech*, see David's practice towards Saul, his professed enemy. For though David had him in his hands, and might have killed him sundry times; nay, though he was provoked thereunto by his servants (1 Sam. 24:7; 26:9,10), yet he spared him, and with all terms of reverence towards Saul appeased his servants, calling Saul his master, and the Lord's anointed. Thus lovingly also in speech did Paul behave himself to Festus and Agrippa (Acts 26:25,27), though they were heathen men, and his enemies. For *doing good in action to an enemy*, read (Exod. 23:4,5), *If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt bring him to him again; and if thou seest thine enemy's ass lying under his burden, wilt thou cease to help him? Thou shalt help him up again with it*. And (Prov. 25:21), *If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; if he thirst, give him drink*. See the practice hereof in Elisha (2 Kin. 6:19-23), when God delivered them into his hands, that sought his life, he brought them to Samaria; and when the king of Israel would have slain them, he forbade him; nay, he caused the king to refresh them with bread and water, and so sent them to their own master. For *praying for our enemies*, we have the example of the prophets, our Saviour

Christ (Luke 23:34), and of Stephen (Acts7:60), who prayed for those that put him to death.

*Objection 1*: It will be said that the Scripture elsewhere seems to make against this; as (Psa. 139:21,22), *Do not I hate them, O Lord* (saith David) *that hate thee; and do not I earnestly contend with them that rise up against me? I hate them with an unfeigned hatred*; whereby it seemeth that in some cases a man may hate his enemies. *Answer*: First, we must put a difference between our enemy's cause and his person. Their evil causes and their sins must be hated, and we must give no approbation thereto; but yet their persons, being God's creatures, and bearing His image in some sort, must be loved. Again, enemies be of two sorts: private and public. A private enemy is he that hateth a man for some private cause in himself, or concerning his affairs; and such an one we must love, and not hate, as Christ here commandeth. A public enemy, is he that hates a man for God's cause, for religion and the gospel's sake; and these public enemies be of two sorts: curable and incurable. If our public enemies be curable, we must pray for their conversion, hating their conditions. If they be incurable, and we have plain signs of their final impenitence, then we may hate them, for so we hate the devil. So Paul saith (1 Cor. 16:22), *If any man love not the Lord Jesus, Anathema Maranatha, let him be finally and wholly accursed*. And yet this we must know, that we ought to direct our hatred to their sins, and for their sins hate their persons, and no otherwise. Now David in that psalm, speaketh not of private, but of public enemies, who hated not only him, but God also in His religion, and were also incurable.

*Objection 2*: But the practice of God's children seems to be otherwise; for David often curseth his enemies, and prayeth for the destruction of them and theirs (Psa. 109:9,10), and Peter wisheth (Acts 8:20) that Simon Magus may *perish with his money*; and Paul *prayeth the Lord to reward Alexander the coppersmith according to his doings* (2 Tim. 4:14). How can this stand with the test? *Answer*: There be divers interpretations of these facts. Some say (which is true) that in David's psalms, his curses are in proper sense, prophecies of the destruction of public incurable enemies of God's church, and are only propounded in the form of prayers. Again, David, Peter and Paul, were enlightened by God's Spirit, and saw into the final estate of these their enemies whom they cursed, and therefore do they wish for their

confusion, not for their own cause in way of private revenge, but upon a desire of the furtherance of God's glory in the execution of His justice upon them whom He had forsaken. And it is not unlawful for God's children to pray that God in justice would glorify His name in the just punishment of impenitent sinners that be cruel enemies to His church.

*Objection 3*: God gave commandment to His people the Jews (Deut. 7:2) *to destroy the Canaanites, and to root out their enemies out of the land*. Now, how could He love them, whom they must so cruelly kill? *Answer*: We must only love the Lord absolutely, and others in God, and for God; that is, so far forth as it standeth with His pleasure; and therefore when He commandeth to kill, we may lawfully kill. And this we may do by way of punishment appointed by God, not only without hatred, but in love, both forgiving the wrong which concerns us, and also praying for grace and mercy for the party, if he belong to God.

*Objection 4*: There be some that sin unto death, for whom we are forbidden to pray (1 John 5:16); and therefore we may not always pray for our enemies. *Answer*: Christ's commandment to pray for our enemies admitteth this exception: *unless they sin a sin unto death*; but that sin is hardly known of the church of God; and therefore private men must not in a conceit thereof, cease this duty to pray for their enemies. Thus then is this text to be understood: *Love your enemies*, that is, your private enemies, *and do good unto them*, unless God command you otherwise, *and pray for them*, if they sin not that sin unto death.

Here is confuted the old received doctrine of the church of Rome touching the love of our enemies, as coming near to the doctrine of these Pharisees. They teach that a man is bound always not to hate his enemies; but for loving them in good usage outwardly, a man is not bound, save in two cases: First, when our enemy is in necessity and danger of life, then he may be relieved and helped. Secondly, in the case of scandal, when as by helping or relieving him we give offence unto others. But out of these two cases to shew kindness to an enemy, is a matter of counsel and perfection. But this doctrine is damnable, flat against this text, and the practice of God's servants expressed in His Word; and therefore we must renounce it, and

acknowledge that we are bound in conscience, on every occasion, to shew our love in word and deed unto our private enemies.

Secondly, hereby is condemned the common practice of men in these days; which is to wrong their private enemies any way they can, by word or deed. Some will rail them as Shimei did on David (2 Sam. 16:7), and as Rabshakeh did on Hezekiah, and the people of God, yea, on God Himself (Isa. 36:4,6,12). This is a damnable practice, flat against this commandment of Christ, and His holy practice (1 Pet. 2:23). Nay, *Michael the archangel durst not blame the devil with cursed speaking, when he strove against him* (Jude 9).

Thirdly, that fruit of rancour is here likewise reproved whereby men will profess they will never forget their enemies, though they do forgive them. It is indeed agreeable to our corrupt nature, to keep a grudge long in mind, and to revive old wrongs; but this commandment of Christ condemneth this practice, and bindeth us both to forgive and forget; and therefore we must labour to beat down this spirit of revenge, and endeavour to love our enemies in word and deed.

Fourthly, here also see that it is not lawful to possess enmity to any man's person, for we should love every man. But how can we love him to whom we profess ourselves enemies? Christianity and private enmity cannot stand together; and therefore we must labour to abandon out of our hearts the hatred of any man's person, and strive to shew forth loving usage, even towards our enemies, though it be against our nature, both by speaking well of them unto others, and shewing kindness unto them, both in word and deed. We must pray for them, and go so far in all good duties towards them, that by our well-doing, we may *heap coals of fire on their heads* (Rom. 12:20); that is, cause their conscience like a fire to burn within them, accusing them of their ill-dealing towards us, and not suffering them to rest till they lay away their enmity and maliciousness against us.

Fifthly, this commandment of loving our enemies in word and deed, shews it to be unlawful for any man to utter evil speeches of another, at any time, unless the occasion be just, and he be lawfully called thereunto; for love covers a multitude of sins, but disgracing speeches are fruits of hatred.

Though Saul were David's professed enemy, and sought his blood, yet David never reviled him; and we ought to follow his good example.

II.

"*That ye may be the children of your father in heaven; for he maketh his son to arise on the evil, and the good; and sendeth rain upon the just and unjust*." (v.45)

1. Because it is against man's nature to love his enemy, therefore our Saviour Christ enforceth His disciples hereunto by the benefit they shall reap hereby in manifesting themselves to be the children of God; for He spake to those that were God's children, thus persuading them to love their enemies. That which will make you known to be God's children, that you must do; but by loving your enemies, you shall make it manifest that you are God's children. This He proveth in the words following, because it is a property of God so to do; for *He maketh the sun to arise on the evil and on the good* etc.

1. Here, first observe a true note of the child of God; namely, to imitate God his heavenly Father in loving his enemies, and expressing the same kind usage both in word and deed, praying for them, and relieving them in their necessities. And because it is so blessed a thing to be the child of God, we must therefore hereby stir up ourselves to the conscionable performance of this duty.

2. Secondly, from the ground of this reason we are taught that we ought principally to employ ourselves to those things, by the doing whereof, we may get assurance that we are the children of God; as also to shun the doing of all such things as declare us to be the children of Satan; that is, all sins which are indeed works of darkness and of the devil. In the evil day, whether it be of death, or of affliction, when no man can comfort us, this will be our only joy unto our hearts, which will swallow up all fear, that we know ourselves to be God's children; for then the Lord will acknowledge us for His own. But if by sin, we live like the devil, God will refuse us, and so we fall wholly to the devil. Let us therefore practice those things whereby this ground of comfort may be treasured in our hearts.

3. Thirdly, note here the style and title of honour which Christ giveth unto God. He calls Him not only *their father*, but *their father which is in heaven*. This He doth to stir up reverence in His hearers towards God, and so have God's children done (Dan. 9:4), before that holy prophet pours out his prayer unto God for his people, he sets out the Lord with most glorious titles: *O Lord God, great and terrible, which keepest covenant and mercy* etc. And Jeremiah praying unto God, spends three or four verses in setting out God's great power and majesty (Jer. 32:17-19). So Hezekiah in his prayer for the people, calls the Lord, *The good God*; which no doubt he did to stir up reverence in his own heart, and in the people, towards God. Whereby we are taught, when we have occasion to mention the name of God, to do it with all reverence, and to use some titles of honour therewithal, to stir up ourselves and our hearers to a gracious awe of heart towards God's majesty. But lamentable is the practice of the world in this behalf; for everywhere the name of God is tossed in men's mouths like a tennis ball; some in the midst of their laughter use, *O God, O Lord*, for breathing words; but others spare not to make God's glorious name the ensign of their rage and fury, in bloody and blasphemous oaths; but void of grace are all such.

*For He maketh His sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust*.

Here Christ propounds the property of God in doing good and shewing kindness to His enemies, to prove that by so doing, we shall shew ourselves to be His children.

1. Wherein, first observe the manner of Christ's speech. He saith not, *He hath caused the sun to rise*, and *hath sent rain* etc., but speaking of the time present, *He doth now cause the sun to rise, and sendeth rain*. So likewise (John 5:17), *My Father yet worketh, and I work together with Him*. In which phrase is expressed a notable work of God's heavenly providence; namely, that after the creation of all things, whereby God gave being unto the creatures, and power and virtue to do the things for which they were created; He doth by His providence still preserve that being, and so in every particular creature. It is God that gave being

to the sun at the beginning, and it is He that ever since continueth the being of the sun, with the light and virtue thereof; and the same is true of all creatures, and of ourselves; (Acts 17:28) *For in Him we live, move and have our being*. He is not like a carpenter who builds an house and then leaves it, but still He preserves the things He hath created. Herein He may well be compared to a spring or fountain, which causeth the rivers to flow while it sendeth out waters, but when it is stopped, they are dried up; even so, whiles God continueth the being and use of a creature, so long they are; but if He withhold His hand from them, they cease to be, and the use of them continueth no more. Thus it is with us, both in regard of our souls and bodies, with the faculties, powers and graces thereof; but (1 Cor. 4:7) *what hast thou that thou hast not received from Him*? *Who* (Heb. 2:3) *beareth up all things by His mighty Word*?

Now hence we must learn these duties: First, to seek to know Him that is daily about us, and preserveth us in soul and in body, from hour to hour. Secondly, to cleave unto God with our hearts, and to set our affections of love, fear, joy, and hope, wholly upon Him, because He is the author and continuer of our being, whatever it be. Thirdly, to obey our God in all things; for shall He give being to our bodies and souls, and shall we dispose of them after our pleasures, to offend Him, who doth wholly support us, and that continually?

2. Secondly, here note Christ saith, *His sun*, not *the sun*; teaching us that the sun which shineth in the firmament, is God's sun, not men's. God Himself is the sole author and governor thereof, He continueth that being which it hath, and the power and virtue which is shewed forth. And the same thing by proportion must be understood of all other creatures both in heaven and earth, the moon and stars, all beasts and cattle, yea, and we ourselves are God's creatures, and He is our Creator, our Lord and our Governor (Psa. 50:12), *The whole world is mine, and all that is therein*. Now hence we must learn two things: First, not to abuse any creature to our lust, as food, raiment etc., but to use whatsoever we enjoy to God's glory, according to His will. Secondly, to endeavour to be led by the creatures which we enjoy, to the knowledge of our Creator, for they are His. But alas, the practice of

the world is otherwise, men suffer themselves by the creatures to be drawn from God; for some make their belly their God; to others, riches and pleasures are their God.

3. Thirdly, Christ's saying of the Father, that *He maketh His sun to arise on the evil and on the good*, doth shew us the common bounty which God vouchsafeth to His creatures, both good and bad; for the rising and shining of the sun is an excellent work of God, by which many other blessings are conveyed to the creatures; for first, everything upon the earth receiveth heat and warmness from it, *nothing is hid from the heat thereof* (Psa. 19:6). In which regard it may well be called the *universal fire of the whole world*. Secondly, the sun serveth notably for the distinction of times, by day and night, weeks, months, quarters and whole years, whereby we know the term of times from the beginning, and so may do till the end of the world; in regard whereof it may well be called *the clock of the whole world*. Which things considered, may make us to blush and be confounded in ourselves for that light regard we have had of so excellent a creature, whereby God conveys so manifold blessings upon the earth. Let us therefore learn to bless God for the sun, and to express our thankfulness by all good duties.

*And sendeth rain on the just and unjust.* Here is noted the second common blessing bestowed of God upon the world; to wit, the falling of the rain upon the ground, both of good and bad. Now here first observe the form of speech here used by Christ, saying, God raineth. (Deut. 11:14) *The Lord giveth rain in due season, the first and latter rain*. This work is attributed to God for weighty causes; First, to shew that the same God who ordained in the beginning that the clouds should water the earth, doth by His own power uphold the continuance of the same blessing unto this day; and indeed, if He should not will the continuance hereof, it would for ever cease to rain upon the earth. Secondly, to teach us that God disposeth of the rain that falleth, restraining and enlarging it at His pleasure, either for the blessing, or the punishment of the place whereon it falleth, and that many times without the help of second causes. (Lev. 26:3,4) *If ye walk in mine ordinances, I will send you rain in due season*. (v.19) *But if you will not obey me, I will make your heaven as iron and your earth as brass*. (Amos 4:7) *I have withheld the rain from you, and caused to rain upon one city*

*and not upon another; one piece was rained upon, and that which was not rained upon withered*.

Here then we must learn:

1. First that we ought to pray unto God for His rain of blessing; that is, fruitful seasons; and also to be thankful unto God for seasonable weather when we receive it, because He sendeth it.

2. This must teach us to obey and serve God, for He hath the clouds in His hands like a sponge, and when He will He presseth out the rain thereof. Now, if we obey Him, He will cause it to fall upon the earth for a blessing; but if we rebel against Him, He will either hold it back, or pour it down upon us for a curse.

3. Seeing God sendeth down the rain, we may gather that no man can certainly tell, by the course of the heavens, the particular season of the weather day by day. If the rain depended wholly upon the celestial bodies, then should it fall alike in all places that be of like position to the heavens; but that is not so, for God ordereth it according to the state of the people upon whom it falleth, either for a blessing or a curse, as we have heard.

4. Hence we may gather that neither witches by the help of Satan, nor yet Satan himself, can cause rain, as many think; for it is God always that raineth. The devil indeed is the prince of the air, and by God's permission he may join himself unto a storm, and make it more terrible and hurtful; as he did in the destruction of Job's cattle and children, *by fire from heaven, and by a mighty wind* (Job 1:16,19); but yet he cannot make the matter of wind or of rain; that is proper to God.

5. Doth God rain upon the earth? Then we may well consider why the land is so often plagued with unseasonable rain; it is no doubt for our disobedience, as we have heard (Lev.26:19); and the contempt of the Word among other sins, is one main cause of this judgment. Now if we would either remove or prevent this plague at any time, we must turn unto the Lord, and repent of our sins, for thereto we are called by this judgment (Amos 4:7). And if we do turn, then will the Lord send a

gracious rain upon our land; but if we will not turn, we shall have another rain, the rain of Sodom and Gomorrah; for (Psa. 11:6) *Upon the wicked God will rain snares, fire and brimstone*. And this is certain, where God sends His judgments for the contempt of His Word, and yet men do not repent, there (Jer. 24:10) one judgment is but the forerunner of a greater, till they be consumed. And sith experience teacheth that after inundations of waters, usually comes plague and pestilence; for the preventing of these judgments, let us repent.

4. The last point to be here observed is this: In what terms our Saviour Christ expresseth, who be the friends of God, and who be His enemies. His friends He calleth *good and just*; His enemies, *evil and unjust*. Now that we may discern of our estate towards God in that behalf, we must see what a good and just man is.

In every such an one, two things are required: First, true faith, whereby a man lays hold on Christ for His righteousness, sanctification and redemption; and for the obtaining hereof, he must deny himself, and become nothing in himself, that he may be all in Christ. Secondly, true conversion of the whole man unto God, from all sin, so as his heart must be renewed and disposed to please God in all things. And because these things are inward and secret, therefore to make them known, there is further required, that a man carry in his heart a resolute and constant purpose, from time to time, never to sin against God; and this purpose of heart he must testify by a godly and conscionable endeavour of life, to please God in all things; for this is the fruit of true faith, and of sound inward conversion. And in regard hereof, were Enoch, Job, David, Zechariah and Elizabeth called *just*. But he that wants this constant purpose, and a daily endeavour, from a believing and penitent heart to please God in all things, is a wicked person, and as yet God's enemy.

By this, first, we see how many are deceived everywhere, with civil honesty; for if a man live uprightly among his neighbours, and do abstain from murder, adultery, oppression and such like sins, he is presently counted a good man. Such an one indeed may be counted an honest man civilly, as Abimelech was (Gen. 20:6), but yet this outward honesty makes not a man just and good in the sight of God, so as He reputes him for His

friend; thereto are required true faith and true repentance, testified by new obedience.

Secondly, here also see that neither the knowledge of God's Word, nor the hearing of it with some gladness, and bringing forth some fruits, nor yet to be able to conceive a prayer for the form thereof; that none of these (I say) no nor all of these, do make a man the friend of God indeed, for all these may be in an evil man, who hath a purpose in his heart to live in some sin, in whose heart as yet there is no true faith, nor sound repentance; without which (as we heard) no man is just in the sight of God, nor accounted for His friend. And therefore we must not content ourselves with these things, but labour to be good and just indeed. When affliction shall befall us, or death approach, we would give all the world, if it was in our hands, for good assurance that God were our friend. Now then, let us labour for true faith and repentance, and testify these by a constant purpose, and a godly endeavour to please God in all things, through the whole course of our lives; and then will the Lord esteem us for His friends.

"*For if you love them that love you, what reward shall ye have? Do not the publicans even the same?*" (v.46)

2. In these words our Saviour Christ propounds a second reason to persuade His disciples and hearers to love their enemies; and to the end it might take the deeper root in their hearts, He repeats the same again in the next verse, which in effect is the same with this. The words are plain, if we know what publicans were. Publicans therefore were officers that gathered toll and tribute, taxes, and rents of the Jews, for the Roman emperor, to whom the Jews were in subjection. Now in the gathering of it, they used much injustice and oppression; for which cause they were hated of the Jews, above all other people, and esteemed most basely of. Now (saith Christ) though these publicans be void of all good conscience, yet they will love their friends, of whom they are loved. And hence Christ reasons thus: *If you my hearers do but love them that love you, ye do but as these publicans do; but you must do more than such ungodly persons do; and therefore you must love your very enemies*.

Here first observe that Christ doth not forbid one friend to love another, for then he should be contrary to himself; but here He condemns carnal love,

whereby one man loves another only because he is loved again, which in effect is nothing else but for a man to love himself in another. And here to note the true manner of loving our neighbour, this rule must be remembered, that *all the commandments of the second table must be practised in and with the first commandment, touching the love of God*. Thus father and mother must be honoured in God, and for God; and thus one man must love another in God, yea, though he be his enemy, because he is God's creature, and bears His image, as well as he himself doth; yea, he is by God commended to our love. This must be the ground, though for other respects our love may increase towards our brother.

*What reward shall ye have*? Here Christ would teach us singular wisdom for the ordering of our lives; namely, that we give ourselves especially to the doing of such things as with God have promise of reward. What moved Moses to refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, to forsake the pleasures and riches of Egypt, and to chose to suffer affliction with God's people? The Word of God is plain (Heb. 11:25,26), *He had respect to the recompense of reward*. But this doctrine is not regarded, else how should all places abound so much with idle persons, and such as give themselves wholly to gaming and company keeping, to sports and delight. Now what reward can these look for at God's hands, unless it be the wages of sin, which is eternal death? Let us therefore beware of such a course, and learn to abound in good works, which are things good and profitable.

*Do not the publicans even the same*? Our Saviour Christ's intent in this instance, is to shew that His disciples, and so all professors of the gospel, must go beyond all other people in duties of love. Indeed their whole life should be spent in the practice of this virtue (Eph. 5:2). *Walk*, that is, lead the course of your life, *in love*; and the state of the church is to *dwell in love* (1 John 4:16). The reason is great, for Christians of all others receive the greatest measure of love from God, through Jesus Christ, and therefore they must abound in this grace; first towards God, and then one towards another. This is the badge of the Christian, and the grace of our religion, and therefore let us shew it forth.

"*And if ye be friendly to your brethren only, what singular thing do ye? Do not even the publicans likewise*?" (v.47)

Christ's drift in these words, is further to enforce the duty of love, to the same effect with the former verse. The word translated *be friendly*, betokens the friendship which was shewed in that country in salutations, by embracing. Now saith Christ, the very publicans will kindly embrace their friends, therefore you must do more.

We observed before three branches of kind usage to be shewed towards an enemy; to wit, to speak well of him, to pray for him, and to do him good. Now here we may annex a fourth, even friendly salutation. This Christ enjoined to His disciples, when He sent them to preach: *When you come into an house, salute the same* (Matt. 10:12), although it may be afterwards they cursed it, because it was unworthy. And here we must learn to be kind and courteous in salutation to our professed enemies.

*Objection 1*: This is to countenance them in their sin and wrongdoing unto us. *Answer*: In saluting an enemy, we must put a difference between his person and his sin. We must shew kindness to his person, but not countenance his sin. Nay, when we embrace his person, if occasion be offered, we must disgrace his sin.

*Objection 2*: (2 John 10) *If any man bring not this doctrine, bid him not God speed*. *Answer*: John there speaks of such persons as are enemies to God, His truth, and to His church; and such indeed we must not embrace. (2 Kin. 3:14) Elisha saith to Jehoram the idolatrous king of Israel, that he would not have looked upon him, nor seen him, had it not been for reverence of Jehosaphat the good king of Judah then present. But private enemies, of whom Christ here speaketh, must always be kindly used in salutation. And yet there is a case wherein this kind salutation may be denied to one that is not a public enemy; to wit, when a superior omitteth it as part of chastisement and correction upon the inferior. Thus David denied liberty to Absalom to come in his sight for a time, after he had pardoned him for killing Amnon (2 Sam. 14:24). But among equals and private men, this must be practised; yea, we must salute kindly, though they salute us not again.

III.

"*Be ye therefore perfect, as your father which is in heaven is perfect*." (v.48).

Here Christ infers an excellent consequent from the former reasons, wherein He exhorts His disciples to perfection in all the duties of love. In it observe two parts: a commandment to be perfect, and a pattern thereof in God. For the first, why doth God command that which no man can perform, for who can be perfect? *Answer*: God gives this and such like commandments for divers causes: First, in regard of His elect, for to them God's commandments serve as means of obedience, God by His grace enabling them to do that which by command He requires; for as in the creation God's commandments gave being to the creatures, so it is after a sort in the regeneration, as here, *be ye perfect*, is a means to make God's children perfect. Secondly, in regard of the wicked, as well to restrain corruption in them, for the peace of His church, as also to leave them without excuse, seeing the best works they do are short of that which they are bound to perform.

To come to the virtue commanded, which is, *perfection in the duties of love*. Perfection in general, is twofold: of the law, and of the gospel. Perfection of the law is when a man loves God and his neighbour according to the rigour of the law. This is in no man in this life, but this shall be in God's elect in the life to come. Perfection of the gospel is that endeavour of obedience which God accepts in Christ, at the hands of His children. This distinction the apostle maketh (Phil. 3), for first he saith he hath not attained to perfection (v.12), meaning the perfection of the law; and yet after he speaketh of himself and others, as being perfect (v.15). *Let us* (saith he) *as many as be perfect, be thus minded*; that is, as many as be perfect according to the gospel. Thus were Noah, Abraham, Job, Zechariah and Elizabeth perfect, that is, sincere and upright before God, both in heart and life; and this is that perfection which Christ here requireth.

Further, this evangelical perfection hath two parts: either of man's nature, or of his actions. The perfection of man's nature is by regeneration; for as in original sin, is both guilt of Adam's sin imputed, and corruption inherent, which is the seed of all sin; so in regeneration, which is the renewing of a man's corrupt nature, there is an abolishing of corruption, and a restoring of

grace in every part and faculty of the soul. For look how far corruption spread itself by Adam's sin; so far doth grace extend by regeneration. Of this perfection, there be three branches: First, *an upright judgment in the mind*, whereby a man understands and believes not only the grounds of religion, but every other doctrine truly grounded in the Word, and is ready to receive it, as it is further revealed; this in sincerity and in judgment; whereby it is plain that to hold only the grounds of religion, and for other points, to follow the times, is a great imperfection and want of sincerity. Secondly, *a pure and honest heart*, whereby a man is free from any purpose to live in sin; and on the contrary is inclined to everything that is good. Thirdly, *a good conscience*, giving testimony according to the Word, and so excusing, that a man may say with Paul (1 Cor. 4:4), *I know nothing by myself*; meaning, for which he should condemn himself. And look where nature is renewed, there these three are never wanting.

Perfection of man's actions standeth in two things: First, in bewailing his wants and imperfections, known and secret; for it is a degree of perfection to bewail our imperfection. Secondly, in setting himself from a sincere heart, to obey God in all His commandments, as occasion is offered (Psa. 119:6) *I shall not be confounded when I have respect to all thy commandments*; and this indeed is the perfection of the Christian. Half obedience is nothing; for as James saith (Jam. 2:10), He that falls in one commandment of purpose and custom, is guilty of all, because if occasion were offered, he would break all the rest.

But it will be said, a man may have both these, and yet want much of perfection. *Answer*: A thing is said to be perfect two ways: either *in parts*, when it hath all the parts of perfection, though in weak measure; or *in degrees*, when he hath a full measure of perfection in every part. A child new born is a perfect man in regard of his parts, having all the parts and members of a man; but it is not perfect in degree, till every part grows up to his perfection. Now the child of God when he is regenerate, hath all parts of perfection, both in soul and body, though in weak measure; but in this life he is not perfect in degrees, which is that full measure the law requireth. (2 Chr. 15:17), the heart of Asa is said to be *perfect towards God all his days*; and yet the high places were not taken away; yea, he failed in seeking to the physician and not to God (2 Chr. 16:12). Asa then had perfection of parts,

but to perfection of degrees he attained not in this life; and therefore he failed in these particulars, through the weakness of sanctification, which here is not finished until death.

So then it is plain, there is a perfection in the child of God, though joined with much weakness, even in this life, his nature is perfect, being renewed in soul to sound judgment, to an honest heart and a good conscience. His actions are perfect in God's acceptance through Christ, whilst he bewails his imperfection, and endeavours sincerely to please God in all things. This is that which Christ enjoins to His disciples; this we must labour for, if we will resemble our heavenly Father. We can get no higher in this life; but let us attain to this, and in the life to come we shall be perfect in degrees, for then our regeneration shall be accomplished.

But herein men fail and come short of their duty; as first, all those that spend their strength and wit to get the things of this world. These men little think of this perfection which the Lord requires in His children. It may be they will hear the Word, but yet their hearts are so glued to the earth and earthly things, that they savour not of regeneration, they know not what it means. But if they will be God's children, they must follow Jehosaphat (2 Chr. 17:6), who *lifted up his heart to the ways of the Lord*; for that is the means to come to perfection.

Secondly, those also are reproved that content themselves with a small measure of knowledge, and do not strive after perfection, as Christ requireth. How can they have a sound judgment, which study not to know the doctrine of Scripture?

Thirdly, that general want of Christian perfection is here reproved, when men content themselves to yield to the outward duties of the first table, that concern God's worship, and yet neglect the duties of the second table, that concerns their brethren in general, and pertain to their functions and callings in particular. This is a common fault in magistrates, ministers, parents, masters, servants, etc.; they will be Christians in the church, but they neglect to shew the power thereof in their callings; but this is a grievous want of sincerity, which makes them far unlike their heavenly Father; for He is ever like Himself, and therefore look what men profess in God's worship, that must they practise in their callings. A magistrate must

be a Christian upon the bench, as well as in the church; in the administration of justice, as well as in the congregation; and so must ministers, masters and all estates. God allows not of that service in the church, that serve their wicked lusts at home (Jer. 7:9,10). God's sacrifices under the law must be whole and sound, not halt and lame or maimed; and such should our obedience be under the gospel, with sincere respect to all God's commandments. It profited Herod little to bear John gladly, and to do many things, so long as he kept his brother's wife; nor Judas to follow Christ, while his heart was upon the bag. Let our practice of religion therefore shew forth the truth of our public profession, and so shall we in some sort resemble our heavenly Father.

# 6:1-2

"*Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*" Matthew 6:1,2

"*Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven*." (v.1)

In the former chapter, the evangelist hath faithfully recorded three parts of our Saviour Christ's sermon, and here beginneth the fourth, which reacheth to the 19th verse of this chapter; wherein our Saviour Christ goeth about to reform His hearers of all abuses in doing good works, and He instanceth in these three: Alms-deeds, prayer and fasting; not so much commanding them, as giving direction for the right manner of performing them, so as they may be acceptable unto God. From the first verse to the fifth, He entreats of alms-deeds, propounding two several commandments, touching the manner of giving alms. The first is in this first verse, *Take heed that you give not your alms before men, to be seen of them*; which He enforceth by an effectual reason in the words following, *or else ye shall have no reward of your Father in heaven*. And then exemplifieth it by a particular example of a corrupt manner in giving alms, borrowed from the ambitious practice of the Scribes and Pharisees (v.2). The second commanment touching alms-giving, is in the 3rd verse, whereof He renders a reason in the 4th verse.

I.

For the first commandment, *Take heed* etc.; this may be repugnant to that precept given before (chapter 5:16), *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works*. But here is no contrariety, if we mark well; for in the former chapter we are commanded to do good works before men, that they may see them, and glorify God for the same. Now here we are not forbidden simply to do good works before men, but to do them before men

for this end, *to have our praise of men*, that we might be glorified for doing them, howsoever it went with God.

Before we come to this rule, the words are somewhat to be scanned; for whereas we read them thus, *Give not your alms before men*, etc., some ancient churches, after other copies and translations read them thus: Do not your righteousness or justice before men; which must not seem strange that in God's book there should be diverse readings; for in former ages, before printing was invented, the Scriptures of God were conveyed from hand to hand, by means of writing; now they that wrote out the copies of Scripture, did now and then mistake some words and letters by negligence, or ignorance, and put one thing for another, whereupon do come these diverse readings. Yet we must not think that the Word of God is hereby maimed or made imperfect; for the true sense of the Holy Ghost remains sound and perfect, though it may be we cannot discern of the right reading. And the sense of Scripture is rather to be judged the Word of God, than the words and letters thereof. Now it being here uncertain whether the reading to follow (for either of them contained sense convenient to the place), therefore I will exclude neither, but from them both propound this instruction:

*That in giving of alms is justice, and a part of righteousness which God requires at out hands*. This the apostle sheweth plainly out of the psalms (Psa. 112:9), (2 Cor. 9:9), *He hath distributed and given to the poor, His righteousness remaineth for ever* . And in common reason it must be so, for a man is but a steward over the goods he possesseth; the poor with whom he liveth  hath title to the part thereof, and he must give unto them by God's express commandment; so as unless he give in some sort, he plays the thief, and robs the poor by keeping back that which is their due.

In regard whereof, we must learn, first, to acknowledge that providing of maintenance for the poor, is not a work of freedom or liberty, left to men's choice, whether they will do it or not, but a matter of justice; and the not doing of it is injustice, against the law of God and of nature, which require that the poor should be maintained at home without begging abroad. Secondly, this should move us to lay aside some portion of our goods to give unto the poor, for the poor have interest unto them; and for this cause

we ought to cut off our superfluities in feasting, in attire, in sports and pleasures, that so we may be better enabled to do justice in giving unto the poor; for hereby commonly men are disabled to do this part of justice. Thirdly, this should teach us according to out places, to see those good orders well maintained and set forward, which are provided for the convenient relief and maintenance of the poor; for the neglecting of them is injustice, and a kind of theft against the poor.

Secondly, observe the word translated *alms*; it is very pithy, signifying *mercy* and *pity*; whence we may learn: first, what it is that makes our giving to the poor to be alms: it is not the thing given, but *the merciful and pitiful heart of the giver*, be the thing never so small, as was the poor widow's mite; and therefore all our alms must proceed from a pitiful heart. Secondly, it sheweth what a one that party must be that is to be relieved, namely, such a one as to be pitied; not our lusty beggars, but infants, orphans, the lame, blind, weak, maimed and aged persons.

Thus much for the words; now followeth the commandment itself: *Take heed that you give not your alms before men to be seen of them*. This commandment tendeth to this end, to teach men how to avoid the unlawful manner of giving alms; for a good thing may be done in an ill manner, and usually men offend this way in their good deeds. Now this commandment prescribes a double circumspection in giving alms: first, touching the ground; secondly, touching the end of alms-giving.

1. The *ground* of our alms must not be the pride of our hearts. This Christ forewarns us of, if we look it should be good and acceptable in the sight of God. This is a point of great importance, and therefore for the better observing of it, I will here shew two points: (1) What this pride is; (2) Why it must be so carefully avoided in our alms- deeds.

1. By *pride* I mean not outward pride in apparel, but that which is inward in the soul, consisting partly in the mind, and partly in the will and affections. *Pride of mind* is a corrupt disposition thereof, whereby a man thinks himself to be better and more excellent than indeed he is. This was the sin of the Pharisee, who boasted unto God of his own goodness (Luke 18:11,12). And hence it came that the church of Laodicea (Rev. 3:17) glorified herself saying, *I am rich and increased*

*in wealth and lack nothing*; whenas indeed she was *poor and blind and miserable and naked*. This conceit is most dangerous, especially in the point of grace, causing many to deceive their own souls by thinking they have grace when they have none, and overweening that which they have. *Pride in will* is an inward affection, whereby a man is not contented with that estate wherein God hath placed him, but desires a better. This befell Adam and Eve (Gen. 3), who sought to be like unto God Himself; and this taketh hold of most men in every age. Now from these two proceedeth that *practice of pride* in man's life, whereby he endeavours to do whatsoever he can for his own praise and glory. This pride is not in some few persons alone, but in every man naturally that comes of Adam, Christ Jesus only excepted. And where it takes place it is so strong, that it will not be crossed; for rather than a man will not have his will in this, he will commit any sin. This caused Absalom to banish his father out of his own kingdom; and Ahithophel to hang himself, when his counsel was refused; and some popes (as histories make mention) to bequeath their souls unto the devil for the obtaining of the popedom. And this is that inward corruption which Christ here forbids to be the ground of our alms- deeds.

2. Secondly, the reasons why this inward pride must be carefully avoided, are these two: First, because whatsoever outward good work the child of God can do by grace, the same may a wicked man do through pride; as conceive a prayer, preach the Word, and practise the outward duties of repentance, of love, and such like; for pride is a sin that will counterfeit grace, and man cannot discern it, but God only. Secondly, many other sins prevail in the wicked, but pride is the sin that troubleth the children of God; and when other sins die, then will pride revive; yea, it will arise out of grace itself; for the child of God will be proud, because he is not proud; therefore Paul (2 Cor. 12:7) must be *buffeted by the messenger of Satan, lest he should be puffed up with abundance of revelations*.

Now the way to avoid this dangerous sin stands in two things: First, we must be careful to know the pride of our own heart, for every man hath it in him more or less, and the more we see it, the less it is; but the less we see it, the more it is in us indeed; and though we know nothing by ourselves, yet

let us suspect ourselves hereof, and labour to see it in our hearts; for he that is most humbled, is not altogether free from this inward pride. Secondly, when we see our pride, we must labour to subdue it; which we shall do, first, by considering the judgments of God upon this sin. Were not our first parents cast out of Paradise when they would needs be as gods? And Herod was eaten up of worms when he took unto himself the glory due unto God (Acts 12:23). Therefore Peter saith (1 Pet. 5:5) *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble*. A man that would beg an alms, must not go in proud apparel; and so he that would procure the favour of God, must not come with a proud heart. Secondly, we must search into ourselves, and labour to see our own wants and corruptions, as our blindness of mind and ignorance, our unbelief etc., and the sight of our sins will be a means to humble us; for they that feel no wants in themselves, cannot choose but be puffed up. Thirdly, we must meditate upon the death and passion of Christ, which He endured for our redemption; how He sweat water and blood, and suffered the wrath of God both in soul and body for our sins. Now how can a man think that Christ endured all this for him, and yet be not cast down with the sight of his own sins, which had a part in the cause of all the curse that caused Christ to cry, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*?

2. The second branch of circumspection in alms-giving here commanded, respects the end thereof: *We must not give alms to be seen of men*; that is, to get praise and fame among men. This caveat Christ gives for a weighty cause; for the corruption of man's nature through the instigation of the devil, causeth everyone almost to do all good works for wrong ends. Why do many men toil themselves so much in their ordinary callings? Is it not partly for honour, partly for pleasure, partly for profit? And do not the most men propound this end to themselves herein, to maintain their families? But though this be a good and commendable thing, yet neither that, nor the rest, are the right ends for which man should labour and travail. The right end of all, is the glory of God in man's good, or the good of man in God's glory. Now when our good works proceed from an humble heart, which sincerely intends the glory of God in man's good, then is the work pleasing unto God. Other ends or beginnings do profane men's labours; and therefore Christ giveth this caveat, to look both to the beginning, and the end of our alms-deeds.

Thus much of the commandment. The reason of it is this: *Or else ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven*. So the words are, *ye have no reward*; and they are very significant, importing thus much: If you do your works from an humble heart, for God's glory in man's good, then you have a reward laid up for you in heaven; which though it appears not presently, yet it is as sure as if you had it already in possession. But if you do not so, you have no reward laid up for you by your heavenly Father.

From this reason in general we may gather that he which hath grace to do, if it be but one good work (as to give alms) upon a good ground, and for a good end, shall never perish, but shall receive eternal life; which may be a notable motive to provoke every man to do good works; as also it proves that the child of God can never perish or finally fall away; for nothing is lost that is laid up with God.

More particularly, first, observe that the word *reward* is not taken properly, but by resemblance, thus: like as a labourer after he hath done his work, receiveth his wages; so the child of God having done that which God commandeth him, receiveth a reward. Secondly, it is said *of your Father*, to signify that this reward is not merited, but is the free gift of a father unto His children. Lastly, Christ saith *your Father*, speaking to all His hearers, among whom was Judas, whom elsewhere He calls a devil, and others whom He knew to be none of God's children, and yet being here a preacher and minister of circumcision (as the apostle speaketh (Rom. 15:8)) He leaveth the secret judgment unto God, and following the judgments of hope and charity, taketh all His hearers to be the children of God; which is a notable precedent to all God's ministers, for Christ here preaching of love, practiseth it; and so ought His servant do. This also condemneth the practice of those that upon a little falling out will not stick to call others damned wretches, or reprobates. There is no charity in such censures; for love always hopes the best (1 Cor. 13).

"*Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*" (v.2)

Here Christ propoundeth by way of prohibition, a particular example of the corrupt manner of alms-giving, proceeding from pride of heart and

ambition, borrowed from the practice of the Scribes and Pharisees; and withal He annexeth in the end of the verse an effectual reason to move men to circumspection about the ground and the end of their alms- deeds.

The exposition.

The original is this: *Thou shalt not blow a trumpet before thee*; so that our translation doth also expound the words of Christ according to the common rule of divines; that words of fact are oftentimes put for words of speech; which being well observed, will clear many places from false interpretation. God saith to Moses (Exod. 13:2), *Sanctify unto me all the firstborn*; and to Joshua (Josh 5:2), *Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise the sons of Israel*; that is, command them to be sanctified and circumcised. (Jer. 1:10) *I have set thee over nations and kingdoms* (saith God to Jeremiah*), to pluck up, to root out, to destroy, and throw down, to build, and to plant*; that is, to preach, and by preaching to pronounce that the Lord will do these things. (John 4:1) Christ is said to baptise, that is (as the next verse imports), He commanded His disciples to baptise. And (Acts 10:15), God is said to *purify* things; that is, He pronounceth things to be pure.

*As hypocrites do in the synagogue*. The word *hypocrite*, betokeneth one that takes upon him to represent the person of another as players do, who sometimes represent mighty kings, at other times poor beggars, and to them it properly belongeth. Now by resemblance it is applied to any that outwardly feign themselves to have that goodness and honesty which they have not; for hypocrisy is nothing else but a shew of that goodness outwardly, which indeed is not in the heart. Now in this instance is included a second reason of the former commandment touching the manner of alms-giving, serving to make all Christ's hearers circumspect, both for the ground and end of their good works. And the reason stands thus: *That which hypocrites do, you must not do. But they do their alms to be praised of men, as is plain in this example. And therefore you are not to give alms to be seen and praised of men*.

Out of this example we may learn these instructions:

1. First, that it is the property of an hypocrite to do good works for false ends, as to be seen of men, and to be praised of men. For indeed an

hypocrite in his heart makes choice not of God, but of men to be the judges and approvers of his good works. And this is gross hypocrisy, because hereby the honour due to God is taken from him and given to men, for God ought to be the judge and approver of all our actions.

Now as Christ lays this sin upon the Scribes and Pharisees, so ought every one of us to lay it on ourselves, considering ourselves as we are by nature out of Christ; for so we make not God, but men the judges and approvers of our actions. This will hereby appear evidently, for when we do a good thing, and yet thereby incur the dispraise of men, are we not more grieved thereat, than when by sin we offend God Himself? Which could not be, but that our hearts do more respect the censure of men, than of the Lord. And to clear this point yet further, consider this: that the root of hypocrisy and of atheism is in our nature, whereby naturally we do these three things: we love, fear and trust in men more than in God, and therefore do make men the judges of our actions.

1. For love; are we not grieved when we ourselves or our friends are dishonoured; and on the contrary, when we ourselves or our friends are praised, are we not glad and rejoice? But when God is dishonoured, who is grieved? Or whose heart doth leap for joy when God is glorified? Which argues plainly that our affection of love is more inclined towards ourselves and to our friends than unto God.

2. For fear; are not most men more afraid when they offend a mortal man like themselves, than when they offend the ever-living God?

3. For trust and confidence in time of affliction; most men are more comforted if some friend promise them help than they are by all the promises of God Himself in the Word. But men will say that they love and fear and trust in God above all. This indeed is the ordinary profession of ignorant people; but the truth is that by nature we refuse God to be our judge and our approver, and appeal unto them. And therefore we must labour to see and feel, and to bewail this hypocrisy, and to be endued with the contrary grace whereby we may simply and sincerely seek to be approved of God in all our actions.

2. Secondly, in this example, note one evident cause of the disorder which was among the Jews in respect of their poor; for they begged in the highways, in the streets of the cities, and gates of the temple, flat against God's commandment, who would not have such a beggar in Israel. Other occasions there were of this abuse, but one principal cause is here noted; namely, that private persons were permitted to give their private alms unto the poor with their own hands in public places. This was a great disorder, and the cause of many beggars; for private men could not discern the particular wants of all that begged so; and therefore God had otherwise provided for them in the Old Testament, as He sheweth before. And in the New Testament there were chosen faithful men called deacons in every congregation, who were to look unto their poor, to collect for them, and to distribute to everyone according to their necessity. It is not unlawful for a private man to give alms in public place if need require; but where the poor are no otherwise provided for than by such private relief, it is a great disorder; like as it is in a family, where the children and servants know not where and when to have their dinners; for the poor are God's children in His family, and ought to be provided for in better sort than by such private relief; and therefore when good order is wanting for provision for the poor, it ought in conscience to be begun, and where it is begun, men must carefully maintain and continue the same.

3. Thirdly, in this example of a corrupt manner of alms-giving, see the concurrence of sundry sins. First, here is noted *hypocrisy*, which were enough to condemn a man; but yet with this there goes *ambition*, and with both, *an open contempt and breach of good order* in providing for the poor; which shews evidently that no sin goes alone, but ordinarily hath its companions; for sins are so enfolded one in another, that he which commits one, is not free from any other. This may plainly be shewed by many examples. In Adam's sin there was the breach of the whole law in every commandment, either directly or by consequence; for he shewed evident want of love to God, in believing Satan more than God; therein he chose Satan, and took God's name in vain; he shewed also evident want of brotherly love, for hereby he became a murderer not only of himself, but of all his posterity; and thus do sins concur in every wicked action, in which regard it may be said with James (Jam. 2:10), *He which faileth in one commandment, is guilty of all*; which must admonish us to make conscience

of every sin; for we cannot live in any one, but we must needs run into many others.

*Verily I say unto you, they have their reward*. These words contain the reason of the former prohibition, wherein we may see the vanity of this giving of alms; for the praise of men is all their reward; they have none with God, as we shewed in the former verse.

# 6:3-4

"*But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth*: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly." Matthew 6:3,4

II.

"*But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth*" (v.3)

These words contain Christ's second commandment touching the manner of alms-giving, with the reason thereof. The commandment is in the third verse, and it beareth this sense; that if the left hand could understand, yet it should not know what our right hand gave; and therefore much more must we conceal the same from men. Yet here Christ forbids not all giving of alms in open place, or in the sight of men, but his meaning is to restrain the ambition of the heart after the praise of men. The giver must not intend or desire that men should see him give alms, that they might praise him; but his heart must simply and sincerely seek to approve itself unto God. This will appear to be the right meaning of our Saviour Christ, by comparing this verse with the first; for here Christ reneweth the commandment there given, and forbiddeth the corrupt desire of the heart after vain glory in the giving of alms.

Now for our better understanding of this commandment, first, we will shew what is here forbidden; and secondly, what is commanded. Here are two things forbidden: first, all desire or intention of men's beholding us when we give out alms; and secondly, all respect and intent to please ourselves in alms-giving; for the left hand must not know what the right hand giveth. The thing here commanded is this; that he which gives alms must do it simply, intending and desiring only to please God and to approve his work unto God without all by- respects of men's praise or approbation.

1. Here then first is condemned the doctrine of the church of Rome, which teacheth men to do good works, with opinion of meriting life everlasting thereby at the hands of God; for that is far more than to do them for this end to get praise of men, which yet is here forbidden; and therefore the other must needs be abominable.

2. Secondly, seeing in our well-doing we must simply intend to approve ourselves unto God, it shall not be amiss here to shew how we may so do our good works that God may approve thereof. Hereunto four things are required: faith, love, humility and sincerity or simplicity.

1. For the first, in every good work there must be a twofold faith: justifying faith and a general faith. Justifying faith, whereby the person doing the work must be reconciled to God, and stand before God a true member of Christ; for of this it is said (Heb. 11:6), *Without faith it is impossible to please God*. And Christ saith (John 15:2,5), *Every branch that beareth not fruit in me, the Father taketh away*; and *without me ye can do nothing*; where it is plain that whosoever would do a work acceptable to God, must first be in Christ; and the reason is evident; for first the person working must be acceptable to God before his works can be approved. But no man's person is approved of God before we be in Christ; and therefore justifying faith, whereby we are united to Christ, is chiefly necessary. By general faith, I mean that whereby a man believes that the work he doth is pleasing to God Hereof Paul saith (Rom. 14:23), *Whatsoever is not of faith is sin*. A work may be good in itself, and yet sinful in the doer, if he want this general faith. Now unto this are two things required: first, a word of God commanding the work, and prescribing the manner of doing it; secondly, a promise of blessing upon the doing of it; for every good work hath its promise, both of the things in this life, and of a better. These things must be known and believed. Upon these grounds we must pray, give alms, and do every good work, and so shall they be approved of God. Now by this double faith required in every good work, we see how those that are bound to practise good works (as everyone is more or less) ought to labour to be acquainted with the Word of God, that they may do their works in faith; for else, though the work be good, it may be sin in them because it is not of faith;

which is the miserable state of ignorant persons, who through want of faith cannot do good works in a good manner.

2. The second thing required in the doing of a good work is love; love (I say) joined with faith; for *faith worketh by love* (Gal. 5:6). Indeed faith doth some things of itself; as apprehend, receive and apply Christ and His righteousness to the believer, which is the proper work of faith; but other things it doth by the help of another; and so faith brings forth the works of mercy, and performeth the duties of the first and second tables; not properly by itself, but by the help of love; and therefore here I say that in every good work is required that love whereby faith worketh. Now the kinds of love required in well-doing are two: first, the love of God in Christ; for as we know God in Christ, so must we love Him; secondly, the love of our brethren, yea of our enemies; for howsoever in our understanding these two may be distinguished, yet in practice they must never be severed; but must always go hand in hand, to move us to do the works of mercy, and all the duties of our calling; as Paul saith of himself (2 Cor. 5:14), and the rest of the apostles, *The love of God constraineth us* to preach the gospel.

3. The third thing required in doing a good work well is humility, whereby a man esteemeth himself to be but a voluntary and reasonable instrument of God therein. This virtue will make a man give the honour of the work to the principal agent, that is, to God Himself, who *worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure* (Phil. 2:13).

4. The fourth thing required in well-doing is simplicity or singleness of heart; whereby a man in doing a good work, intendeth simply and directly to honour and please God, without all by-respects to his own praise, or the pleasing of men. This is a special virtue directing a man to the right end in every good work, which is the obedience and honour of God in man's good. This virtue was in Paul (2 Cor. 1:12), who in simplicity and godly pureness, had his conversation in the world. Thus he preached the gospel; and so ought we to do every good work. Now that this sincerity may shew itself, we must take heed of a special vice which is contrary unto it, namely, the guile of the spirit, mentioned (Psa. 32:2); which maketh a man intend and propound false

ends and by-regards in doing good works; as his own praise and delight, and to please men thereby. And that we may avoid this spiritual guile, we are to know that it may and doth usually prevail with men in four cases:

1. When those do practise virtue in whom God only restrains the contrary vice. Thus civil honest men that have no religion may practise justice, temperance, mercy and other moral virtues, because they are not inclined to injustice, intemperance and the contrary vices. But these actions in them are no good works before God, because they proceed not from sanctified hearts, sincerely intending to obey and glorify God hereby.

2. When men do good works for fear of avoiding justice and the penalties of men's laws; and such for the most part is the repentance of the sick. I grant indeed that some do truly repent in this estate, but commonly such repentance is unsound, and proceedeth not from a single heart, but from fear; whereby, being under God's hand, they seek to avoid His judgment. Such also are the outward duties of religion performed by our common Protestants, who come to church and receive the sacraments chiefly for custom's sake and to avoid the dangers of men's laws.

3. When men do good works for the honour and praise of men. This is a dangerous thing. Upon this ground a man may preach the Word, use prayer, and profess the gospel; yea, and be zealous for God's glory as Jehu was. And hence it comes that many fall away to looseness of life from a strict profession of religion, because they received not the truth in simplicity of heart, with purpose only to obey and please God, but rather to get the praise of men.

4. When men do good works from some corruption of heart prevailing in them; as when a man is both proud and covetous, yet more proud than covetous. Covetousness bids him not to give to the poor; but yet pride desiring the praise of men prevailing in him, causeth him to give to the poor. And so, when covetousness prevails in a proud man, it will cause him to abstain from riot and proud apparel, which yet his pride would persuade him unto. In all these cases, spiritual guile corrupts the work

> that otherwise is good in itself; and therefore we must have a watchful eye unto singleness of heart in our well-doing and to the rest of the virtues before-named, that so we may be able to say with good conscience that our works are such as God approveth.

"*That thine alms may be secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret, He will reward the openly*" (v.4)

Here is the reason whereby Christ enforceth the former commandment; and it hath two parts; the first is drawn from a special property in God, *to see in secret*; the second is from His bounty, in *rewarding openly*.

1. For the first, the words are thus in the original, *And thy Father which is a seer in secret*; for the word there used signifieth a *discerning seer*; whereby Christ would teach us that God sees and beholds things that no man can see, even the secret thoughts and desires of man's heart.

Hence we must learn three things: (1) To examine ourselves strictly not only of our gross and open sins, which all the world may see; but also of our most inward and hidden corruptions; and when we cannot see them, yet we must suspect ourselves of our secret wants; for though men know them not, no nor we ourselves, yet God the secret seer beholdeth them. (2) Never to hide our sins within ourselves, but freely to lay them open before God to our own shame, yea, to confess our unknown sins. We must not like Adam, sew fig leaves together to cover our nakedness, or flee from God thinking to hide ourselves from His sight. (3) To be careful not only to do good works, but also to do them in an holy manner, from good grounds, and to a right end; for God seeth secrets, and will not be shifted off with false shews. David saith (Psa. 119:168), *I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies, because all my ways are before thee*. And the rather must we be moved hereunto, because God knowing what is in man's heart, doth oftentimes prove men with temptations that He may discover the guile of their hearts; and therefore that we may escape the judgments of God due unto hypocrisy, we must labour to do all good duties in singleness of heart.

2. The second reason drawn from God's bounty unto them that in singleness of heart do good works, is in these words: *He will reward thee openly*; wherein He preventeth this objection which some of His hearers might

make against His former precept: If I may not do good works to be seen of men, then shall I lose my labour. Christ answers, Not so; for God the Father will reward thee openly, if thou do good from a single heart, only respecting the praise and honour of God in man's good. If it be asked how this can stand with that saying of Christ (John 5:22), that *the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son*; I answer, that in regard of deliberation, of authority, and consent, the last judgment shall be executed by the whole Trinity; but yet in regard of immediate execution, the Father judgeth not, but Christ only; for He alone giveth the sentence both of absolution and condemnation.

The second reason teacheth us sundry things concerning praise:

1. First, that *God Himself is the sole author of true praise*. Paul saith (2 Cor. 10:18), *He which praiseth himself is not allowed, but whom the Lord praiseth*; where He compareth the world to a theatre wherein men are actors and men and angels be spectators. But God alone is the judge, who giveth praise and good name to everyone that deserveth it, not only in this life, but in the world to come; in regard whereof, we must endeavour ourselves so to do all our good works, that God Himself may approve thereof. To seek the praise of men is a fond thing, seeing that not man, but God, is the author of true praise. Yea, this must teach us not to depend upon man for praise and commendation for the good things we do, but upon God Himself, from whom all praise cometh.

2. Secondly, that *God as He is a Father, is the sole author of praise*, for Christ saith, *your Father will reward you*. Now God is our Father only in Christ, and therefore our union with Christ is the ground of all true praise. *He is a true Israelite* (saith Paul, Rom. 2:29) *which is one within, and the circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God*. This then discovereth the error of the world in seeking praise and reputation; for some seek it in the comeliness of their body, some in apparel and some in learning, etc., but all these are wrong means; the right way to get true praise is to be in Christ, and to have an humble and sanctified heart, set purposely to keep God's commandments. (Psa. 119:22), David prayed God to

remove from him shame and contempt, because he kept God's testimonies; as though the keeping of God's commandments had been the only means to avoid contempt, and to procure true praise and fame.

3. Thirdly, that the life to come is the only time of true praise, for Christ here saith, *He shall reward thee openly*; that is, in the last day. (1 Cor. 4:5), *When the Lord shall come, then shall everyone have praise of God*. This must teach us not to care for the contempt of the world which followeth our profession, so that our conversation be godly; but to rest patiently contented, because it is the lot and portion of God's children, and our sins deserve greater reproach, always remembering that the time of our praise is yet to come. Yea, hence we must learn not to aim at our own praise, in things of this life, but wholly to seek the glory of God in all things; for if we seek His glory now, the time will come when He will glorify us.

4. Fourthly, that the praise that God shall give His children in the end of the world, *shall be open and manifest*, before all men and angels, both good and bad, when they shall stand to be judged by Jesus Christ; and this is true praise which shall never have end, whereunto the praise of men is not comparable. We count highly of applause and reputation with earthly princes, and all men honour him whom the prince commends; how much more then shall they be advanced, whom God Himself should vouchsafe to praise and commend.

# 6:5-6

"*And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*" Matthew 6:5,6

"*And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*" (v.5)

In this verse, and the rest to the fourteenth, Christ entreateth of the duties of prayer, wherein He dealeth as in the former point touching alms-giving; for first, He forbids a twofold vice in prayer: hypocrisy and babbling; and then teacheth the contrary virtues and the right practice of prayer. The vice of hypocrisy in prayer is forbidden in this fifth verse, and the contrary virtue enjoined in the next.

I.

The exposition.

*When thou prayest*. To pray properly is to entreat of God the gift of some good thing concerning ourselves; and in this sense it is only one part of that holy worship of God which is called *invocation*; for (1 Tim. 2:1) the apostle maketh four kinds or parts of invocation, to wit, (1) *Supplication*, when we entreat God to remove some evil from us. (2) *Prayer*, whereby we beg at the hands of God the gift of some good thing unto us; and these two concern ourselves. (3) The third is *intercession*, when as we entreat the Lord to grant some good thing unto our brethren, or to remove some evil from them. (4) The fourth is *thanksgiving*, whereby we give laud and thanks to God for blessings received, either by ourselves, or by our brethren. Now

in this place *prayer* is not to be taken strictly for one part of invocation, but generally for the whole worship of God by invocation; as it is commonly taken of us, and often used in Scripture, one part being put for the whole.

*Be not as the hypocrites*, that is, do not as they do in prayer. By hypocrisy, He understandeth principally the Jewish teachers, the Scribes and Pharisees, for at them He aimeth in this part of His sermon.

*For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the streets*. We must not here conceive that Christ condemns altogether this gesture of standing in prayer as unlawful; for Himself prayed standing when He raised up Lazarus (John 11:41); and the primitive church in their assemblies called stations, prayed standing; but He reproveth here the abuse of this gesture in these Jewish teachers. For first, they used this gesture to a wrong end, namely, thereby to get the praise of men; because standing is the fittest gesture which a man can use in prayer to make him be seen of others. Secondly, these Scribes and Pharisees thought themselves more righteous than all other men, and therefore judged that they had no need to humble themselves so much either in soul or body as the publicans and sinners did. Again, Christ here condemneth not the action of prayer in these places, the synagogues and the streets; for no man was ever forbidden of God to pray in any place. The Patriarchs were not tied to any place; and under the law, howsoever the temple was the place appointed for God's outward worship in sacrificing, and such like, yet even then it was lawful for the Jews to pray in any place; and after Christ's coming, Paul (1 Tim. 2:8) willeth that men pray everywhere, lifting up pure hands unto God. But here is condemned this gross fault of these Scribes and Pharisees, that they minded to pray nowhere else but in these open and public places, which is expressed by this phrase, *they love to stand and pray*; so that in a word this is the meaning of this verse: *You my hearers, when you pray, take heed of the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, for they regard only the praise of men, and therefore do use such gesture in prayer, and choose such places to pray in that they may best be seen of men*. Where we see He directly condemns their hypocrisy, as well in respect of the *ground* thereof, which was *the pride of their hearts* and not God's grace; as also in regard of the *end* thereof, which was *the praise of men* and not the glory of God.

The use.

1. Whereas Christ saith, *When thou prayest*, He taketh it for granted that all men of years must pray; and whereas He condemns the false manner of prayer, and sets down the right form and manner thereof, He teacheth us that it is a most necessary thing for all that have discretion, to exercise themselves religiously in this duty of prayer. And because our Saviour here urgeth this duty so much, I will here shew *the necessity of prayer*; which may appear unto us by sundry reasons: (1) Prayer is one of the most principal parts of God's worship; for herein we acknowledge Him to be the giver of all goodness, the searcher and knower of our hearts; and hereby we testify the faith, hope and confidence we have in God. And prayer is called *the calves of our lips* (Hos. 14:2), because it is a sacrifice well- pleasing to God. (2) By prayer we do obtain, and also continue and preserve unto ourselves every good grace and blessing of God, especially such as concern eternal life; for God promiseth His Spirit to them that ask it by prayer; and the first conversion of a sinner, howsoever it be the free gift of God, yet by God's grace moving and enabling a man thereunto, is obtained by prayer; and so are all the good graces following our conversion, both gotten and increased. (3) The true gift of prayer is a pledge of the spirit of adoption; and therefore Zechariah calls the spirit of prayer (Zech.12:10) *the spirit of grace*. And Paul saith (Rom. 8:26,15), *The Spirit helps our infirmities*, even *the spirit of our adoption, which teacheth us to cry, Abba Father*. (4) By prayer we have spiritual communion and familiarity with God; for in the preaching of the Word, God speaks to us; and in prayer we speak to God, and the more we pray, the nearer and greater fellowship we have with God; which one reason (if there were no more) is sufficient to persuade us of the necessity of prayer, and to move us unto diligence therein.

But sundry objections are made against the necessity of prayer:

*Objection 1*: It is said God knows our thoughts before we pray, and therefore it is needless to express them by prayer unto Him. *Answer*: We pray not to acquaint God with our suits, or with our hearts, as though He knew them not, but to perform obedience unto His commandment, who requireth this duty at our hands. Again, we pray unto God, to honour Him, in acknowledging Him to be the knower of our hearts, the giver of all

goodness, the stay of our faith and hope, in whom only we put all our trust and confidence.

*Objection 2*: Whether we pray or not, God will give us the blessings which He means to bestow on us. *Answer*: This is flat atheism; and yet we must distinguish of God's blessings, for some are common blessings which God oft gives to men without their asking, because they serve to preserve nature; as rain and fruitful seasons, food, raiment, etc. (Acts 14:17). And yet even these common blessings must be prayed for; (Phil. 4:6) *In all things let your requests be made known to God*. And James saith (Jam. 4:2), *You lust and have not because ye ask not*. (Psa. 106:23), Moses prayer saves the people from destruction. Others are special blessings of the elect, and these must always be sought and obtained by prayer.

*Objection 3*: God hath decreed all events, and everything shall so fall out as He hath appointed, and therefore it is needless to pray, and oftentimes it is but the crossing of God's will. *Answer*: The reason is naught; for as God hath decreed the event of all things, so likewise He hath appointed the means whereby His decree shall be effected; and prayer many times is a principal means to bring God's will to pass (1 Kin. 18:1). God shewed to Elijah that He would send rain in Israel after that long drought, and yet the prophet crouched unto the earth, and put his face between his knees (v.42); no doubt humbling himself in prayer to God for it, as St James saith (Jam. 5:17,18). Where we may see that prayer is not contrary to God's decree, but a subordinate means to bring the same to pass; and therefore we must rather reason thus, that because God hath decreed the event of all things, and hath appointed prayer as a means to effect sundry of His decrees, therefore we must use it.

Considering then that prayer is necessary, notwithstanding all that can be said against it, we must learn with special reverence to give ourselves unto this duty, both publicly in the assemblies of the saints, and privately in our families, being masters and governors; for no family ought to want this morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving; yea, we must pray by ourselves particularly in regard of our particular wants. Indeed the most do thus plead for themselves that they use to pray often; but the truth is that the common practice of our people in prayer is nothing but lip-labour

and a mocking of God; for what be their prayers but the saying over the ten commandments and the Creed, which are no prayers. Yea, their repetition of the Lord's prayer without understanding or devotion, is no prayer with God, when they do it only of custom, and rest in the work done. But here is required another manner of prayer than this. And to incite us unto it, let us consider the worthy examples of God's servants herein. Moses prayed for the saving of the Israelites, forty days and forty nights without meat or drink (Exod. 34:28). David prayed seven times a day (Psa. 119:164). And our Saviour Christ spent whole nights in prayer (Luke 6:12). Now these examples were written for our learning, to teach us to addict ourselves to this holy duty, wherein our hearts speak unto God. The want hereof is the cause of the common atheism that is in the world, of injustice and cruelty in men's callings, or swearing, pride and backbiting in men's lives; for if men would often set themselves in the presence of God, by unfeigned invocation, the remembrance thereof would still be before their eyes, and cause them to abstain from all these iniquities; for who being stained with such transgressions durst present himself before the majesty of God, who is a consuming fire against all sin and wickedness, having *fiery eyes* to see their sins, and *feet of brass* to bruise them in pieces that will not repent (Rev. 1:14,15).

2. Secondly, in this prohibition against hypocrisy in prayer, we may see that to conceive a prayer and to make profession of religion, may for the outward work, as well be performed from pride of heart as from the grace of God. Carnal men may do that in pride, which God's children do by grace, as we shewed in the former point of alms-giving. That therefore which Christ said of hearing the Word, *take heed how you hear*, must be conceived to be spoken to us of prayer and the profession of religion, *take heed how you pray, and how you profess religion*. And indeed before we pray, we ought to enter into our hearts, and there to search out our corruptions diligently, that we may be able to discern in ourselves between pride and God's grace; and to perceive upon what ground we pray, that it be not from a damnable pride, but from the saving grace of God's Holy Spirit.

3. Thirdly, in this prohibition Christ condemns this false end of prayer, when men do it *to have praise of men*; whereby we may see that it is a thing incident to the professors of the gospel, to do the duties of religion, for the

approbation of men, which notably bewrays the hypocrisy of our hearts, which naturally have more respect to men than to the Lord, even then when we have to deal with God Himself. Thus did the Scribes and Pharisees, and it is to be feared that the same fault is common among us; for men are far more forward and careful to perform the public duties of religion, in the assemblies of the church, than private duties, either in families or by themselves. Many will pray in the church, that never regard private prayer at home. Again, in performing public duties, many have more care of the outward action than of truth and sincerity in the heart; and many study more for fit words to delight men's ears, than for good affections, which God approveth; for what is the cause that many ancient professors, when they come to die, know not how to commend themselves to God? Surely, this especially, that in the whole course of their profession, they more respected men that God; and therefore in the time of death, when they must needs deal with God indeed, they know not what to do, nor how to behave themselves.

4. Lastly, Christ here reproves their behaviour in prayer, which was standing, without all humbling of themselves, either in soul or body. This is a thing incident to many in our congregations, who use to shew no manner of reverence or humility in the time of prayer; but either stand or sit as though they had no need to humble themselves; or else intended only that men should see them. But we must know that howsoever the Word of God prescribes no peculiar gesture in this action, yet it is not a thing indifferent, either to use, or not to use, some seemly gesture of humiliation in this worship of God; but some must needs be used, to express and further the humility of the heart, which is chiefly required. The seraphims standing before God (Isa. 6:2) cover their feet and faces with their wings, in regard of God's presence; and the poor publican that prayed with the Pharisee, howsoever he prayed standing (Luke 18:13), yet he cast down his countenance, and smote himself on the breast, to testify his humiliation. Yea, Christ Jesus our Lord, when He bear the punishment of our sins in the garden, fell down upon His face, and prayed (Matt. 26:39). Thus also did Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:45), Elijah (1 Kin. 18:42), Ezra (Ezra 9:5) and Daniel (Dan. 6:10) humble themselves. And it hath always been the practice of God's servants in prayer, by some convenient gesture of the body, to express the humility of their hearts; which checketh the custom of our

common people in prayer, who are so far from bringing a broken heart to God, which is the thing He chiefly requires, that they know not what to ask; and many there be that will not submit themselves to such outward gesture as might express their inward humiliation. These things are far unseemly for God's people, and therefore let us learn to humble ourselves at God's footstool, first in our very hearts, and withal, we must be careful to testify the same by some convenient outward humiliation.

II.

"*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*" (v.6)

Christ having forbidden hypocrisy in the former verse, doth here command the contrary virtue; namely, sincerity, setting down the right manner of prayer to God in that behalf. Now because the words are not to be taken in that sense, which at the first reading they seem to bear; therefore for the better understanding of them, I will here lay down two grounds:

1. *First ground*. That in this place our Saviour Christ doth not forbid public prayer in the congregation, or in public places; for public prayer is God's ordinance. *Where two or three* (saith Christ (Matt. 18:19,20)) *be gathered together in my name, there am I in the middle among them; and whatsoever they desire, shall be given them of my Father*. Again, public prayer serves for most worthy uses, for which it may be maintained; as first, to make men's prayers unto God more fervent and effectual; as in the commonwealth, a private man's supplication is not so much respected, as when a whole incorporation, or a whole shire make petition to the prince. Secondly, by public prayer, a man professeth himself to be a member of God's church, and one that severeth himself from all profane societies and companies of men in the world. Thirdly, public prayer serves to stir up zeal in them that be cold and backward; for herein they are made acquainted with God's blessings, they are left to see their own wants, and they have the good example of God's children.

2. *2nd ground. That private prayer* (though it be God's own ordinance*) is not here directly commanded*; for look what was forbidden in the former verse, the contrary thereto is here commanded; but Christ did not simply there forbid public prayer, He aimed at an higher thing therein; namely, hypocrisy, and therefore here He commandeth not private prayer directly, but intendeth the right manner thereof, for sincerity, whether public or private.

Having laid down these two grounds, I now come to the true meaning of these words.

*When thou prayest*, that is, either by thyself alone, or with others, *enter into thy chamber, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray*, etc., that is, be as though thou didst pray in thy closet, intending only to approve thyself and thine heart unto the Lord, having no respect to any creature in the world; for this Christ means by *praying in a chamber* or *closet*; namely, that a man in prayer should not respect himself, or any creature, but simply intend and approve himself unto God only.

In the words thus explained, we are to observe two things: a commandment, and a reason thereof.

1. The commandment is in these words: *When thou prayest enter into thy chamber, and when thou hast shut the door, pray unto thy Father which is in secret*. This commandment in joining the right disposition of the heart to Godward in our prayers, doth prescribe the true and perfect manner of prayer; whereto that we may better attain, I will shew how the same is performed.

That a man in prayer may approve himself and his actions unto God alone, three kinds of duties are required: some going before prayer, some in the act of prayer, and some after prayer.

1. Before prayer four duties are required:

1. A man must have knowledge of three things concerning prayer (for every prayer must be made in faith and in obedience unto God, which without knowledge cannot be done), to wit, of God's commandment to

pray; of the things we ask in prayer, and of the manner of asking, which is this: spiritual blessings concerning life eternal, such as remission of sins, sanctification, and other necessary graces, must be asked simply without condition. But temporal things concerning this life, such as health, wealth, liberty and such like, must be asked with condition of God's will, as they serve for His glory, the good of ourselves and of our brethren.

2. A man must labour to find himself converted unto God, having a true purpose of heart not to live in any sin; for (John 9:31) *God heareth not sinners*; and David saith (Psa. 66:18), *If I regard wickedness in my heart, God will not hear my prayer*. When men come to the Lord's table, they forsake their sins, and turn unto God; which must also be done before we pray, for therein we are to deal with God, who cannot abide iniquity.

3. A man must seek to be in Christ, that would pray with comfort (John 15:7), *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask what ye will, and it shall be done for you*. In the Old Testament the sacrifices were to be offered only upon the altar of God in the temple or in the tabernacle, which prefigured this means: that in the New Testament, our prayers, which are our sacrifices, must be offered only in Christ Jesus, who is our intercessor in heaven (Rom. 8:34), and our spiritual temple.

4. Before prayer a man must sever himself from all creatures in his thoughts and desires, and bring himself before God with fear and reverence, that every power and faculty of the soul may say, as Cornelius did to Peter (Acts 10:33), *We are all here in the presence of God*. For this end, his mind and memory must be taken up with divine and holy thoughts, and his heart possessed with holy desires; God in Christ must be his whole delight, and all by-thoughts must be banished. Our Saviour Christ used to pray in the night, and in solitary places apart from the societies of men; this He did (no doubt) for this end: that He might set Himself wholly before God, and be set free from all occasions of distraction in that divine duty.

2. Duties in prayer are especially five:

1. We must labour to have a true sense and feeling of our wants, of our sins and corruptions, and be inwardly touched in conscience for the same; for as the beggar sits still at home, and never goes to beg relief till he feel himself pinched with hunger and want, so it is with us, till we feel our own wants and miseries by reason of our sins, we can never put up an earnest and hearty prayer to God.

2. We must have an inward, fervent and unfeigned desire toward God, for the supply of all our wants and miseries. This is a special thing in prayer, which maketh it not only to be a petition of the lips, but a true request of the heart. This the prophet David expressed, when he said unto God (Psa. 143:6), *My soul desireth after thee, as the thirsty land doth after rain*. And Hannah also when she told Eli (1 Sam. 1:15), that she *poured out her soul as water before the Lord*.

3. Every petition must be made in obedience, that is, we must have a commandment enjoining us to ask the thing we pray for, and a promise to assure us that it shall be granted unto us. And yet here this special caveat must be remembered, that we leave both the time and the manner of accomplishing our requests to the good pleasure and wisdom of God.

4. Every petition must be presented to God in the name and mediation of Christ (John 16:23,26); for in ourselves we are sinners, and (Isa. 59:2) *Our iniquities make a separation between God and us*; so that we cannot have access unto the Father, save only be the mediation of Jesus Christ. If we would come with boldness into the holy place, it must be by the new and living way, which Christ hath prepared for us through the veil, that is, His flesh.

5. In prayer we must have faith, whereby we believe that the thing we ask shall be done unto us (Mark 11:24), *Whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believe ye shall have it, and it shall be done unto you*. Now the ground of this faith must be God's commandment and His promise, which I mentioned before.

3. The duties after prayer are two:

1. We must call to remembrance the prayer we made to God. If one man talk with another, he will be so attentive that, as near as may be, he will remember the words that passed between them; and much more ought we so to do when we talk with God. Now we must thus meditate on our prayers for this end, that we may the better do the thing we ask, as we crave in prayer the pardon of our sins, so we must after prayer endeavour to leave the practice of them. What a horrible shame is it for men to beg at God's hands the pardon of sin, and when they rise from prayer, to fall again to the practice of it? This is with the dog to return to his vomit (2 Pet. 2:22), and with the desperate thief to stealing after he hath entreated favour of the judge.

2. After prayer we must be careful to be as plentiful in thanksgiving for blessings received, as we were in petition to crave them. This indeed may be done in the beginning of our prayer, though here I mention it last, but omitted it may not be. Ordinary men have this humanity, that where they find friendship, they will be more plentiful in tendering thanks than in making new requests; and if we deal thus with men, shall we not much more do it with God, with whom true thankfulness for one blessing is a special means to procure more? Now this thankfulness must not be only in word, but in deed testified by due obedience in life and conversation; and these are the duties whereby a man shall avoid all carnal ostentation in prayer, and approve his heart unto God therein.

By this description of the true manner of prayer, we may learn these things:

1. First, that the Romish church doth neither know nor teach nor practise the duty of prayer aright; they pray not in knowledge, for they pray in an unknown tongue and allow of ignorance as the mother of devotion. They commend doubting by speaking against assurance, and so pray not in faith, nor obedience. They pray not in humility for mercy for their sins, for they think to merit by their prayers; and which is worst of all, they direct not their prayers to God only, in the name of Christ, but to God and His saints, making the virgin Mary their mediatrix; yea, they pray to the wooden cross, which is most horrible idolatry.

2. Secondly, that our common people come far short of their duty in this part of God's worship; for their prayers consist chiefly in the bare repetition of words, which is only a lip-labour. They pray without knowledge and feeling, and so must needs fail in many other duties. Now this bewrays the manifold wants that be in the prayers of the best Christians; for besides their ignorance of many duties in prayer, their doubting and distrust, their dullness and deadness of heart, and their by-thoughts, do all shew that their hearts are not wholly taken up with God's glory, as they ought to be.

3. Lastly, hereby we may see the gross ignorance of our common people, about spells and charms; because they consist of good words, and many strange things are done thereby, therefore they think them to be good prayers; but herein they are deceived through ignorance in the right form of prayer; for they that make them and use them are either graceless persons that have society with the devil, or grossly deluded through palpable ignorance; and they cannot set themselves before God to approve their hearts unto Him in this action; nay, the worship that is done herein is to the devil, and the cure that is wrought thereby, is his work; for these charms are his watchword, to stir him up to such exploits.

Furthermore in this clause, *Pray unto thy Father which is in secret*, that is, an invisible God; is couched a reason to induce men to the obedience of this commandment, to this effect: *He to whom thou prayest is an invisible God, therefore thou must endeavour to approve the hidden man of thy heart unto Him*. Hence I gather:

1. First, that it is an horrible thing to make an image to represent the true God, or to worship God in it; for God is invisible. The second commandment condemneth them both, as Moses himself doth expound it (Deut. 4:15,16), *Ye saw no image in the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, therefore corrupt not yourselves by making you a graven image, or representation of any sign*.

2. Secondly, that there should be no outward pomp in prayer, either for gesture or for garments; for prayer is made to an invisible Father. This overthrows the whole worship of the popish church, which stands in

outward shews of carnal pomp; if there be any pomp, it most be inward, in the graces of the heart, among which humility is the first ornament.

3. Thirdly, that all places are alike in respect of God's presence, and of His hearing; for he is a God in secret, wheresoever a man hath occasion to pray, there God is; which confuteth them that make the church a more holy place for prayer than elsewhere, and therefore reserve all their prayers till they come thither; for now difference of place, in respect of God's presence, is taken away. God is as well in the hold, and in the private house, as in the church; and yet churches are ordained and used in a godly policy, because a congregation may more conveniently there meet, to their mutual edification, in the public exercise of the Word and prayer; otherwise private houses were as good places for God's worship as churches, if they were so decent and convenient for edification; for in all places men may lift up pure hands unto God, as the apostle teacheth (1 Tim. 2:8).

2.

*And thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly*.

These words contain a twofold reason whereby Christ persuadeth His hearers, and in them all others, to the careful practice of the former duty, of sincerity in prayer. The first reason is drawn from God's *all-seeing property*; the second from His *bounty*.

1. God's all-seeing property is set out in these words: *And the Father which seeth in secret*; that is, though the Father Himself be invisible, yet when thou prayest in secret, that is, as though thou wert in secret, intending only to approve thine heart unto God in prayer, then thy Father seeth thee, He knows thine heart and hears thy prayer. This is verified by the example of Jonah, who was heard praying in the whale's body; or of Daniel, praying in the Lion's den, and of Moses, who is said to cry unto the Lord, whenas he prayed only in heart (Exod. 14:15).

The use of this point is manifold:

First, it serveth to admonish us, that when we pray, we must in singleness of heart, bring ourselves into God's presence, and heartily and truly put up our requests unto God, so as we may approve unto Him, both our hearts and our prayers; for there is nothing in our prayers that can be hid from God; and therefore we must not content ourselves with the thing done, but labour so to pray that God may be well- pleased with the manner thereof.

Secondly, hereby we are taught to make conscience, not only of our doings and speeches, but even of our very thoughts, and that in secret places; for though we may conceal the same from men, yet we cannot cover them from the eyes of God; He is invisible, and yet *all things are naked before Him* (Heb. 4:13).

Thirdly, this proveth that no prayer can lawfully be made to the virgin Mary, or to any other saint departed; for He alone is to be called upon in prayer, who sees in secret. But God only sees in secret, neither the virgin Mary, nor any other of the saints can see in secret; and therefore prayer is to be made to none but to God alone. The papists answer that saints departed see in secret, though not of themselves, yet by God and in God; but that is false. The angels before their fall, saw not their own future fall, nor the fall of man. The blessed angels in heaven, know not now the time and day of the last judgment; yea, and the saints departed lie under the altar crying, *How long Lord*? (Rev. 6:9,10), being ignorant of the time of their full redemption; and therefore the saints departed see not in secret.

2. The second reason drawn from God's promised bounty, is in these words: *Shall reward thee openly*; that is, shall repay thee for thy prayer in the day of judgment, before the saints and holy angels, as we expounded the same words in the fourth verse. This is a notable reason to induce men to pray in a true and holy manner; wherein we may see the endless mercy of God, vouchsafed to them that pray aright. If any subject put up a supplication to his earthly prince, he takes it for a special favour if the prince vouchsafed to admit him to his presence. Behold here the King of Kings will not only vouchsafe access unto the throne of grace, when we put up our supplications unto Him, but if we pray aright, He doth hold Himself indebted unto us for the same, and promiseth one day to reward us openly. This far exceeds the love of all

creatures in heaven and earth, no prince is so kind and gracious to his best subjects, as the Lord is to all that call upon Him in spirit and truth.

From this place the papists would gather that prayer is a work that merits at God's hand eternal life, for thus they reason: *Where there is repaying by way of reward, there is something done which meriteth; but unto prayer there is a repaying; therefore it doth merit at God's hand. Answer*: Reward is due to man two ways: either by desert, or of free gift and promise. Now in this place God will reward man for his prayer, not for his desert, but of His own free will and grace, because He hath promised so to do. That this is so, may thus appear: If a beggar should ask an alms of any man, it were absurd to say that the beggar by asking did deserve the alms; and so stands the case for the merit of our prayers; thereby we beg things at God's hands, and therefore can no more merit thereby than the beggar can deserve his alms by asking; nay rather we may gather here that God's rewarding them that pray, proceeds from His own free grace alone; for prayer properly is a work of man unto God, wherein man gives nothing unto God, as the Jews did in the sacrifices, or as is done in other spiritual sacrifices of the New Testament; but only asketh and receiveth something from God, and therefore cannot hereby merit anything at God's hands. And by this may all other places be expounded, where reward is promised to man's works.

Lastly, note the phrase here used: *He shall reward thee openly*; that is, at the last day. Whence I gather that till the day of judgment, no servant of God shall fully reap the fruit and benefit of his prayers. This must be well considered of all that have care to call upon God unfeignedly; for many times after long and earnest prayer, we feel little or no comfort, whereby we may be brought to dislike our estate, as though God had no respect unto us; but we must know that God doth often long defer to reward His servants that pray unto Him. No doubt but Zachariah and Elizabeth prayed for issue in their younger age, and yet they were not heard till they were both old; and David saith, his eyes failed for waiting on God when He would accomplish His promise made unto him (Psa. 38). This we may also see in the petitions of the Lord's prayer; for they be all according to His will, yet the full fruition of the benefits there asked, is referred to the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

# 6:7-8

"*But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him*." Matthew 6:7,8

"*But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*" Matthew 6:7

Our Saviour Christ, having dealt against hypocrisy in prayer, doth here come to the second vice which He intends to reform therein, namely *babbling*, consisting in the outward form of prayer. The words contain two parts, a commandment and a reason thereof.

1. The commandment.

*When ye pray use no vain repetitions, as the heathen do*; where first we must know that Christ reproves not repetition in prayer simply, but needless repetitions only; for in Psalm 51, David doth sundry times repeat his requests for the pardon of sin and for sanctification. Also, Moses, Elijah and our Saviour Christ prayed forty days together, and in this long prayer (no doubt) used many repetitions; much less can we pray one day together without many repetitions. Here then by *vain repetitions*, is meant *babbling*; that is, a desire and affectation to use and speak many words in prayer. And under this one vice, are condemned all sins of the same kind, that is, all superfluous multiplication of words in prayer. *As the heathen*, that is, such as were not the people of God, but *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise* (Eph. 2:12).

In this commandment are condemned many abuse in the manner of prayer:

1. *Mere babbling*, when words are used for prayer, which contain neither requests unto God, nor giving of thanks. Such are many popish prayers, and such is the use of the Ave Maria, among our common

people, for it is the salutation of the angel Gabriel to the virgin Mary, calling her by commission from God to be the mother of Christ; which words, none since that day had warrant to use to the virgin Mary, only they are to be read as a part of that history. Yea, the rehearsal of the Ten Commandments, and of the Creed for prayers, is but mere babbling.

2. *Prayers made in ignorance* are here condemned. Thus the popish sort offend, who use to pray unto God in an unknown tongue; and thus many sin, that use the Lord's prayer without understanding of the words.

3. *Cold and dull praying* is here condemned, when the lips draw near unto God, but the heart is no whit affected therewith. This is a common vice, and some taint hereof may every man find in his own heart.

4. *Superstitious prayers*, when as God's worship is measured out by set numbers. This is the popish practice answerable to their doctrine that the rehearsing of so many Paternosters, Aves, Dirges, Masses, and such like, are effectual with God to procure such and such things. This opinion takes place with our common people, for they think God is served by the work done. If the words be said, all is well.

5. *Rash praying*, without due preparation, is here condemned, when men pray only on the sudden, by the motion of the Spirit, as they use to speak. Too many are of this mind, allowing no set form of prayer to any sort; but howsoever conceived prayer be most comfortable, yet without due preparation of the heart, it is most subject to vain repetitions.

6. *Rash vows*, especially of things not lawful, or above our power.

7. *Rash wishes*, of good or evil, being framed according to our carnal affections, and not by the Word of God.

And in a word, all vain and superfluous speech in any manner of invocation, wherein the heart is not affected according to the will of God;

all which must be remembered, for they shew plainly that our common prayers are far short of that which the Lord requireth.

Here some will say, If so many things be disallowed in prayer, how shall we speak aright in prayer? *Answer*: As the apostle Paul said of singing, so say I of prayer; it must be *with grace in our hearts* (Col. 3:16), and all our words, both for measure and number, must be tempered thereto, and no more ought to be used in prayer than may serve to express and further in ourselves, or others, some inward grace of God; as faith, repentance, zeal of God's glory etc. (Eccl. 5:2) *Be not rash with thy mouth, nor let thine heart be hasty to utter a thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou art on earth, therefore let thy words be few*; where we have express command, not only to prepare our hearts, but our words also, when we come before God in prayer, that they be such as may express some grace of our hearts.

*As the heathen*.

In this instance, we may note that the heathen had some insight into matters of religion; for first, they knew there was a God, and that the same God may be worshipped. Secondly, they practised many excellent virtues of the second table; as justice both in word and deed, liberality, continence, fidelity, and such like; yea, they cared to do some duties of the first table, as here we see they prayed unto God; and some of them performed this duty in such sort as they obtained hereby some temporal blessings. The heathen mariners (Jon. 1:14) that carried Jonah towards Tarshish, prayed to God, and obtained safety; and Ahab (1 Kin. 21:27) humbled himself unto God in prayer and fasting, and obtained a temporal freedom from a fearful judgment. Now the consideration of this point serves to check many among us who think that God will hold them excused because they mean well, and do no man harm; they plead that they are no adulterers, thieves, nor outrageous offenders; but all this the heathen man can do, and yet he is but in a damnable case; for though these be good things, yet they will not bring any man to salvation. We must therefore get faith in Christ, and from thence practise all Christian virtues.

2. *For they think to be heard by their much babbling*.

These words are a reason of the former commandment, wherein we may note three opinions of the heathen concerning God: (1) They thought God was like an earthly man, who might be instructed and persuaded by words. (2) They denied God's providence, and were not persuaded that God saw them or regarded their estate; and therefore they use many words to acquaint Him therewith. (3) They thought by the force of words to prevail with God.

Hence we may learn these instructions:

1. That though the heathen knew there was a God, yet they turned Him into an idol when they worshipped Him; and therefore Paul saith (Eph. 2:12), they were *without God in the world*; for they made Him like unto man, without any providence, and persuadable also by man's reason, and by many words.

2. By these opinions of the heathen touching God's, we may gather that there was not always in the Old Testament, an universal grace given to all, whereby they might be saved if they would; for if they had had any such grace, they would never have thought so grossly of God as they did. One spark of true knowledge of the Messiah would have expelled all these carnal conceits of God out of men's hearts. And therefore howsoever the heathen had so much knowledge of God, as made them without excuse, yet we are to hold that before Christ's coming, they were left to themselves, and forsaken of God in His just judgment, in regard of His special grace and favour.

3. By these heathen we may see what be out natural conceits of God, for our nature is the same with theirs; and therefore of ourselves we think God to be like some old man, sitting in heaven, without any regard of us at all. And when we have all things needful we will trust in God, but when means fail, we forsake Him straight. And this we shew by using unlawful means to help ourselves in the time of distress, as by seeking to witches etc. Lastly, naturally we think we can prevail with God by our words. The papists teach that the saying of five words, *Nam hoc est corpus meum*, will turn the bread and wine in the sacrament into the body and blood of Christ. And it is the common opinion of our ignorant people that the saying of words pleaseth God. They think the

> words of Scripture written or spoken, have virtue in them to do strange things, and this is one main ground of all the practices of sorcery which be so common among us. But we are to know that there is no such virtue in any words, it is only faith in the heart that makes God's Word effectual for our good. Words of themselves can do no more but signify, and that they do not of themselves, but by the pleasure of men; and therefore we are to renounce the use of all spells and charms; for be the words never so good, they are but the devil's watchword, and the ceremonies used therewithal are his sacraments to cause him to work wonders. We therefore must learn by the Word of God, to conceive better of God than nature can teach us, as of an heavenly and invisible God, governing all creatures by His providence; and not persuaded by man's reason, but working all things according to the counsel of His own will.

"*Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him*." (v.8)

In this verse our Saviour Christ repeateth the former commandment touching prayer, made after the manner of the heathen; and withal annexeth a second reason to enforce the same. The commandment is repeated from the former reason in these words: *Be ye not like them therefore*; as if He should say, considering that the heathen in their prayers look to be heard for the multitude of their words, therefore ye must not pray in that manner which they do. This repetition of the commandment serves to imprint the same more deeply in the hearts of His hearers, to cause them, and so us in them, to be more careful to avoid needless repetitions in prayer.

Now having handled this commandment in the former verse, I will here only observe this point of doctrine touching the distinction of people before the death of Christ; for here Christ saith unto the Jews, *Be ye not like them*; that is, like the Gentiles; where He putteth a plain difference between the Jews and all the nations of the world besides. And therefore when He first sent His disciples to preach, He forbade them (Matt. 10:5,6) *the way of the Gentiles, and the cities of Samaria*; commanding them to *go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. And this distinction was not only in Christ's time, but had been from the beginning, for the space of 4,000 years. In the

first age of the world there were (Gen. 6:2) *the sons of God* and *the daughters of men*; after the flood (Gal. 4:29), *the children of the flesh* and *the children of the promise*. And under the law (Hos. 2:23), a *people of God* and *no people*. This distinction stood in two things:

1. In regard of the grace of adoption, and of the especial favour of God: for in this text Christ saith, *the Jews had God for their Father*, which the Gentiles had not, for they were *strangers from the covenant of promise*.

2. In regard of God's true worship: for concerning prayer, a special part thereof, Christ here saith to the Jews, *Ye shall not be like the Gentiles*. If any shall here think that this preferment of the Jews before the Gentiles, in regard of God's special mercy came from this, that God foresaw something in them which was not in the Gentiles, let them hear what Moses saith to the Jews (Deut. 7:7,8), *The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you for your multitude, but because the Lord loved you, and would keep the oath which He sware to your fathers*.

From this ground of doctrine touching the distinction of people, in regard of God's special mercy, follow three weighty points to be known and believed: First, that the promise of remission of sins, and life everlasting in the Messiah, is not universal to all, but indefinite to many sorts, kinds and estates; for if the promise pertained to all, then there could be no distinction of man and man, of people and people, in regard of mercy; and therefore the opinion of universal grace is false and erroneous. Secondly, that though Christ died for all (for so Scripture saith) yet he died not alike effectually for all; for if redemption by Christ had been universal, then had mercy belonged alike to all, which is against the text, and therefore the opinion of universal redemption is also a forgery of man's brain. Thirdly, that God calls not all men effectually to salvation by Christ, for then should everyone have God to be his Father in Christ; and the Jew had no privilege before the Gentile in regard of mercy and the grace of adoption; but here we see that God for many hundreds of years, was the Father of the Jew, and not of the Gentile, in regard of grace and adoption. And by this doctrine, we may clear that place of the apostle St Paul (1 Tim. 2:4), where he saith, *God would*

*have all men to be saved*; for he meaneth not all men in all times, but in this last age of the world, after the ascension of Christ, when as the partition wall was broken down, and the distinction between Jew and Gentile taken away, in regard of mercy and adoption.

*For your Father knoweth whereof ye have need, before ye ask of Him*.

These words are a second reason against the heathenish manner of prayer, to this effect: It is needless for you to use vain repetitions in your prayers, because God knows your wants before you pray; and therefore few words well ordered are sufficient.

The exposition.

*Your Father knoweth*.

This knowledge of God is not a bare notice taken of our wants, but such a knowledge as doth withal include a special care to make supply unto them; for this is a rule in the expounding of Scripture, that words of knowledge are oftentimes put for words of affection; as (Psa. 1:6), *The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish*; where the opposition of knowledge to destruction sheweth plainly that by knowledge there is meant *the Lord's due regard and respect* unto the ways of the godly; which is a point full of all comfort to the children of God; and for the clearing of it, three questions are to be scanned, which may well be moved out of this text:

*Question 1*: If God knows our wants before we pray, why then should we pray at all? *Answer*: We pray, not to inform God of the things we want, as though He knew them not; but for other causes: as (1) to stir up our hearts to seek unto God's presence and favour; (2) to exercise our faith in the meditation of God's promises; (3) to ease our woeful hearts, by pouring them out to the Lord; (4) to testify our obedience unto God's commandments, and our trust in His providence, for the receiving of every good thing we desire.

*Question 2*: If God knows our wants, and have care to make supply thereof, why then doth God oftentimes delay to grant the prayers of His servants?

*Answer*: God deferreth to grant the request of His children for many respects, tending to their great good, as: (1) thereby to kindle their faith, and to stir up their zeal in prayer, that they may more earnestly beg the things they want. For this end our Saviour Christ reasoned with the woman of Canaan, before He would cure her daughter; (2) to keep them in humility, and to prevent spiritual pride; thus He denied to remove from the apostle Paul *the buffeting of Satan*, though he prayed for it, *lest he should be puffed up through multitude of revelations* (2 Cor. 12:7-9); (3) to make them esteem more highly of the blessings of God, and to stir them up to more thankfulness for the same; for it is commonly true that things lightly gotten, are lightly set by.

*Question 3*: How falleth it out that God doth never grant some men their requests? *Answer*: (1) Because they make their prayers, but not according to God's will, either failing all the time, as did the foolish virgins, who cried, *Lord, Lord, open to us*, when the doors were shut (Matt. 25:11,12); or in the things they ask, and so the sons of Zebedee (Matt. 20:20-22) had not their request, because *they asked they knew not what*; (2) Because they doubt and waver in prayer, for such *shall not receive anything from the Lord* (Jam. 1:6,7); (3) Because they pray for wrong ends; *Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that you might consume it on your lusts* (Jam. 4:3).

The use.

1. First, this provident eye of God over all our wants, teacheth us what to do when we are assaulted by an enemy, either of body or soul. We must first of all make God our refuge and tower of defence, by getting assurance of our adoption; for if we be God's children, He is our Father, knowing and weighing our wants, and He is most careful to make supply thereto before we pray. (Gen. 25:22), when the two twins strove together in Rebecca's womb, she sent to ask the Lord thereof, no doubt by Isaac her husband, who before had prayed for her (v.21). So when Jehosaphat was beset with many enemies, he cried unto the Lord for help, and was delivered (2 Chr. 18:31; 20:12). And it was the prophet David's practice to have recourse to God in all his troubles, for which cause he calls the Lord *his rock, his resting and hiding place*.

2. Secondly, hereby we are taught to have a moderate care for the things of this life; for we have a Father in heaven who careth for us, knowing all our wants, and ready to make supply thereof before we pray. In these days, most men set their hearts upon the world, and trust to outward means more than to God Himself, which comes from this: because they want a true persuasion of their adoption in Christ; for if they knew that God were their Father, then surely this persuasion would take place in their hearts. *God knows my wants, and is careful for the supply thereof, and therefore I will trust in Him, and obey Him*.

3. Thirdly, this teacheth us, in any necessity or affliction, to subject ourselves to the will of God, labouring to be thankful for that estate, as well as for prosperity, and studying to please and honour God therein; for He is a Father who seeth all our wants before we complain, and is careful for our good, knowing that affliction is better for us than prosperity, or else He would send us deliverance; for it is all one with Him, and He delights not in the affliction of His people.

4. Fourthly, this serves to arm us against all carnal and slavish fear whereby men's hearts are oppressed, either in regard of death, or of the day of judgment; for though the devil rage against us, yet when death cometh, God is our Father who knoweth our wants, and the way to comfort us, and is both willing and able to save us. In a word, this meditation serveth to stir us up to all dutiful obedience in the whole course of our lives; for who can be but thankful to such a Father as knows all his wants, and as He is able, so also He is willing and ready to make supply thereto. This therefore should enlarge our hearts to bless God, that is such a Father unto us in Christ.

# 6:9

"*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name*." Matthew 6:9

Our Saviour Christ, having forbidden His disciples all carnal and superstitious kind of praying, doth here prescribe unto them a most holy form of true prayer. But before we come unto it, He gives them this commandment: *After this manner pray ye*. St Luke hath it thus: *When you pray, say, Our Father*, etc., in which words Christ enjoins His disciples to use a right and holy form of prayer, the pattern whereof is after set down. Now because this point is controversial, I will briefly set down how far forth this prayer of Christ's is prescribed unto us; to wit, for matter and form we must imitate and follow it in all our prayers, but we are not tied to the very words of this prayer, but may freely use them, or other words at our pleasure; for our Saviour Christ ofttimes prayed in other words, and so did the apostles, as we may see by Paul's prayers in his epistles, wherein he observeth the matter and manner of this prayer, but yet useth other words. Yea, St Luke, setting down this very form of prayer, doth somewhat alter from the words of St Matthew.

1. Upon this commandment, it may well be demanded whether it be profitable and necessary to use a set form of prayer, either privately or publicly in the service of God? *Answer*: I take a set form of prayer, either publicly or privately, to be both profitable and necessary; set (I say) both for the matter and manner, and if need require, for the very words also. My reasons are these:

1. That which God hath ordained is both profitable and necessary. But God hath ordained that men should use set forms of prayer; for the priests were enjoined a set form of prayer in blessing the people (Num. 6:23-26), and the 92nd Psalm is a set prayer for the Sabbath day; yea, all the psalms of David (some few psalms of doctrine only excepted) are set forms of prayers to be used in the church of God for ever. And in this place, Christ prescribes a set form of prayer, not only for the

matter and manner, but also for the words. And the like did John Baptist, when he taught his disciples to pray.

2. In man there be sundry wants in prayer, as ignorance in the understanding, distractions in the mind, oblivion in the memory both of God's commandment and promises; in the heart is much deadness, dullness and distrust; in the tongue many times is want of such convenient utterance as should be in him that would speak unto God; and in most men there is bashfulness, that they cannot utter and dispose the desires of their heart before others in that order which were meet. Now to make supply of all these wants, a set form of prayer is to be used, whereunto all the powers of body and soul may be well fitted.

3. The ancient church of God, long before the time of popery, used a set form of prayer. Indeed for the first three hundred years after Christ, by reason of continual persecution, they could not do so; but after those times, there was a set form of prayer used in all churches, insomuch as the soldiers in the field had their set prayers. And in many councils it was decreed that no church should use any form of prayer but such as was allowed and appointed, and that for these causes: First, that there might be an uniformity in the solemn worship of God; and secondly, that the ignorance and negligence of many pastors might be prevented, who otherwise would have omitted this duty in their congregation. And therefore, there was then set down a general form of Confession of faith, of prayer, and thanksgiving, and of administration of the sacraments.

Now considering set prayers is God's ordinance, and the imperfections of man require it, and the same hath been so long used in former ages, I doubt not to affirm the same to be both profitable and necessary; whereby we may see how blind and rash they are, who term set prayers an abominable idol, and as loathsome unto God as swine's flesh was to the Jews. These be loathsome and irreverent terms. But that we may know their error and folly the better, let us here scan their principal reasons against set prayer; and they be two:

1. To read a sermon penned by another is no preaching, and therefore to repeat a set prayer is no prayer. *Answer*: The reason is naught; for in

reading a penned sermon, a man cannot express the gift of prophecy; but in reading a set prayer, he may shew the gift of prayer; as namely, a touched heart for his sins, an hungering desire after grace, and a thankful heart after God's mercies; and herein doth prayer consist, and not in words.

2. We must pray freely as the Spirit moves us; and therefore to use set forms of prayer, is to stint and quench the good motions of the Spirit. *Answer*: This reason were somewhat, if everyone received such a portion and measure of the Spirit as did enable him hereunto; but seeing in this life we have but the firstfruits hereof, and not the tithes (as one saith), we are to use all good helps to make supply unto our wants; for in the practice of holy duties, we are like unto a man that is newly recovered of some grievous sickness, who can walk in his chamber, yet not by himself alone, but either with his staff, or leaning upon another man's shoulder. Even so, we being weak and feeble in prayer, had need of the help of set forms of prayer, to hold up our feeble hands unto God. And therefore it is requisite for men to use set forms of prayer, at least for the matter and order thereof in their own hearts; yea, and many times it is needful for some to use set prayers for words; for many that have true grace in their hearts, want utterance to express it; and if they might not use set forms of prayer, they should be deprived of many great comforts, especially when they pray with others. So that if the heart be rightly prepared thereto, set prayer doth not quench, but help the weak gifts of the Spirit, both in heart and tongue.

By this then we see that neither our church, nor any other, where a set form of divine worship is established, is therefore to be blamed; because the same is both necessary and profitable. Secondly, here we see that it is meet and necessary we should have some set form of prayer in our hearts according to our peculiar estates, whereby we may express unto God our peculiar wants, and crave supply thereof particularly. Some think we must only pray upon extraordinary instinct and motion of the Spirit; but so many be our wants, that unless we prepare ourselves beforehand, we cannot pray aright; and therefore to avoid many distractions and lets in our mind, heart and utterance, we shall be found needful to prescribe unto ourselves a set

form of prayer. We are content to keep a set order for our diet and apparel, and why should we not do it in prayer, which concerns the comfort and refreshing of our souls?

2. A second thing to be gathered from this commandment is this: That the Lord's prayer is the most excellent form of prayer that is, or can be made by any creature; for it was indicted and propounded by the Son of God, who is the wisdom of the Father. Now the excellency of it stands in these things:

1. In the pithy shortness of it; for in few words it compriseth endless matter.

2. In the perfection of it; for it containeth in it whatsoever is to be asked in prayer; in which respect it is well called of one, *the abridgement of the whole gospel*.

3. In the order thereof; which hereafter we shall see in the resolution of it.

4. In the acceptation it hath with God the Father; for it containeth the words of Christ His Son, in whom the Father is well pleased.

Uses.

1. First, the excellency of this prayer sheweth plainly that if any set form of prayer may be used, then this may, being indicted by the Mediator of our church. And therefore the Anabaptists of our day are fondly deceived, who deny the use thereof for a prayer, whenas before this time, for the space of fifteen hundred years after Christ, there was never any that disallowed it.

2. Secondly, hence we see that the practice of those preachers is commendable, who use to conclude their prayers with the Lord's Prayer; for hereby, as by a most perfect and excellent prayer, the wants and imperfections of our prayers are supplied.

3. Thirdly, whereas some would gather from the perfection and excellency of this prayer, that it alone is sufficient to be used, they are deceived; for Christ's intent was rather to commend this prayer unto us for matter and manner, than for the words thereof.

4. Again, though it be a most perfect prayer, yet it is only general. But every true believer must have particular prayers, whereby in special form and manner his particular estate and condition may be made known unto the Lord; yet so, as they be always suitable unto this form here prescribed.

And thus much of the commandment. Now followeth the prayer itself.

"*Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name*" etc.

This prayer hath three parts: I. A preface; II. The petitions; III. The conclusion.

I.

The preface in these words: *Our Father which art in heaven*. In the handling whereof, as also in the rest of this prayer, I will first propound the meaning, then the instructions.

1. The Meaning.

*Our Father*.

This title properly belongs to God, who is a Father simply, by creation giving being to all things, and preserving them by His providence. Men indeed are called fathers, but that is only secondarily, because in some properties of fatherhood they resemble God. Now this title is given to God, sometime simply considered without personal relation (Deut. 32:6), *Do ye so reward the Lord, O foolish people? Is not He thy Father that hath bought thee*? Otherwhile it is given to the particular persons in the Trinity; as first and principally to the First Person, who is commonly called the Father. And the Second Person in the Trinity is sometimes called Father, as (Isa. 9:6) *the Father of eternity*; because He is the ground of our adoption, whereby we become eternally the sons of God. And therefore He is brought in thus complaining of reproach: *Behold, I and the children which the Lord hath given me, are as signs and wonders in Israel* (Isa. 8:18); for the author to the Hebrews expounds that place of Christ (Heb. 2:13); and He is said to *have seed* (Isa. 53:10). And the Holy Ghost may proportionally be called Father, because with the Father and the Son He gives being to all things.

But in this place by Father is meant properly the First Person, who is first and chiefly the Father of Christ; and in Christ, our Father. He is the Father of Christ, first by nature, begetting Him as He is the Son, of His own substance before all worlds, by communicating to Him His whole essence or Godhead. Secondly, He is the Father of Christ, as Christ is man, by the grace of personal union; for the manhood of Christ doth wholly subsist in the Godhead of the Second Person, and therefore Christ as He is man (I say not in His manhood, which is a nature not a person), may well be called the Son of God. And in this relation of Himself to the First Person, Christ saith (John 14:28), *My Father is greater than I*. God the Father is our Father, not by nature, or in regard of personal union, but by the grace of adoption in Christ; for *God sent His Son made of a woman* (that is, incarnate), *that we might receive the adoption of sons* (Gal. 4:4,5). And this grace we receive when we truly believe in His name (John 1:12, Gal. 3:26). God for Christ's sake being content to receive us for His sons and daughters.

*Which art in heaven*.

God is said to be in heaven, not as though He were included in the circle of the heavens; for the heavens, and the heaven of heavens are not able to contain Him (1 Kin. 8:27), and indeed He is neither included nor excluded any place, being infinite, and so everywhere; but because His majesty and glory is most eminent in the highest heavens to His saints and angels; and thence doth He manifest Himself unto us in His power, wisdom, justice and mercy, while we are on earth; for *heaven is His throne, and the earth is His footstool* (Isa. 66:1). So that the meaning of this preface is this: *O Lord God, thou art the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him our most merciful Father by adoption and grace, thou art a most glorious God, who doest in heaven and from heaven manifest thy glorious power, and mercy, thy wisdom, justice* etc.

2. The Instructions.

*Our Father*.

1. This title *Father*, here given to God, teacheth us to whom we must direct our prayers; not to saints or angels, or any other creatures, but to God alone.

Reasons:

1. This is a perfect pattern of true prayer, wanting no direction for the right performance of this part of God's worship. Now this directs us only unto God in prayer.

2. God only is the Author and Giver of all good things (Jam. 1:17), and therefore we must ask them of Him alone.

3. The Lord only, who is infinite and omnipotent, can hear all men's prayers at all times, and in all places; and therefore He alone is to be prayed unto, and not saints departed, as the papists teach.

2. By this title, we may see in what order we must direct our prayers unto God; for as the Word of God revealeth God unto us, so must we pray unto Him. Now the Scripture revealeth God unto us, to be one in essence and three in Person, *viz.* the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; whereof the Father is first, the Son is the second, the Holy Ghost the third in order, though not in time or greatness. Thus and no otherwise must we conceive of God, neither severing the Godhead from the Persons, nor the Persons from the Godhead. And thus also must we worship Him, even one God in three Persons, and three Persons in one God. And yet seeing the Father is first in order, the Son the second, and the Holy Ghost the third, therefore when we pray to God, we must observe this order, directing our prayers to God the Father, in the mediation of the Son, by the assistance of the Holy Ghost, as Christ here teacheth us to say *Our Father*.

*Question*: May we not direct our prayers to the Son, or to the Holy Ghost by name? *Answer*: Yes, for Stephen prayed to the Son (Acts 7:59) *Lord Jesus receive my spirit*; and Christ bids His disciples, *Go teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost* (Matt. 28:19). *Objection*: But in this perfect platform, we are taught to pray to the Father alone. *Answer*: Though the Father alone be here named, yet the other two persons are not hereby excluded. The Father indeed is most usually named because He is the first in order, but yet with Him always is implied the Son, and the Holy Ghost; for as all three persons subsist in one and the same divine nature or Godhead, and are not severed in will, in counsel, or in

outward actions, as creation, preservation and redemption, save only they are distinguished in the manner of working; so likewise must they be all conceived in our minds together when we pray, and none severed out though they be not named. We must pray to all, though we name but one, having in that one relation to the rest in our mind and heart. And if we conceive aright of the order of the Persons in the Trinity, subsisting in the unity of essence, we may safely name in our prayers which Person we will, so that withal we include the rest in our mind, and may also (if we name all) place them in such order as best fitteth our present occasion; as the apostle doth in his benediction (2 Cor. 13:14) *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all, Amen*; where he placeth the second before the first, because by the grace of Christ we come to be partakers of the love of God the Father.

3. In this title *Father*, see the true ground of that boldness wherewith God's children come before God in prayer; namely, their interest in the Covenant of grace in Christ, in whom God becomes their Father. The Scripture mentioneth two covenants: one of works, which saith, *Do this, and thou shalt live*; the other of grace, concerning reconciliation by the Messiah through faith; for it saith, *Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved*. Now the covenant of works, through the corruption of our flesh, drives us from God, and throws us to hell; but the Covenant of grace shews our reconciliation to God in Christ; for (2 Cor. 5:19) *God was in Christ, and reconciled the world unto Himself, not imputing their sins unto them*; for which the first covenant would have condemned them. And when we truly believe in Christ, we perform the condition of this Covenant, and so (Rom. 5:1) *through faith in Him have peace with God*; yea (Eph. 3:12), *boldness, and entrance with confidence*. And therefore when we come to God in prayer, we must ground upon this Covenant in Christ, and so shall we go boldly unto the throne of grace. Bring faith in Christ, then is God thy Father, and so thou shalt be welcome. Hence it was that the prophets and holy men under the law, do so often entreat the Lord in their prayers, to remember His Covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which was the Covenant of grace, as the apostle sheweth (Gal. 3; Rom. 4).

4. In this title *Father*, we are taught how to dispose ourselves towards God when we pray unto Him; namely, as children towards their Father, for our whole behaviour both outward and inward. And this stands especially in four things:

1. In due reverence both of heart and gesture, like as gracious children come before their aweful parents.

2. In true humility, from our hearts renouncing our own merits, and our own wills, and relying wholly on Christ's righteousness, and on the will of God in Him.

3. In true contrition and sorrow of heart for our own sins, whereby we have offended God, who hath been so gracious and merciful a Father unto us in Christ.

4. In a sound purpose of heart to break off the course of all sin, and to walk before God in new obedience to all His commandments.

This is such behaviour as beseemeth God's children in prayer; and hereunto must we labour to conform ourselves when we come before God, or else we shew ourselves not children, but rebels and traitors. Beware therefore of all irreverent behaviour in prayer; beware of pride, of hardness and wickedness of heart, as having the least purpose to live in sin; for as David saith (Psa. 66:18), *If I regard wickedness in my heart, God will not hear my prayer*; but (saith he (Psa. 26:6)), *I will wash my hands in innocency, and so will I compass thine altar*; with *a contrite and broken heart* (Psa. 51:17), disclaiming his own righteousness (v.1 and Psa. 115:1), and in all reverence of behaviour (Psa. 95:9).

Thus much of the title *Father*. Now let us see how we must apply it to ourselves in prayer. *Our Father*, that is, my Father in Christ, and not mine only, but the Father of all that truly believe in Him.

Hence we learn sundry instructions:

1. That when we pray, we must apply to ourselves all the promises of God in Christ touching righteousness and life everlasting; for He that

makes them is our Father, and therefore they belong to us that be His children. These promises are many and excellent. And that they must be applied to ourselves in prayer is granted on all parts; but how? There is the controversy. The papists say, we must apply them to ourselves by hope; we say by faith, which is the ground of things hoped for, laying hold on them for ourselves particularly, as Thomas did on Christ (John 20:28), *My God, and my Lord*; which I prove thus: Whatsoever we ask in prayer, we must (Mark 11:24) *believe that God will grant it for His Son's sake*. But this we cannot do, unless we believe that God is our Father in Christ, and Christ our Redeemer; and therefore we must first by faith lay hold upon the main promises of righteousness and life everlasting in Christ, which is the ground of all other blessings we receive from God. O (will some say), this is hard to do. *Answer*: Yet we must do our endeavour herein, and strive against doubting, using the means whereby we may come to that measure of grace to say with Paul (Gal. 2:20), *I live now by faith in the Son of God, who hath loved me, and given Himself for me*. Doing this in sincerity, God accepts the will for the deed, even our desire and endeavour to apply Christ and His benefits, for application itself. And if we continue in this use of means, He that hath begun in us this good desire, will finish it in the fruition of grace and full assurance.

2. This teacheth us, when we pray, to be mindful of God's whole militant church and people; for we must say, *Our Father*. Indeed it is not unlawful to apply this title in prayer to ourselves particularly, for God saith of everyone that truly believeth, *Thou shalt call me Father* (Jer. 3:19), and so did Christ (Matt. 26:39) and His apostles (2 Cor. 6:18) apply to themselves this title in their prayers. But yet Christ would have us always to pray for our brethren, being assured from this His direction, that they likewise pray for us. This was David's usual practice, no doubt; for when he prayed (Psa. 51:1) most earnestly for the pardon of his own personal sins, he then forgets not Zion, but prays (v.18) the Lord to *do well unto it, and to build the walls of Jerusalem*. Now in every prayer we make, we must have respect to the church of God; then undoubtedly in the course of our lives we must employ ourselves to seek the good of others, especially of God's church; for our conversation must express the truth of our devotion. Everyone will

say that this is the minister's duty; which is most true, but yet it is not his only; for as in the natural body every member employs itself for the good of the whole body, so must it be in the mystical body of Christ; for the meanest Christian hath some gift of the Spirit; and the manifestation of the Spirit (wheresoever it is) is given to profit withal. The common saying is, *Every man for himself, and God for us all*; but this is a graceless saying, flat against the communion of saints, wherein everyone seeks another's good.

3. Hence we learn how we must come affected towards our brethren when we pray to God, namely, lovingly, and peaceably, as to children of the same Father. When we come to the Lord's table, we make conscience of love and amity with all men. And so should we do in prayer, for therein we bring a spiritual sacrifice unto God, and therefore we must (Matt. 5:24) *be reconciled to our brethren* when we offer it; for when men's hearts be full of malice, or *their hands full of blood* (Isa. 1:15), *God will not hear them, though they make many prayers*. If therefore we call upon God as our Father, we must be sure to love His children as our brethren; for (1 John 4:20), *this commandment we have of God, that he which loveth God should love his brother also*; and (1 John 3:10) *he is not of God that loveth not his brother*.

4. Here we see that all true believers, whether high or low, poor or rich, are in an equal condition in regard of God; for God is no respecter of persons; and here Christ teacheth everyone to say, *Our Father*. In earthly kingdoms there be differences of estates and degrees; some be noble, some be base; some rule, others serve and obey; but *with God in Christ there is neither bond nor free* etc. (Col. 3:11). The believing shepherd may call God his Father, as well as the believing king, and have as good a place in Christ's kingdom. Which serves notably both to encourage the poor to embrace the gospel in sincerity, seeing their mean outward estate can nothing prejudice or hinder their high acceptance with the Lord, if they be faithful; as also to admonish the rich and noble in this world, not to be puffed up with these outward things to condemn the poor; for these things give them no title to the kingdom of God; nay (1 Cor. 1:26), *not many noble, nor mighty after*

*the flesh are called*; but *God hath chosen the poor of this world, that they should be rich in faith* (Jam. 2:5).

*Which art in heaven*.

1. These words shew towards what place we must dispose ourselves in prayer. Our Father to whom we pray is *in heaven*, and therefore thither must we direct our hearts, our eyes, our hands, and all that is in us. Indeed the Jews under the law looked towards the temple, and the temple towards the mercy-seat, because the Lord had there promised the manifestation of His presence; and therefore Daniel turned his face towards Jerusalem when he prayed in Chaldea (Dan. 6:10). But now in the New Testament, difference of place in respect of God's presence is taken away, and we are not tied in prayer to look east or west, north or south, but men may now everywhere and in every way lift up pure hearts and hands unto God; towards heaven thou must dispose thy heart, because thy Father to whom thou prayest is there; and look which way thou wilt, or go whither thou wilt, heaven is not nearer or further off. Which shews evidently two notable and gross popish fooleries in the matter of God's worship: the first is their going on pilgrimage from place to place to serve God the better; for God whom thou must worship is in heaven; in respect whereof all places are alike, and stir no foot, thou are not further off. Their second foolery, which is also abominable before God, is to worship God in an image, as crosses and in crucifixes etc. These they use to put them in mind of God and of Christ; but this they learn by the precepts and traditions of men, and therefore it is but mere vain and foolish worship in the sight of God. Christ teacheth us to set our hearts towards heaven, and not to pore on dumb images here on earth.

2. Is God in heaven? Then when we pray we must come before God with all reverence, fear and trembling; for He is in heaven a most glorious God, full of all majesty and power. *Be not rash with thy mouth, nor let thine heart be hasty to utter a word before God*. Why so? *For He is in heaven, and thou art upon earth, therefore let thy words be few* (Eccl. 5:1,2). Now this reverence must shew itself, first, in the holy disposition of the heart and affections towards the Lord, when the

mind is not carried away with by-thoughts, but applieth itself wholly and only to the present service it hath in hand. Secondly, in the comely gesture of the body beseeming so holy an action, done to so high a majesty. Thirdly, in the humble and reverent uttering of our requests, having beforehand well considered the things we are to utter before God. But goes the case thus with men in their ordinary prayers? Nothing less; for beside the multitude that pray without understanding, even the better sort in the time of prayer have their minds running upon other matters, some about their profits, others about their sports, or such like. Now is not this Pharisaical prayer, wherein the lips draw near to God, but the heart is far removed? Again, many shew no reverence in gesture or in speech. Some distain to bow to God in prayer, and others do rush upon God in many words without premeditation. But all these sin grievously; for howsoever irreverent praying troubles few men's consciences, because it is not easily discerned, being against the first table; yet it is to be esteemed a disgrace unto the Almighty; and being carelessly practised, when it is once known, it is plain mockery of God's majesty, worse than mocking of father and mother; and therefore we must with all carefulness avoid it, and set our hearts with all reverence towards God in prayer.

3. Hence we must learn to ask of God in prayer heavenly things especially. These earthly blessings may be asked, so far forth as they are helps to further us towards our everlasting inheritance in heaven, to which we are called (1 Pet. 1:3,4). But to be ever grovelling in the earth, is against the nature of him that hath a Father in heaven.

4. Our principal care must be how to come to heaven, for there our Father is. Ordinarily a child desires to be with his father, and is best pleased on his mother's lap, or in his father's arms; herein therefore we must testify ourselves to be the sons and daughters of God, by our unfeigned desire to be in heaven where our Father is. It is unnatural for a child not to be delighted with his father's house; and so it argues them to be void of grace, that have no affection towards heaven and heavenly things. Let us therefore delight to pray, whereby we may creep into our Father's bosom, and though our bodies be on earth, yet in affection and desire let our souls mount up to heaven. Here we are but pilgrims, if

God be our Father, our hearts must be upon our home which is heaven, where our Father is.

Now the words of this preface thus opened, contain a twofold notable ground and prop to all our prayers; to wit, that God is both able and willing to her and help when we pray; for His being *in heaven*, imports that He is almighty, and therefore can hear and help us. *Our God is in heaven, and He doth whatsoever He will* (Psa. 115:3). And being Father, yea, our Father in Christ, He must needs be willing and ready to grant our requests; for no father is so tenderly affected towards his natural son, as the Lord our God is towards all His children in Christ. (Psa. 103:13), *As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord have compassion on all that call upon Him*. (Luke 11:13), *If you that be evil can give good things to your children, much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Ghost to them that ask Him*. And hence it is that Christ saith, *Whatsoever you ask the Father in my name, He will give it you* (John 16:23). Of these two must everyone be persuaded that prays aright. Everyone will grant that God is able to hear and help, but of His willingness thereunto, none can be assured but he that is the child of God, who knoweth God to be His Father. Yet here must none deceive himself, to think whatsoever he asks on his own head, God will grant it; for if we ask amiss, we shall not receive; and therefore we must carefully mark and observe the direction of God's Word, both for the things we ask, and for our manner of asking.

II.

*Hallowed be thy name*.

Thus much of the preface, here begins the petitions, which are six in number; whereof the three first concern God, the three latter concern ourselves. Again, of those which concern God, the first concerns God's glory itself, the other two the means whereby God's glory is manifested and enlarged among men; for God's name is then glorified among men, when His kingdom doth come, and His will is done.

Now this petition for the glorifying of God's name, is rightly set in the first place; for God's glory is the absolute end of all things. (Prov. 16:4), *The Lord made all things for His own sake, yea, even the wicked for the day of*

*evil*; and therefore it must be preferred above all things; before life itself, yea before salvation, which is life eternal (John 12:27,28), our Saviour Christ prefers the glory of His Father's name before His own life. And Paul prefers it before his own salvation; for he professeth that for God's glory in the salvation of the Jews, he could *wish himself separate from Christ* (Rom. 9:3).

In this petition, as in the rest, we are to observe this order: first, shew the meaning of the words; then propound the uses.

1. The Meaning.

*Name*.

The word ascribed to God is here taken generally; first, for God *Himself*; as (Psa. 20:1) *The name of the God of Jacob defend thee*. (Rom. 10:13) *Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*; that is, upon the Lord. Secondly, it here betokens *anything whereby God may be known*, as men are by their names; and thus it comprehends: (1) His divine attributes; as justice, mercy, power, wisdom etc. (2) His Word, the Holy Scriptures, which reveal to them the true knowledge of God. (3) God's *judgments*, public or private; for thereby He makes known His presence, His power and His justice. (4) His *works and creatures*; for all these bear a stamp of God's name, and in them may the invisible things of God be seen (Rom. 1:20).

*Hallowed*, or *sanctified*.

To *hallow God's name* is to glorify God's name, as (John 12:28) *Father glorify thy name*, and this we do when we give unto Him the highest honour that may be. The highest I say, because there are two kinds of honour: first, the honour of religion, when we give our hears to God, loving Him, fearing Him, trusting and delighting in Him above all; which we testify by all outward adoration prescribed in God's Word; this is the highest honour of all. Secondly, there is the honour of society, which passeth between man and man in commonwealths; and it consisteth in the acknowledgment of pre-eminence and superiority in another, either by word or gesture, civilly. Thus subjects honour princes and magistrates; and inferiors their superiors.

This is due to the creature. The former is due to the Creator only, and that is the honour we pray for.

That we may yet the better understand the meaning of this petition, we must know that God's name is hallowed or sanctified of us two ways: either in God Himself, or in His works.

1. In Himself by three actions:

1. When we conceive God in our minds, and acknowledge Him as He hath revealed Himself in His Word; to wit, Creator and Governor of all things, most holy, most wise, just, merciful, etc.

2. When we sanctify the Lord in our hearts (1 Pet. 3:15); that is, when we love Him above all, and fear Him above all, and put our trust in Him in all estates.

3. When we praise and laud the name of God for His goodness; yea, though we should never taste of His special favour, yet for His general mercy, justice and most wise providence, we ought to extol the Lord with our mouths.

2. God's name is hallowed or sanctified in His creatures by three special actions:

1. When we acknowledge the wisdom of God, and His powerful hand in every creature.

2. When we have a reverent estimation of the creatures, and use them in Christian sobriety, in regard the stamp of God's power and wisdom which appeareth in them.

3. When we sanctify our moderate use of them by the Word and prayer, as God requireth (1 Tim. 4:5).

See the practice hereof in the Word of God, which is His own solemn ordinance whereby He makes Himself known unto His church. Therein we sanctify and hallow God's name:

1. When we acknowledge the wisdom, mercy and power of God in it.

2. When we have a reverent estimation of the Word in regard of the glorious image of God which appeareth in it.

3. When we use it in a sanctified and holy manner, coming unto it reverently with prepared hearts, hungering after the graces of God which are wrought thereby, and giving ourselves in heart and life to be framed and ruled thereby. And thus we sanctify God in afflictions (for they are His work) when we labour to see the hand of God therein, in justice, mercy and great wisdom chastening us, when we have a reverent regard to the hand of God appearing in them; and labour to be humbled thereby for the increase of our repentance, and the exercise of our faith and patience.

Thus then in this petition we desire in mind, in heart, and life, to glorify God both in Himself and in His works; and the meaning of it may be thus expressed: O Lord, open our eyes that we may know thee aright, and may discern thy power, wisdom, justice and mercy; and enlarge our hearts that we may sanctify thee in our hearts, by making thee our fear, love, joy and confidence; and upon our lips, that we may bless thee for thine infinite goodness; yea, O Lord, open our eyes that we may see thee in thy works, and strike our hearts with reverence of thy name appearing in them; and grant that when we use any one of them, we may honour thee in our sober and sanctified use thereof.

The Uses.

1. *Wants to be bewailed*.

Here we are to call to mind our wants, and to humble our souls for those sins whereby we have hindered God's glory or profaned His name; and these especially are four:

1. *Pride of heart*; a vile affection whereby we seek our own praise and glory, and not God's. This is natural, and so the more hardly discerned; but while it is nourished, God's glory is neglected, and therefore when

we desire to glorify God's name, we must acknowledge and bewail this inward corruption.

2. *Want of zeal*, coldness of heart towards God. This is an inward corruption which debaseth the Lord in our hearts, and takes away that high esteem of God which ought to be in us. This causeth us to omit to glorify God, and to defend the causes of God, and the honour of His name, when wicked men disgrace and reproach the same. He that hath any insight into his own estate may perceive this in himself. Now it mightily hinders the glory of God, and therefore we must unfeignedly bewail it in our own hearts.

3. *Hardness of heart*, whereby we are hindered from the true knowledge of God in His Word, and from discerning His wisdom, power, justice, mercy etc. in His works, though we have them before our eyes. Hence it come that either we neglect the Word, and pass by the works of God without consideration; or, if we use them, yet it is without glory to God, or profit to our souls. (Mark 6:52) Christ's own disciples *considered not the matter of the loaves, because their hearts were hardened*; they discerned not, or at least remembered not, the power of God in that miracle, though themselves were instruments about it, and they might perceive the food to increase in their hands.

4. *Profaneness and impiety in life*; for God is glorified when we bring forth the fruits of grace (John 15:8). And our good works cause others to glorify God (Matt. 5:16). And therefore our profane life is a reproach unto the Lord, and causeth others to dishonour and blaspheme His name (Rom. 2:24). Now this profaneness appeareth either in men's speech, by blaspheming the name of God, abusing His titles, attributes, His Word, His creatures, or any work of His providence; or in their conversation, when they dispose the whole course of their lives to wrong ends, seeking themselves and not God's glory.

These are the special sins against God's glory which we are to see and to bewail in our own hearts. If we see them not in ourselves, our case is the worse, and we must suspect ourselves the more. If we perceive them in us, we must be humbled for them, yea, ashamed and confounded in our own

hearts, thinking evil of ourselves by reason hereof; and then shall we be able to say with some truth of heart, *O Lord, hallowed be thy name*. And indeed till we be inwardly humbled for these corruptions in some measure, the heart can never speak these words as a son and daughter of God ought to do.

2. *Graces to be desired*.

Secondly, this petition teacheth us earnestly to desire of God these spiritual graces, whereby we may glorify His name in ourselves and others. The graces enabling us hereto are these especially:

1. *The true knowledge of God*, as He hath revealed Himself in His Word, and in the works of His power and providence; for he that knows not God cannot possibly glorify His name.

2. *To sanctify God in our hearts*; by loving, fearing, and trusting in Him above all. This makes greatly for His glory, when we depend upon Him in soul and body for all good things.

3. *The calves of our lips*, which is a sacrifice of praise to God for all His mercies (Psa. 50:23), *He that offereth praise shall glorify me*.

4. *To see God's hand in all His works*, how mighty, wise, just, and gracious the Lord is.

5. *To reverence the works of God* for His justice, mercy, power etc. appearing in them.

6. *To use all His creatures reverently*, sanctifying the same unto ourselves by the Word and prayer.

These graces we must hunger after, and labour to have a lively feeling of in our hearts, and so shall we sanctify God's name, and honour Him in all His works. And hereby we shall know ourselves to be the sons and daughters of God. We may indeed belong to God in His secret counsel; but without these sanctified affections, we are not effectually called, and so indeed not actually become God's children.

3. *Duties to be practised*.

Thirdly, whatsoever we ask of God in prayer, we must unfeignedly endeavour to practice in our lives; as therefore we pray that God's name may be hallowed, so we must be careful to sanctify the same in our conversation. For this end we must have regard to three things:

1. That our lives be unblameable, not tainted with any sin, that as Paul did of earthly servants, They must *count their masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God be not evil spoken of* (1 Tim. 6:1). So the same may be verified in every one of us towards the Lord our Master in heaven. Away therefore with all idolatry, blasphemous oaths, and cursed speaking, with Sabbath-breaking, and all other sins against the second table; for a profane life brings great reproach upon the name of God which men profess.

2. We must propound the right end of our life every day in our calling and conversation, to wit, God's honour and glory, and not our own praise, wealth, pleasure or dignity.

3. When God offers occasion by any work of providence, we must endeavour therein to glorify and magnify God. Example: Say God sends a grievous dearth and famine of bread among us, or the plague of pestilence, as He hath done sundry times; then must we strive herein to glorify and praise God's name: first, by labouring to see the hand of God smiting us for our sins; secondly, by reverencing the work of God, esteeming it as His hand upon us; thirdly, by humbling ourselves unto God, and renewing our repentance for our sins that have brought God's judgment upon us. Thus should we glorify God in His judgments; but alas, such is our blindness and security, that though God's hand be upon us, yet few lay it to heart. Where is he that saith (Jer. 8:6), *What have I done*? Nay, though God Himself *call unto weeping and mourning, and to girding with sackcloth* (as the prophet speaketh (Isa. 22:12,13)), yet *behold, joy and gladness, eating and drinking*; so as God's name is dishonoured in His judgments. So when God's blessings are upon us, we should glorify His name by labouring to see His hand of mercy; and esteeming of them reverently, with praise and thanksgiving to God that is the Giver. But herein also men dishonour

God, by poring upon the means, praising their own wit and industry, and so sacrifice to their nets, as the prophet saith (Hab. 2:15,16).

Now because this duty is of great weight and importance, I will add some special reasons to move us hereunto:

1. From the necessity hereof in God's church and children; for God's name is dishonoured over all the world. In the great dominions of the Turk, God is acknowledged, but yet out of the Trinity; and the Jews confessing God, deny Christ. The papists in words confess and acknowledge the Trinity; but yet by their idolatry they greatly rob God of His glory, they rob Christ of His offices, and give divine worship unto creatures. And in the bosom of the church are many atheists, blasphemers, oppressors, drunkards, adulterers, and voluptuous persons, whose belly is their god; all which, though they will profess God in word, yet by their works they deny Him; so that unless God's children seek to maintain and advance God's glory, it is likely to be trampled and trodden underfoot.

2. There is great danger to God's children in omitting and neglecting this duty; for by calling they are brought near unto God. Now God will be glorified in all that come near Him. If we do not honour Him according to our profession, His hand will be upon us for His glory in our confusion. Hence it was that God slew Nadab and Abihu the sons of Aaron (Lev. 10:1,2), for offering strange fire before the Lord; and He debarred Moses and Aaron out of the promised land (Num. 20:10) because they glorified Him not at the waters of strife. This made the wrath of God to burn like fire against the house of Eli (1 Sam. 2:29,31; 3:13), for the iniquity of his sons, which their father saw in them, and yet stayed them not, and so honoured them above the Lord. We had need therefore to look unto ourselves that we glorify God in Himself and in His works, else His hand will be upon us in soul or body, goods, or calling, or some other way for the glory of His justice; for God will not lose His glory.

3. If we say, *Hallowed be thy name* with our mouth, and seek not His honour in our life, we bewray in ourselves damnable hypocrisy, and make profession of that sin which the Lord utterly detesteth. We

esteem very basely of dissemblers among men; but much more odious is this sin in the matters of God; and therefore let the practice of our lives shew the sincerity of our hearts, when we pray for the glorifying of God's name.

4. Fourthly, this petition teacheth us that we ourselves must be hallowed and sanctified, for else we cannot hallow God's name. They that bear the vessels of the Lord, in His sanctuary, must be clean (Isa. 52:11). How mush more ought they to be holy, that bear the glorious name of God? When Ananias doubted of going to Paul, the Lord tells him (Acts 9:15), *He is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name*; alluding to that state of sanctification whereto the Lord had lately called him, whereby He made him a fit instrument for the glory of His name in the ministry of the gospel. And the same state must we labour after, if we would be answerable to that we seem to desire in this petition. We must therefore labour to be new creatures, changed in mind and heart, for an unholy person cannot truly desire the glory of God; but when we once feel the grace of sanctification, then will the desire of God's glory breed in out hearts, and we shall know how worthy the Lord is to have all the glory given unto His name.

5. Fifthly, If we compare this petition with the reason wherewith Christ concludes this prayer, we shall see that the praise and honour of God is the beginning and end of Christ's prayer, and so as it were the first and last thing with Christ. Whence we learn that we ought to be more frequent and plentiful in thanksgiving unto God, than in petition and request. Thus we deal with those that be bountiful unto us on earth, we give them many thanks for our good turn; and therefore should we mush more abound in thanksgiving to our heavenly Father, from whom we receive every good gift that we enjoy. It beseems not the child of God to be always and only begging, as though he had nothing; but withal must be plentiful in thanks and praise, for that argues he hath a taste of God's mercy towards him. This made David say (Psa 147:1), *Praise is a comely and pleasant thing*; (Psa. 33:1), *It well becometh upright men to be thankful*. Our life of glory shall be spent in praising God, and therefore we should inure ourselves thereto in this time of grace; and indeed, according to our thanksgiving is our grace;

little praise, little grace; but he that abounds in thanksgiving, abounds in God's blessings. Again, hearty thanksgiving for that we have, is an effectual prayer for more increase.

6. Lastly, the place wherein this petition is set in this prayer, teacheth us to seek the glory of God simply and absolutely before all other things. This ought to be the affection of God's child, though he should receive no blessing from God; for look what God prefers in His direction, that must we always prefer in all our actions, though no good should follow unto us thereupon. For this end, God gives us time to live in this world, that we might glorify God in our place and callings; and he that employeth himself otherwise profaneth God's name and transgresseth this heavenly order here set down by Christ, who is the wisdom of His Father.

# 6:10

"*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*." Matthew 6:10

*Thy kingdom come*.

The Coherence.

Christ having taught us to pray for the sanctifying of God's name, in the former petition, doth in this, and the rest which follow, as it were, expound the same, by directing us to the means whereby God's name is hallowed of us; for then do we glorify God's name, when He sets up His kingdom in us; and we suffer Him to rule in our hearts, when we do His will, depend upon His providence for the things of this life, trust in His mercy for the pardon of our sins, and on His power and strength against temptation. Now of them all, this second hath the nearest dependence upon the former, as being an especial means thereof; for men ought to glorify God's name on earth, but of themselves they cannot do it till God rules in their hearts by His Word and Spirit, and so set up His kingdom in them.

The Meaning.

God's kingdom is twofold: general and special.

1. God's general kingdom is His absolute power and sovereignty, whereby He ruleth all things in heaven, in earth and in hell, even the devils themselves; (Psa. 103:19), *The Lord hath prepared His throne in heaven, His kingdom ruleth over all*; and this we acknowledge in the end of this prayer, *For thine is the kingdom*. Now this we pray not for, because it is always everywhere, no creature can hinder it, no not all the devils in hell; for every creature is subject hereunto, and can do nothing but that which God either willeth or permitteth (Dan. 4:35), *according to His will He worketh in the army of heaven, and in the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hands nor say, What doest thou*?

2. God's special kingdom is that whereby He ruleth His elect and chosen people, working His will not only by them, as He doth in His general kingdom, by the devils themselves, but in them also by His Holy Spirit; and it is called special, because it is not exercised over all the world, but only over the elect, whom He hath ordained to eternal life.

This special kingdom of God is twofold: either of grace or of glory.

1. The *kingdom of grace* is a spiritual estate wherein God makes men willingly subject to His written Word by His Spirit. I call the kingdom of grace a spiritual estate both because it is principally exercised in the conscience, and also because this regiment in the conscience is by the Spirit of God. Secondly, I shew wherein it consists; namely, in a voluntary subjection of the whole man in soul, and body, and spirit, to the will of God revealed in the Word; (Psa. 110:3), *Thy people shall come willingly in the day of assembling thine army, in holy beauty*. And this subjection standeth in three things: in *righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost* (Rom. 14:17).

1. In *righteousness*, that is, first, in Christ's righteousness imputed; and secondly, in the righteousness of a good conscience; the ground whereof is sanctification of the Spirit, which Christ gives them whom He doth justify.

2. In *peace*, that is, peace of conscience towards God, and peace with God's church; yea, with all creatures, so far forth as is needful for them. Now under peace, we must comprehend love, and all duties of love; for as righteousness concerns the person in soul and body, so peace respects all duties and actions of the life. Righteousness is the root from whence springeth this peace with every action thereof; for when the heart is sanctified, the life is reformed.

3. Lastly, in *joy in the Holy Ghost*. This is a fruit of both the former, respecting especially the state of affliction, for when a man is justified and sanctified, and hath peace towards God, then ariseth in his heart a spiritual delight in God, in all estates; yea, though great afflictions light upon him for God's cause, yet he beareth them with inward joy and delight, knowing that the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon

him, and that he shall be glorified with Christ, if he suffer with Christ; which things, while he compareth together, he little esteemeth the afflictions of this life, in respect of the glory that shall be revealed; (2 Cor. 4:17), *For the light affliction that is but for a moment, causeth unto us a far more excellent and eternal weight of glory*. These are the branches of this spiritual subjection, which whosoever hath, is a good subject in the kingdom of grace; as the apostle saith in the next verse (Rom. 14:18), *He that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable unto God, and approved of men*.

2. The *kingdom of glory* is the blessed estate of God's elect in heaven, whereby God in Christ becomes all things unto them immediately (1 Cor. 15:28). This estate of glory is a subjection also, but yet such a subjection as is indeed a glorious regiment; for there we reign with Christ, in whom and through whom God Himself becomes honour, peace, health, food, raiment, and all things needful to the perfection of felicity.

Now these two being God's kingdom, differ thus: the state of grace is the beginning and entrance of the state of glory; and the state of glory is the perfection of the state of grace. This state of glory is the city, and the state of grace, as it were, the suburbs of it. In this life, we live in the kingdom of grace; but the kingdom of glory is reserved for the life to come; and this special kingdom of God in both these estates, do we here pray for.

*Thy kingdom*.

This imports that there is another kingdom, even the kingdom of Satan, which is a kingdom of darkness, full of all disorder and confusion through sin, which greatly hindereth and annoyeth God's kingdom of grace especially.

*Come*.

That is, to us men in the world; and then it cometh when God doth erect and establish the same in their hearts. Now unto perfection it comes in five degrees:

1. When God gives unto men the outward means of salvation, wherein He doth reveal His grace and favour in Christ; as the gospel is preached, which is therefore called *the Word of the kingdom* (Matt. 13:19). And so Christ (having relation to His preaching, which He confirmed by miracles among the Jews) saith, *The kingdom of God is come unto you* (Luke 11:20). And being demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come; He tells them that it was among them (Luke 17:21), meaning that is was brought unto them by the ministry of John Baptist, of Himself, and of His disciples; although indeed it were without profit to many of them.

2. When the Word preached enlightens the mind, so as a man knows and understands the mysteries of the gospel, which is the law of this kingdom.

3. When a man is thereby regenerated, and so brought into this kingdom; for by regeneration we have effectual entrance into the state of grace, wherein Christ rules in us by His Word and Spirit, and we yield subjection unto Him.

4. At the end of this life, when the body goes to the earth, but the soul to God that gave it, being translated to the joys of heaven, in the glory of this kingdom.

5. At the last judgment, when body and soul being united again, are both made partakers of the glory of this kingdom; and this is the full and perfect coming of it.

So then, our request to God in this petition is to this effect: O Father, let thy kingdom come to us that be pilgrims and strangers here on earth, prepare us for it, and enter us into it, that be yet without; renew us by thy Spirit, that we may be subject to thy will, confirm us also in this estate, that our souls after this life, and both soul and body at the day of judgment, may be fully glorified; yea Lord, hasten this glory to us, and to all thine elect.

The Uses.

1. *Wants to be bewailed*.

The wants we are to bewail in this petition, either concern ourselves, or others.

1. First, we must lament and mourn for our own miserable estate by nature, whereby we are the servants of sin, and so in thraldom and bondage under Satan. Sin leads us into bondage, for *he that committeth sin is the servant of sin* (John 8:34). And where sin reigneth, there the devil hath dominion. And hence it comes that we rebel so much against the kingdom of God, and refuse to stoop to the sceptre of His Word. Indeed this bondage is weakened in God's children, but none is wholly freed from it in this life, as Paul's complaint declares (Rom. 7:14), *The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin*. The natural man is dead in sin and feels it not; we therefore must labour to feel in ourselves this spiritual bondage under sin; and when we feel it, we must bewail it, and so shew some life of grace to be in us. This Paul did (Rom. 7:24), *O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death*? Look as the prisoner feels his bolts and fetters, so sensibly should we feel the chain of sin, wherewith our souls are kept in bondage; and till we feel it and bewail it, the kingdom of Christ doth not come unto us. We must therefore every day, cry unto Christ our Lord, that He would shew Himself to be our Redeemer by breaking the fetters of sin wherewith our souls are kept in bondage, and giving us that free spirit which may fully erect His blessed kingdom in our hearts; for *where the Spirit is, there is liberty* (2 Cor. 3:17).

2. Secondly, we must bewail the sins of all the world in the transgression of God's law, whereby God is dishonoured and His kingdom hindered, and the kingdom of darkness furthered. (2 Pet. 7,8), *Just Lot vexed his righteous soul with the unclean conversation of the wicked of his time*. (1 Kin. 19:10), When Elijah saw the children of Israel forsake God's Covenant, break down His altars and slay His prophets with the sword, he became very zealous for the Lord of hosts. (Psa. 119:136), *Mine eyes* (saith David) *gush outwith rivers of water, because they keep not thy law*; (v. 139), *My zeal hath even consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy law*. (Mark 3:5), Christ mourned for the hardness of the hearts of the people; and (Luke 19:41,42), He wept

over Jerusalem, for that they knew not the day of their visitation. Now look how these were affected with the reigning sins of their times. So must we also mourn for their sins that reign among us; as atheism, and profaneness, contempt of God's Word, blasphemy, Sabbath-breaking, oppression, cruelty and pride. All good subjects are grieved much when they see foreign enemies display among them banners of victory; how much more then ought the godly to grieve, when they see impiety practised with an high hand, which is as it were a flag of defiance in the kingdom of Christ, and a special ensign of Satan's triumphing in the increase of his kingdom of darkness? When the devil sees one that hath lived in sin, but cast a look toward the kingdom of Christ, he rageth greatly, and labours by all means to turn him back; and when we see those that have made profession of religion, return again to the lusts of their former ignorance, O it should grieve our souls, and cause us to pray, *Thy kingdom come*. Do we perceive the Turk or pope, or any instrument of Satan, either by subtilty or tyranny, to hinder the gospel preached, which is the sceptre of Christ's kingdom, and the arm of God whereby He pulls men from the kingdom of darkness? O then we should mourn. Or do we see the want of God's ordinance in preaching, sacraments and discipline, which serve for the furtherance of Christ's kingdom; or the Lord's people to ignorant or idle ministers, to scandalous teachers, either for life or doctrine? In all these we have cause of mourning, and they should stir up our hearts to cry unto the Lord, *Thy kingdom come*.

2. *Graces to be desired*.

As we must mourn for the wants and hindrances of Christ's kingdom, so we must hereby learn to have our hearts inflamed with spiritual desires after all helps and furtherances unto God's kingdom, both in ourselves and others:

1. As first, for the preaching of the gospel, and all other divine ordinances, whereby God's kingdom is erected and maintained. Our hearts' desire to God must be that these may be set up and continued where they are wanting, and that God may bless them, where they are vouchsafed.

2. Secondly, that God would enlighten the eyes of our minds that we may see the wonders of His law, as David did (Psa. 119:18), that so the Lord's ordinance may be blessed unto us.

3. Thirdly, that we may be wholly subject unto Christ, and that of conscience, not only in outward behaviour, but in mind and heart and will, and in all our affections. We must make sure this holy desire be in us indeed, and therefore must deny ourselves, and subject ourselves wholly unto God, as a willing people to serve Him, and none but Him. And then we may be sure His kingdom is come unto us.

4. Fourthly, we must desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ in the kingdom of glory, for this end, that we may make an end of sinning, and become more obedient subjects unto Christ; yea, wholly ruled by Him; though for the good of others, we must be content to live.

5. Fifthly, That Christ would come in judgment, when all things shall be subdued unto God, and all His obedient subjects shall be fully glorified. This we may desire in heart, though we must leave the time to God's good pleasure, still waiting for it by faith in His promise.

6. Sixthly, that God would enlarge His sanctuary here on earth, gather His elect more and more, and still defend and maintain His church in every place in the world.

When these desires affect our souls, then do we truly say, *Thy kingdom come*.

3. *Duties to be practised*.

Whatsoever we ask in prayer, that must we endeavour after in life and conversation, else we mock God, saying well, and doing nothing.

1. First, therefore, as we say, *Thy kingdom come*, so must we seek to meet it, and strive to enter into it. For this end God gives us time to live in this world, that here we might enter the gate of grace, and wait for the fruition of glory. And therefore we must diligently frequent the suburbs of this heavenly Jerusalem, even the preaching of the Word, and

therein labour both for true humiliation and conversion, or else we cannot enter into this kingdom (Matt. 18:3; John 3:5). First, we must have the pride of our hearts pulled down, and become as little children, being humbled in ourselves through the knowledge of our sins, and the feeling of that misery which is due unto us for them. Yea, we must confess them unto God, and cry unto Him for mercy, and by this means lay aside this burden, which hinders our entrance into the gate of grace. Secondly, we must be converted and changed by the renewing of our minds, our hearts must cleave unto God, and we must carry therein a resolute purpose not to sin. When these things be in us, we enter into God's kingdom; but till we endeavour after them in some truth, we say in vain, *Thy kingdom come*.

2. Secondly, we must be careful to bring forth the fruits of this kingdom; for therefore doth He send it among men, and for want hereof doth He take it from them (Matt. 21:43). Now these fruits are *righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost* (Rom. 14:17), whereof we have spoken before; all which we must labour to find in our hearts, and to express in our lives, else this kingdom shall be taken from us, and we shall never see the glory of it.

3. Thirdly, hence we must learn to be contented in all estates of this life whatsoever, the hope of the glory of this kingdom which we pray for, must swallow up all the sorrows that earthly calamities can bring upon us. This it was that made the Patriarchs to walk contented in the state of pilgrims and strangers here on earth (Heb. 11:13,14). Yea, this renews (2 Cor. 4:16-18) the inner man, it cheers the heart, and keeps it from fainting, *though the outward man perish*, to look after the joys of this kingdom, which are *the things not seen*; and therefore Christ herewith comforts His disciples against the sorrow of affliction, saying, *Fear not little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom* (Luke 12:32).

4. Fourthly, we must all labour in our places and callings to bring one another into this kingdom, one neighbour another, and one friend another. (Ezek. 18:30), *Return* (saith the Lord to the house of Israel), *and cause one another to return*. This the prophet Isaiah noteth as a

practice of the subjects of this kingdom, that they *shall say one to another, come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord* (Isa. 2:3). But masters of families especially must look to the practice of this duty, and labour to bring God's kingdom into their families. For this end they must see to these things: First, that there be no manifest or open sin permitted in their families. Rid thy house of such a person, if thou canst not reform him (Psa. 101:7). Secondly, instruct thy family in the way of the Lord, that they may know to live righteously and uprightly both before God and man. Thirdly, set up and maintain the private worship of God in thy family, join thou with them in holy duties, especially in daily calling upon the name of God. In regard of these, and such like duties, it is that the Scripture (Luke 19:9) ascribes salvation to a family, where the master or the governor of the house is converted to the faith. As for the practice hereof, the holy Patriarchs are commended to all posterity. God saith of Abraham (Gen. 18:19), *I know him, that he will command his sons, and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord*. And Jacob (Gen. 35:2) commands his family to put away their strange gods, and to cleanse themselves. And Joshua (Josh. 24:15) professed publicly that he and his family would serve the Lord.

5. Fifthly, hence we must learn every day to prepare ourselves to die; for by death our souls enter into the glory of this kingdom, which we pray may come unto us; and therefore we must be ready to receive it every day, that whensoever our king cometh unto us, either by death or in the last judgment, we may pass from grace to glory. And indeed we cannot with comfort make this petition unless we be in some measure prepared for death, and that every day. Now being prepared, we must wait, as Job did (Job 14:14), *every day till our changing come*. Look how the godly in the Old Testament looked for Christ's first coming in the flesh; so must we wait for his coming to us, either by death or judgment; neither must anything dismay us in this waiting, no not death itself; for the sooner we die, the sooner we may enter into glory. And here we may take a view of the monstrous hypocrisy of the world; for who will not say these words: *Thy kingdom come*? But yet the most men neglect to prepare themselves for entrance into this kingdom; nay, many contemn the word and prayer, which are the means whereby we

have admittance into the state of grace and are prepared for the kingdom of glory.

6. Sixthly, we may here learn of our Saviour Christ the practice of humility, and in all things to give all glory to God; for though this kingdom pertain equally to Him (as He is God) with the Father; yet because He hath it from the Father, as He is the Son, therefore he will have it wholly attributed unto Him; for He teacheth us to say, *Our Father, Thy kingdom come.*

7. Lastly, here observe the necessity of this petition, in respect of our outward estate; for the coming of this kingdom to any estate is a special cause of prosperity and happiness unto us; for where this kingdom is, God's hand of blessing and protection is in a special manner; here the Lord reigneth, and His glorious and blessed angels, which are mighty in strength and power, keep watch and guard in that kingdom, and about that people who have the Lord for their King and God. Hence it is that this our kingdom hath so long enjoyed peace and protection from many dangerous assaults, because we embrace and profess the gospel, which is the sceptre of God's kingdom; and if we could do it in sincerity, and walk worthy of the Lord our King, our prosperity should be as the floods, and our peace as the sun and moon in heaven. And therefore they that love the peace of this kingdom, must embrace and obey the gospel, and pray for the happy and flourishing estate thereof; for therein stands our peace.

*Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven*.

The Coherence.

This petition dependeth on both the former thus: as a means whereby we do that which we desire in the first petition, for God's name is glorified when His will is done; and as a manifestation of that which we desire in the second petition, for there we pray that God's kingdom may come unto us, and He rule in our hearts by His Word and Spirit. Now here we crave that we may do His will, and so testify ourselves to be His loyal subjects.

The Meaning.

This petition is propounded in a comparison which naturally standeth thus: *As thy will is done in heaven, so let thy will be done in earth*. And it hath two parts: The first respects the grace of obedience which we pray for: *Thy will be done in earth*. The second shews the right manner of performing it: *As it is in heaven*.

I.

For the first, *Thy will be done in earth*, God's will is only one, considered in itself, as God is one; yet from understanding, it may be thus distinguished: It is either *absolute* or *revealed*.

God's *absolute will* is the will of His good pleasure whereby according to His eternal counsel, He determines of all things what shall be done or what shall not be done, and in what manner. This absolute will extendeth over all creatures and over all their actions (Eph. 1:11), *We are predestined according to the purpose of Him that worketh all things after the counsel of His own will*. (Rom. 9:19), *Who hath resisted His will*? (Matt. 10:29), *Without this will of God, a sparrow cannot fall to the ground*. And this absolute will of God is hidden from us till God reveal it by the event.

God's *revealed will* is the sacred doctrine of God in His Word, whereby He signifieth unto man, so far as concerns his happiness and salvation, what he ought to do or what he ought not to do. This is not God's absolute will, but rather an effect thereof concerning man, revealing unto him, not what he simply and absolutely willed to be done, for that must needs be done; but what is pleasing or displeasing unto Him done by man, and what he will have man to do, or not to do, if he desire to come to life, and would not be condemned. And this revealed will comprehendeth both the law and gospel, with all their commandments, prohibitions, threatenings, exhortations, promises, and such like, whereto the apostle hath revelation when he saith, *Prove what is the good will of God, and acceptable* (Rom. 12:2). Now this distinction of God's will being according to the Scripture, hath his use in this place; for when we say, *Thy will be done*, we mean not the *absolute*, but the *revealed* will of God.

*Reasons*. 1. The absolute will of God is always done, and cannot be resisted. *My counsel shall stand* (saith the Lord (Isa. 46:10)) *and I will do*

*whatsoever I will*; and again (Rom. 9:19), *Who hath resisted His will*? That is, His absolute will; for His revealed will is generally transgressed by men, and men do that which seemeth good in their own eyes, notwithstanding God reveal His will to the contrary.

2. A man may sometime dissent from the absolute will of God without sinning, so be it he still submit himself to the will of God, resting therein, when it is revealed. Thus Abraham (Gen. 18:23-32) prayed for the safety of Sodom (yet submissively) which God willed and decreed to destroy; and David (2 Sam. 12:16-19) prayed for the life of his child, which God would have to die; and our Saviour Christ (Matt 26:39) prayed for the removal of that cup which God had absolutely decreed He should drink of, yet submitting His will unto His Father's. And Paul (Acts 16:7), according to his apostolic function, desired to preach the gospel in Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered him not; which sheweth plainly it was not the will of God that he should preach there, and yet he desired it religiously, without sin, as did the rest before mentioned. And as in will, so in affection a man may dissent from God's absolute will without sin. Christ as the Son of God knew His Father's will concerning the destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 13:34), yet He wept for it, in a tender compassion over their misery to come; and so the brethren at Caesarea (Acts 21:13) wept and lamented for Paul's going to Jerusalem, though Agabus prophesied that God would have it so. Neither must this seem strange to us, for two things may remain both good, and yet differ one from another; and so may man's created will differ from God's absolute and uncreated will, and yet both remain good.

Having found that this petition must be understood of the revealed will of God, we now come to search out the special branches of God's revealed will; which we shall find in several places of the Holy Scripture.

The first is the conversion of a sinner (Ezek. 33:11), *As I live* (saith the Lord), *I will not the death of a sinner, but that the wicked turn from his way and live*.

The second is that we deny ourselves and rely wholly on our Saviour Christ Jesus for life and salvation. (John 6:40), *This is the will of God, that he that seeth the Son, and believeth in Him, should have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day*.

The third is our sanctification in soul and body and spirit (1 Thess. 4:3), *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification*.

The fourth is that everyone that lives in the church of God, beside his general calling of a Christian, should have a particular calling to live in, wherein he must seek the glory of God in the good of others. (1 Cor. 7:20), *Let every man abide in the same vocation wherein he is called, and therein walk with God* (v.24).

The fifth part of God's will is to subject ourselves under the hand of God in all crosses and afflictions whatsoever. When the brethren at Caesarea saw Paul's resolution to go to Jerusalem, notwithstanding the bonds that there remained for him, they said (as it were expounding this petition), *The will of the Lord be done* (Acts 21:14).

*Be done*.

According to the Scripture there be two degrees of doing God's will: the first is prescribed in the gospel, to wit, a sincere endeavour and strife according to all the power of grace that God hath given us, to do the will of God; and this especially is here meant. The second is commanded in the law, and it is a fulfilling of God's will, doing that which God commandeth in the manner of perfection which he commandeth. But this is not attained unto us in this life; and therefore our desire of God in this petition is that He would give us grace, sincerely to endeavour to do His whole will here on earth, and to hasten that time and state unto us, wherein we shall do it perfectly as the law requires.

The Uses.

1. *Wants to be bewailed, both in ourselves and others*.

    1. This petition teacheth us to bewail our natural disposition, whereby we are prone to rebel against the will of God, being wholly bent to disobedience in doing that which is evil.

    1. We must bewail our natural hypocrisy, even that which remaineth in us after grace received; for though we may say these words, yet we

cannot possibly have our hearts affected with such a perfect desire after obedience to God's will, as we ought to have.

2. Though we have never so much grace, yet here we must labour and bewail our want of obedience in all good duties; for though we give ourselves to do good things, yet the best of us all fall in the manner of doing them; as in hearing the Word, in receiving the sacraments, and prayer; so as we must be humbled for our wants, and confess that we are unprofitable servants, when we have done all that is commanded us (Luke 17:10).

2. Secondly, we must bewail the sins of others, whereby they disobey the will of God, and so rebel against Him; hereby God is dishonoured, and therefore in zeal of God's glory, and love to our brethren, we must be grieved when others sin. Thus was David affected (Psa. 119:136), and Paul (2 Cor. 12:21), *I fear lest when I come to you, my God abase me among you, and I shall bewail many of them that have sinned already*.

2. *Graces to be desired*.

As we must bewail the wants that hinder the doing of God's will in ourselves and others; so must we stir up our hearts unto heavenly desires after those graces whereby God's will may be done.

1. As first, that we may have grace to deny ourselves, our own wills and affections; for naturally we are herein unlike God and like the devil; and this must everyone learn that would be Christ's disciple (Luke 9:23).

2. Secondly, that God would incline and dispose our hearts towards His holy Word, that we may not only know, but obey God's revealed will. This was David's usual request (Psa. 119:27), *Make me to understand the way of thy testimonies;* and (v.36), *Incline my heart to thy testimonies*. For how should we do the will of God, unless we know it? And how shall we know it, unless our hearts affect the means of grace and of obedience.

3. Thirdly, that God would hasten that time and state unto us, wherein we shall perfectly do the will of God: that is our state of glory.

4. Fourthly, that under every cross which God shall lay upon us, we may possess our souls with patience, and so subject ourselves to God's absolute will. Thus Paul prays in behalf of the Colossians, that God would *strengthen them by the power of his might, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness* (Col. 1:11).

5. Fifthly, that God would turn the hearts of men from sin, and bring them everywhere to the obedience of His will.

3. *Duties to be practised*.

Because we must seek to practise that which we ask in prayer, therefore hereby we are also taught to endeavour ourselves after these good duties:

1. First, *to prove what is the good will of God, and acceptable* (Rom. 12:2). We must by often trial of our actions by the Word of God, become expert in God's will; use in all things make perfect, and therefore in all our affairs we must consult with God, whether the thing we go about be agreeable to His will. Most men will have an eye to the laws of the land in their civil affairs, as in buying and selling; and why should we not be as wise for our souls in the matter of God? Do we not dissemble with God when we say with our tongues, *Thy will be done*, and yet in life and conversation, have no regard to square our works thereby?

2. Secondly, we must be strict in the matter of sin, making conscience of every evil way; yea, even of the first motions unto sin, that never come to consent; for this petition for obedience respects not only our words and deeds, but our secret thoughts; for even they must be brought to obedience to God (2 Cor. 10:5).

3. Thirdly, we must seek to cut off all things that hinder us from doing God's will. We must mortify and crucify the lusts of the flesh, and all sinful motions of our corrupt hearts; for these make us rebels against God in transgressing His will. This is an hard thing to do, and unto a

natural man of himself altogether impossible, and therefore we must use spiritual means; for the deeds of the flesh must be mortified by the Spirit (Rom. 8:13). Now the ground of this work is the death of our Saviour Christ applied by faith to our corrupt heart; for the *old man is crucified with Him* (as the apostle Paul saith, Rom. 6:6), *that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin*. This therefore must we do, if we think ourselves to have part in Christ; we must persuade our hearts that when our Saviour Christ was upon the cross in our room and stead, bearing the punishment of our sins, then were we, in regard of the old man, crucified with Him; the virtue and efficacy whereof we shall undoubtedly find in ourselves, for the mortifying of sin, when we do truly believe; for our fellowship with Christ begins in His death; and if we be dead to sin, how can the motions thereof yet live and reign in us? When a malefactor is put to death, he ceases from his bad courses; and so, if our corruption be crucified with our Saviour Christ, it must not reign in our hearts, to bring forth the fruits of sin. Let us therefore meditate on the death of our Saviour Christ, and apply it to ourselves by faith, and consider the vileness of our sins, in the bitterness of His passion; and then no doubt we shall be moved to strive against evil motions: For *if we be Christ's, we have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts* (Gal. 5:24).

4. Fourthly, we must not live inordinately, but in that sort which God enjoineth Christians in His Word. Everyone must have a double calling: the general calling of a Christian, common to all that live in the church, concerning the service of God, in righteousness and holiness; and a particular lawful calling, in some set state of life, tending to the good of the church, commonwealth or family, wherein a man must glorify God in the good of men. This is to live in order, and he that wanteth both, or one of these, lives inordinately, for God would have every man to abide in that vocation wherein He hath called him. Everyone therefore according to his gift and grace received from God, must live in a lawful calling, and he that doth not so, resisteth God's will. Whereby we see that wandering beggars are not to be suffered in the church or commonwealth; for they live without any calling, and so transgress God's will. Yea, their course of life is here also condemned that spend their life in sports and gaming; for such a life is rebellion

against God, who will be glorified in works done by virtue of our lawful calling.

5. Fifthly, it is the will of God that through manifold afflictions we should enter into His kingdom; and therefore when any cross befalls us walking in our lawful callings, we must endeavour to subject ourselves patiently to the will of God therein. In prosperity we are cheerful and thankful, but when affliction comes, our nature would repine. O remember we say in all estates, *Thy will be done*; and therefore in the most bitter crosses that can befall us, we must labour to say with Job, *The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord* (Job 1:21). So did the prophet David being banished from his kingdom by his own son (2 Sam. 15:26), *But if He thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good in His eyes*. And (2 Sam. 16:10,11), when Shimei cursed him, he stayed Abishai from revenge, upon consideration of God's will to have it so, saying, *Suffer him to curse, for the Lord hath bidden him*.

II.

*In earth as it is in heaven*.

Having spoken of the grace of obedience desired in this petition, we now come to the manner how it must be performed; to wit, *In earth as it is in heaven*; that is, of us men living on earth, as the blessed angels and glorified saints do it in heaven; for the angels that excel in strength, do God's commandments in obeying the voice of His Word (Psa. 103:20). And because this exposition is generally received, I will not stand to prove it; this only must we remember: that here we pray not to perform obedience equal in measure and degree to the obedience of the saints and angels in heaven, but such as is like unto it. For this note of comparison here imports a likeness and resemblance, and not equality.

Now this likeness here stands in four things:

1. First, *in cheerfulness and willingness*; for the holy angels obey the commandment of God freely and readily, without murmuring or constraint. For this cause they are said to *come and stand before God* (Job 1:6), and to

*behold His face* (Matt. 18:10), to express their voluntary service unto God. And so should God's children obey God, as Paul speaketh of (Phile. 14) Philemon's beneficence, *it must not be as it were of necessity, but willingly*. As in the case of alms-giving, *God loves a cheerful giver* (2 Cor. 9:7), so in all obedience He likes a cheerful doing. And therefore He saith (2 Cor. 8:12), *If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath*. In this regards, Peter besought the elders (1 Pet. 5:2), *to feed the flock of God, depending on them; and to care for it; not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind*. And the apostle Paul saith (1 Cor. 9:17), *If I do it willingly, I have a reward*. This virtue the prophet David expressed notably (Psa. 40:6-8), when God as it were bored new ears in his soul, then he said, *Lo I come, I desire to do thy will*.

2. Secondly, *in priority*. So the angels prefer to do the will of God before all other things; and therefore they are said to stand in His presence continually as it were waiting upon His pleasure. And the like affection for obedience unto God must be in all His children. This Abraham notably testifies, when at God's command he would have killed Isaac; testifying thereby that he preferred obedience unto God before the dearest thing in the world. This also we may see in David (Psa. 119:14), *I have had a great delight in the way of thy testimonies, as in all riches*. And (v. 127), *I love thy commandments above gold, yea above much fine gold*. And in our Saviour Christ, who said, when He was weary and hungry, *My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work* (John 4:34).

3. Thirdly, *in speed and quickness*; for the angels do God's will without all delay or slackness, which the Scripture signifies by their wings, and flying, which it ascribeth unto them. And the like whereby should God's children shew in their obedience unto God (Psa. 119:60), *I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments*.

4. Fourthly, *in faithfulness*. The angels do not God's will by halves or piecemeal, but thoroughly and perfectly, whereinsoever God employeth them. And so should we be faithful in doing God's will, endeavouring to yield sincere obedience, not to some, but to all God's commandments which concern us. *I shall not be confounded when I have respect unto all thy commandments* (Psa. 119:6). King Josiah turned to the Lord with all his

soul, with all his heart, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses (2 Kin. 23:25), an example to be followed of all God's children, that so they may be like to the blessed angels.

Uses.

1. *Wants to be wailed*.

    1. First, this pattern of angelical obedience here propounded for our imitation, must teach us to acknowledge and bewail the natural hardness, deadness and untowardness of our hearts, in yielding obedience unto the will of God. If we feel not this dull and untoward heart, we may suspect ourselves of the want of grace, for every gracious heart feels it more or less, and bewails it unto God; and so must we do if we say in truth, *Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven*.

    2. Secondly, we must here also bewail the want of sincerity and faithfulness in doing God's will. Our maimed and halt obedience shews how far we come short of this angelical example. Many content themselves with the outward service of the body and never regard the inward worship of the heart; and others have respect to outward duties of piety that concern God, but for uprightness and mercy toward men, they little regard. This the angels do not.

2. *Graces to be desired*.

Hereby also we must learn to pray for the spirit of freedom whereby we may be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and so may the more freely and cheerfully and heartily endeavour to do God's will. *Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and stablish me by thy free Spirit* (Psa. 51:12). The Holy Ghost is therefore called the *free Spirit*, because it gives liberty from the bondage of sin, and makes the heart free and forward, and cheerful in God's service; for *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty* (2 Cor. 3:17).

3. *Duties to be practised*.

Because we must practise the good things we pray for, therefore here we are taught to frame our lives to an holy imitation of the blessed angels. Though we cannot attain to the measure of their obedience, yet we must endeavour after their manner of obedience *in readiness* etc., and so by following them, begin our heaven in this world. This will not stand with their honour, who account zeal in religion, affected preciseness. But such as call God Father in sincerity, must set before them the obedience of the holy angels as a pattern for their imitation. Now in them we may observe these things for us to follow:

1. First, they desired before Christ's incarnation to look into the mystery of our redemption as wrought by Christ (1 Pet. 1:12); although it concerns them not as it doth us; for they never fell, and they are established by another grace than of redemption. Now herein we must follow the angels, or (if it were possible) go beyond them, for *Christ took not the angels but the seed of Abraham* (Heb. 2:16). His redemption concerns us, and therefore we much more must be diligent searchers out of this mystery in the gospel.

2. Secondly, the angels are maintainers of true religion, and of the worship of God; for the law was given by angels (Gal. 3:19). The most of Daniel's visions were shewed by an angel; and so was the revelation unto John (Rev. 1:1). The angels brought the apostles out of prison to preach the gospel sundry times. They are enemies to idolatry, for (Rev. 19:10), when John would have worshipped the angel, he forbade him saying, See thou do it not, worship God. Herein also we must be followers of angels, by furthering the gospel and true worship of God to the uttermost of our power; by hindering all idolatry, and shewing ourselves enemies to all the enemies of God and of His truth.

3. Thirdly, the angels were always serviceable unto Christ. They brought the tidings of His birth to the shepherds (Luke 2:9,10); they ministered unto Him in His temptation (Matt. 4:11); in His agony (Luke 22:43); in His resurrection (Matt. 28:2); and in His ascension (Acts 1:10). And so should we perform unto Christ all the service we can.

4. Fourthly, they spend their time in praising and lauding the name of God; and so should we labour to have our hearts enlarged for His

glory, and our mouths filled with His praises.

5. Fifthly, they be serviceable for our good, if we be God's children, though they be far better than we are. They are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for their sakes which shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). They are as nurses to bear God's children in their hands, (Psa. 34:7), *The angel of the Lord pitcheth round about them that fear Him*. And all this they do unto us of love, as though it were not enjoined them. So we after their example must employ ourselves in soul and body, calling, credit, and all we have for the good of men.

6. Sixthly, the angels are joyful when sinners are humbled and converted from sin unto God (Luke 15:10); and they are grieved when men by sin dishonour God. And the like affections should be in us. We should mourn for all sin in ourselves and others whereby God is dishonoured; and have our own hearts to leap for joy when sinners repent and turn unto God. In the world to come we shall be like the angels in heaven in glory (Matt. 22:30). Let us therefore here testify this hope by beginning our heaven upon earth, in becoming like to the angels, though not in glory, yet in obedience.

7. Here, lastly, observe what honour we are to give to the angels of heaven, namely, the honour of imitation, becoming like unto them in obedience, and treading in the steps of their virtues. But for the honour of invocation, that is due to God alone, and we must not give it to angels. Damnable therefore is the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome, who pray unto the angels, and give unto them the honour of God in religious worship.His

# 6:11

"*Give us this day our daily bread*." Matthew 6:11

The Coherence.

Hitherto we have handled the petitions that concern God's glory; now we come to the petitions that concern ourselves, as the word Ô*us*' doth plainly shew, in these three which follow. And they depend upon the former as an explication of the manner of our obedience; for there we asked grace to do God's will, and here we pray for God's blessings and mercies wherein we may express our obedience, for we do God's will when we depend upon His providence for the blessings of this life; when we rely upon His mercy for the pardon of our sins; and trust in His powerful strength against temptation and deliverance from evil. Now then, to come particularly to this fourth petition; having in the former, craved grace to do God's will in our particular callings, here we pray for such sufficiency of all temporal blessings whereby we may glorify God therein.

In the handling of this petition, six points are to be considered:

1. What we ask: Bread.

2. What bread we ask: Daily bread.

3. Whose bread? Ours.

4. For what time? This day.

5. To whom? To us.

6. Whence we would have it; by gift from God: Give us.

1. For the first: The thing we ask is *bread*. But what is meant by *bread* is not agreed upon.

1. Some expound it spiritually as Christ's body and blood, the food of the soul in Word and sacraments. But the unfitness of this exposition we shall see by the weakness of their reasons alleged for it:

1. First, they say, it is not meet that in so heavenly a prayer, we should ask so base a thing as material bread of our heavenly Father. *Answer*: If God commands us to ask Him bread, and to depend upon Him for it, we must not judge basely of it. Now in this chapter, God commands us to depend upon Him for food to eat, yea, (1 Pet. 5:7), we must cast all our cares upon Him. And Jacob's practice in praying for bread to eat (Gen. 28:20), and Agur praying for a competency in outward things (Prov. 30:8), declare plainly the lawfulness thereof.

2. Secondly, they say, we must first seek God's kingdom and His righteousness, and then all these things shall be cast upon us (Matt. 6:33). *Answer*: Distrustful and distracting care is there only forbidden, but a moderate care is there allowed; and therefore prayer for them is undoubtedly lawful.

2. The second opinion touching bread is of the papists, to wit, that here we ask not only all necessary sustenance for the body, but much more all spiritual food, namely, the blessed sacrament, which is Christ the bread of life. But neither is this so fit, for:

1. First, we prayed for spiritual things directly in the second petition.

2. Secondly, sacramental bread cannot here be meant, because it was not ordained when Christ taught His disciples this prayer.

3. Thirdly, their exposition is against their own practice; for if by bread were meant Christ in the sacrament, then the people should be fed therewith every day, which they bar them from.

3. The third opinion is that by bread is meant corporeal food and blessings, necessary to temporal life only. And this I take to be the truth for these reasons, which also make against the former expositions:

1. First, St Luke, the best interpreter of our Saviour Christ, expounds the words, *of bread that serves for the day*; that is, for every day (Luke 11:3), and therefore it must needs be bodily; for spiritual food once truly received, serves not for a day but for ever (John 4:14).

2. Secondly, this is a perfect platform of prayer, and therefore must contain petition for temporal blessings, else it were not perfect. Now we cannot comprehend our requests for temporal blessings under any other petition but this only, and therefore Christ here propoundeth them.

Now, properly, bread imports that sustenance made of grain which is fit and convenient for man's bodily nourishment, such as Melchizedek brought out to Abraham and his company, with wine, for their refreshing (Gen. 14:18). And such is meant in Scripture where bread is opposed to wine and water. But more generally it is taken for all kinds of food whatsoever whereby life is preserved; in which sense goat's milk is called bread (Prov. 27:27); and the fruit of trees (Jer. 11:19); and all things that pass to and fro in traffick (Prov. 31:14). Now in this place it must be taken in a general sense, not only for bread, but for all other necessary food, and for raiment also, with health, peace, liberty, and all other things that are meet and needful for the good outward estate of man, of family, or commonwealth.

The uses.

1 Use. In that Christ bids us to pray for bread, and not for dainties; hereby He would teach us to beware of covetousness, the common sin of our nature, whereby we are discontent with our estate, and murmur with the Israelites, if we have no more but manna. But we must strive against this corruption, and say with David, *Lord, incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness* (Psa. 119:36).

2 Use. Secondly, we must also hereby learn to practice sobriety and moderation in diet, apparel, and all other things appertaining to this life, using them so as we may be the fitter for our callings, and the service of God, and so bettered thereby and not made worse.

3 Use. Thirdly, this must teach us contentment with that place and state of life, and measure of wealth which God gives us; for we must ask bread only, that is, things necessary; and therefore if God gives us things necessary, we must be therewith content, and our corrupt mind must not be judge herein, but what God bestows upon our sober use of lawful means within our calling, *that* must we judge to be our portion. *If we have food and raiment, let us therewith be content* (1 Tim. 6:8). That was Paul's practice, *I can be abased and I can abound; everywhere in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, to abound and to have want* (Phil. 4:12). The Israelites in the wilderness (Num. 11:31,33) were not content with manna, but would needs have flesh to eat, and God gave them their desire; but *whilst the flesh was in their mouths, His wrath fell upon them*. Therefore let us lust after no more than God gives upon our sober use of lawful means, lest in seeking more, we draw God's curse upon us. But, alas, few are content with their estate, the yeoman will be like the gentleman in attire and diet; and the gentleman like the nobleman; and hence comes usury, oppression, injustice and much ungodliness; hence it comes that God's judgment in dearth is increased upon the poor, because men make no conscience of the means, so they may benefit and enrich themselves, and get aloft. But beware of God's curse with thine advancement; unless God change thine estate, rest contented with that which is present, and be thankful for it; for *better is a little with the fear of God, than great treasure and trouble therewith* (Prov. 15:16). Now what trouble is like the wrath of God? Therefore be content with that which God sendeth in the use of lawful means.

4 Use. Fourthly, must we ask of God for every bit of bread we eat? Then away with all chance and fortune, and let us learn to acknowledge God's providence in all things.

5 Use. Fifthly, must God's children ask of God their daily food, and receive it as a gift of mercy from the hands of their Father? Then away with merit by man's works; for if bread be of mercy, life everlasting cannot be of merit on man's part.

6 Use. Lastly, this petition ministreth unto us a notable ground of contentment against distrustful care; for that which Christ bids us ask, God

undoubtedly will give, because it is according to His will; and therefore the child of God may assure himself of things sufficient for this life, in the sober use of lawful means; and look, if temporal blessings fail, for a good supply of spiritual graces.

Here, a question may be asked, seeing we ask of God but bread only, that is, things necessary for this life, whether may we use the creatures of God for our delight? *Answer*: We may use the outward blessings of God for our honest delight (Eccl. 5:18), *Behold what I have seen good, that it is comely to eat, and drink, and to take pleasure in all his labour wherein man travaileth under the sun*. Yet three caveats must be remembered lest we abuse our liberty in this delight: (1) We must see God to give us not only things necessary, but for delight; (2) In our delight and pleasure, we must so moderate our affections that they be not taken up with these earthly things, nor hereby withdrawn or hindered from things heavenly and spiritual; (3) Our principal joy must be in spiritual food, even in Christ crucified, and in our true communion with Him in His body and blood; all our delight must stoop to this, and out of Christ we must count nothing joyous.

2. What bread? *Daily bread*. The word in the original signifieth bread put to our substances day by day; that is such bread as serves to preserve health and life from day to day. This Agur calls *bread* or *food convenient* for him (Prov. 30:8).

The Use.

In the second point we learn two things:

1 Use. First, that it is lawful to ask temporal blessings at the hands of God, for He is our merciful Father, and bids us so to do; which serveth to confirm the former exposition of this article.

2 Use. Secondly, that we ought to have a moderate care to preserve our bodily life and health, in the diligent use of all lawful means; for what we pray for, we must endeavour to do. The sixth commandment saith, Thou shalt not kill; wherein the Lord enjoineth us by all good means to preserve our own and our neighbour's life. And this we must do for two causes, especially: first, that we may do all the good we can to the church,

commonwealth and family whereof we are members; secondly, that we may have a sufficient time to prepare ourselves for heaven; for death will come, and the day of judgment; and after death, there is no wisdom nor counsel, work, nor invention (Eccl. 9:10). Therefore now must we prepare ourselves for God, that we may be ready to receive Him at His coming; and he that is prepared for the Lord hath lived well and long enough, but without this, our life is spent in vain.

3. Whose bread do we pray for? *Our own*, not other men's. But how doth bread, or any other temporal blessings become ours? *Answer*: First, we have true right thereto before God; secondly, when we have lawful possession thereof before men. Our right before God is needful, for we lost all in Adam, and have recovery of our right in the creatures only in Christ Jesus, when by faith we become His members (1 Cor. 3:22), *All things are yours, and ye are Christ's*. And yet for all this, the child of God may not use all things as his own, though he have right thereto in Christ, unless by God's providence he have also lawful right thereto, or possession thereof before men, as by lawful gift, purchase, labour or such like. Indeed right in Christ is the chiefest title, but yet right before men is also necessary; for Christian liberty doth not abolish good orders in civil estates, but establish them rather. Christ is no enemy to Caesar, and therefore the Scripture enjoins every man to eat his own bread (2 Thess. 3:12); that is, such whereto he hath right in Christ by faith, and also enjoyeth by God's providence in some honest means allowed of men; for by good orders established among men, we are put into possession of those things whereto we have right in Christ.

The Use.

1 Use. Here we learn to receive our bread from God, or any other temporal blessing we enjoy as a fruit of Christ's passion; and indeed Christ crucified is the foundation of every good gift and blessing of God. As for infidels and wicked men who possess and use many temporal blessings, it must be granted that they have the right thereto before men; but yet having no part in Christ crucified, they want the true foundation, and so are no better than usurpers before God, for which one day they must be called to reckoning. If this point were learned, men should shew more conscience in getting, and more reverence and thankfulness in using God's temporal blessings than

usually they do. There would be less riot and excess in diet and attire, and less abuse of all God's creatures; for the meditation of this price of our restitution would restrain us from dishonouring God in any of His blessings.

2 Use. This petition for our own bread teacheth us that everyone should have a lawful calling, and therein so employ himself that he may eat his own bread (2 Thess 3:12). No man ought to live out of a lawful calling, nor yet idly therein; the master must banish idleness out of his family, and the magistrate out of the commonwealth. Vagrant persons ought not to be tolerated, for such eat not their own bread.

3 Use. Here is condemned all fraud, injustice and cruelty in the getting of temporal blessings, for we pray for our own bread; but that which is so gotten is not our own, but others. Neither will the gamesters gain, nor that which is got by lottery, stand with this petition; for this is not to labour the thing that good is, as the apostle requireth (Eph. 4:28); neither are they sanctified means of getting.

*Question*: If this bread be our own, what need we to ask it? *Answer*: We ask it for good causes though it be our own; for in bread there be two things: the substance of bread, and the blessing of God therein, which in Scripture is called the staff of bread (Isa. 3:1), which is that virtue and power therein whereby it nourisheth; for herein it fareth with bread as it does with an old man: take away his staff, and he cannot stand but falleth; so take away God's blessing from bread, and it becomes unprofitable, and nourisheth not. Now because we may have the substance of bread, and yet want the blessing upon it; we may have our garners full, and yet be poor. We may eat and not be satisfied (Mic. 6:14); fill our bellies, and yet be hungry; therefore we pray to God for bread that so we may have not only the substance, but the blessing of God therewithal; for which cause princes must as well make this petition as the poorest beggars.

4. For what time do we ask bread? Not for a month or a year, but *for this day*, or as Luke hath it, *according to the day* (Luke 11:3), that is, meet and convenient for this present day.

The Use.

In this circumstance of time, we are taught:

1 Use. First, to bewail our distrustfulness in God's providence for temporal blessings, as food, raiment etc.

2 Use. Secondly, to acknowledge God's particular providence upon us from day to day, whereon we must depend and cast ourselves continually for all things needful, though we see no reason thereof. Thus did Abraham, when he was about to sacrifice his son; for when Isaac asked, *Where is the sacrifice*? Abraham answered, *My son, God will provide* (Gen. 22:8); and so He did (v.13), whereupon Abraham in memory of this singular work of God's providence, called the name of that place *Jehovah-Jireh, God will provide* (v.14). A most worthy precedent for every man in the way of obedience, to depend upon God's providence for all things needful, endeavouring to see His disposing hand in all things that fall out good or bad.

3 Use. Thirdly, to moderate our care in seeking for the blessings of this life, we must have care to provide things honest and necessary; and for this end must exercise ourselves in the use of lawful means, otherwise we shall tempt God. But yet our care must be so moderate, that we still depend upon our heavenly Father's care and providence for us, who bids us ask Him bread for every day. And thus we shall have enough, whenas distrustful and immoderate care shall help us nothing. When the Israelites lived by manna (Exod. 16:18,19), which God gave them from heaven, they were commanded to gather but for one day, and to reserve none of it till the morrow; whereby God would teach them to depend upon His daily providence; which while they did, they had sufficient, and that which was good; but when through covetousness they would needs gather more than for the day, and so reserved of it till the morning, God's curse light upon it, for *it was full of worms and stank* (v.20). And afterward when they began to dislike manna (Num. 11:4), and were not content with His providence, but *lusted after flesh, He gave them their desire, but withal His wrath fell upon them while the flesh was between their teeth before it was chewed* (v.33). And so it will be with us if we distrust in God. But if we learn and practise this dependence on God's particular providence, we shall have experience

of His goodness, though ordinary means fail, either by supply (as 1 Kin. 17:6), or by patience to bear the want.

4 Use. Fourthly, here we have a good ground of that holy practice of God's children, sanctifying their meat and drink by prayer and thanksgiving; for here we are taught to pray for temporal blessings, and therefore when we have them and use them, we should glorify God by prayer and thanksgiving for His blessing upon them. The reason hereof is great, for: first, hereby we are distinguished from brute beasts, who live upon God's blessings, but yet cannot praise Him as man may do. Secondly, hereby we testify our right and interest into God's creatures by Jesus Christ, which we lost in Adam; for true prayer is a fruit of faith, and by faith we are made partakers of Christ Jesus. Thirdly, such is our corruption by nature that we are prone to abuse all God's blessings, and therefore we must pray for grace to use them moderately and thankfully.

5 Use. Fifthly, here we may learn how to frame our daily prayers to God, for this circumstance of time must be referred to every petition; and therefore this must be our practice, every day to pray for grace to glorify God's name, to yield obedience to His will, to have our sins forgiven, and so for the rest.

5. For whom do we ask bread? Not for ourselves alone, but for our brethren; *Give us*; which serves to teach us brotherly love, which seeketh not her own things only, but is bountiful towards others, seeking their good also. And indeed here we are but stewards of God's temporal blessings, and therefore may not employ them as we will, but for His glory, who is our absolute Lord. Now His discretion is to this effect; that first, we should glorify God with our temporal goods, employing them for the maintenance of His worship, and of true religion. Secondly, that we should employ them for the common good, in the relief of the poor, and other necessary duties for the commonwealth. Thirdly, that we should provide for our own, especially them of our family, that we may live in peace and quietness, and so the better prepare ourselves for the life to come.

6. From whom must we look to receive our bread? Namely, from God; for we say unto Him that is our Father in Christ, *Give us*; which teacheth us that though we be His children, and so have right to temporal blessings, yet

whatsoever we have, we must know it comes from God, and must receive and use it as from His hand. And this we shall do if we sanctify the creatures of God unto our temporal use; for every creature of God is good, if it be sanctified in His use. Now the creature is sanctified not as man is, when the Spirit of God worketh in him, abolishing corruption and renewing grace; nor yet as the elements in the sacraments are sanctified, which are set apart by God to an holy and spiritual use, to be seals and pledges of grace; but when it is made fit to our temporal and civil use, which is done by the word and prayer (1 Tim 4:4,5). Whereby *the word* is meant; first, *the word of creation*, whereby God in the beginning fitted the creature for man's use, and gave him power and sovereignty over it. Secondly, *the word of restitution*, whereby after the fall, and after the flood, He granted unto man the use of His creatures (Gen. 9:3). Thirdly, *the word of the gospel* concerning our Christian liberty, wherein He hath enlarged our use in the creatures of God (Acts 10:15). And *by prayer*, we desire God to give His power unto the creatures, and His blessing upon them to serve for our good and comfort; as also to give us grace to receive them as from His hand, and to use them to His glory. If we could learn and practise this duty, we should have more comfort in the creatures than yet we have; yea, it would restrain us from fraud, oppression, cruelty, and from pride and vanity in getting and using all God's blessings; for if we were persuaded that all temporal blessings came from His hand, how durst we sin against Him either in getting or using of them.

Secondly, in that after our labour and diligence in our callings, we must still pray to God to give us bread, we must learn to observe that order of causes which God hath set in the producing of all temporal blessings for this life; for not only food and raiment, but our labour and diligence there about are secondary causes, depending upon the blessings of God, which is the first cause of all disposing and ordering all things unto goodness; for it comes from God that meat doth feed us, and clothes do keep us warm. If He say unto stones, *become bread*, they shall feed us (Matt. 4:3,4). Yea, in the want of bread, He can preserve strength for many days (Exod. 34:28; 1 Kin. 19:8). Yea, if He speak the word, poison shall become bread and nourish us. But without His blessing, nothing can do us good (Psa. 127:1),*Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it*. We therefore must learn to rely upon God's providence for a blessing on all our labour and

study, and wait for His blessing in all the means we use for our good and comfort; for He is our life, our health, our preservation.

# 6:12

"*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*." Matthew 6:12

The Coherence.

Christ having taught us in the former petition to pray for temporal blessings, and for grace to rely upon God's provident dispensation for the things of this life, doth in this petition and the next, direct us to ask spiritual blessings for ourselves, to wit, remission of our sins, and strength against temptation. And the reasons of this order is this: Christ makes the former petition a step unto these; for a man must rest upon God's providence for the preservation of his body, that will rely upon His mercy for the salvation of his soul. He that cannot be persuaded that God will give him bread, will hardly be resolved that he will forgive him his sins.

1. Where, first, we may note what is the faith of worldlings: they do not trust in God for food, raiment, and other temporal blessings. How then can we say that their faith is found for eternal mercies? *He that believeth will not make haste* (Isa. 28:16), but will stay God's leisure, waiting for His blessings whereof he stands in need. But is this the practice of the world? No verily; for let a cross come, and men will not stick to use unlawful means for their deliverance. And so they deal, when hope of gain is offered, making little conscience of fraud, lying, oppression, etc., and so making haste to be rich, they overrun the provident hand of God that would lead them by ordinary lawful means.

2. Secondly, hence we learn how to enjoy and use all temporal blessings, food, raiment, and such like; namely, as helps and means to draw us towards God's mercy in Christ. Thus did Jacob (Gen. 28:20,21), *If God will be with me, and give me bread to eat, and clothes to put on, É. Then shall the Lord be my God*. (John 6:27), Christ bids those whom He had fed miraculously, when they sought Him afterward for outward things, that they should *not labour for that food which perisheth*, resting therein, *but for that*

*which endureth unto everlasting life*; leading them from bodily care and labour, to that which is heavenly and spiritual.

To come to the petition, wherein we will handle, first, the necessity of it; then the meaning; and lastly, the uses.

1. For the first: This petition may seem to be needless; for they that make it are God's children, who have all their sins forgiven them, both past, present and to come. *Answer*: This indeed must be the daily petition of all God's children in this world, and the necessity of it is great; for howsoever in the purpose of God, all sins are pardoned to true believers; yea, all sins past repented of, are so forgiven, that they shall never be again imputed; yet sins present, and to come, are not actually pardoned, till they be repented of. This experience teacheth, for who can feel the assurance of mercy for any sin committed, before he have repented of it? And though true repentance once had, set us forever in God's favour, yet it must be daily renewed for our daily falls, or else we cannot know it to be true. Hence it is that Paul entreats the saints of God in Corinth (though they had truly repented at their conversion) to *be reconciled unto God* (2 Cor. 5:20), meaning, by renewing their repentance. And David was the true child of God, yet being left unto himself, he fell into two grievous sins, wherein he lay almost a whole year without repentance; during all which time he had not pardon of them actually; for Nathan rebuked him to bring him to repentance, and upon his confession, pronounced them pardoned; yea, and David himself afterward, for the fuller assurance of mercy to his soul, most earnestly entreated pardon hereof at the hands of God (Psa. 51). So that this petition is most necessary, as for the more full assurance of sins past.

2. The Meaning.

This petition is propounded in the form of a comparison, which naturally standeth thus: *As we forgive out debtors, so forgive thou to us our debts*. And it hath two parts: a request for pardon, and a reason thereof.

1. Our request for pardon is this: *Forgive us our debts*.

In the word *debt* is a figurative kind of speech taken from bargaining, wherein God is resembled to the creditor; man is the debtor; the law is the

bond or obligation; and sin is that debt of ours for which we stand bound to God by the law. This appears by this, that in the Evangelists, the word sin and debt are used promiscuously; as Luke 11:4 compared with this of Matthew and Luke 13:4. Now sin makes us debtors unto God, not for that we owe it unto Him, for we are bound by the law to yield the contrary obedience; but because upon default of obedience unto God, whereto we are bound by the law, we are bound for our sins unto punishment, which is as it were a second debt. Even as a man that is bound in an obligation to another, through default of performing the condition thereof, is bound to pay both the principal and the forfeiture; the punishment of sin which is eternal death, being that forfeiture whereto we stand bound before God, for want of obedience which is as it were principal.

The consideration of this resemblance for which sin is called a debt, serves to direct us in some points of religion:

1. As, first, it confutes their opinion who hold that our whole justification consists in the remission of sins, and that the same is wrought by the shedding of Christ's blood alone; for we owe to God a double debt, first, obedience, and for default thereof we stand bound to punishment. These two debts are different and distinct one from another, and they must both be paid, and God's justice satisfied either by ourselves or by a surety, before we can be accepted as righteous unto life. Now we ourselves can discharge neither; therefore Christ our surety must do both; and so He hath; for our second debt of sin whereby we stand bound to punishment, Christ discharged by His death and passion, wherein He made His Son a sacrifice for sin; and our debt of obedience in perfect love to God and man, He also paid to God in fulfilling the law for us. Whereupon it is true that *the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them which walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit* (Rom. 8:4).

But (say they) the Scripture everywhere ascribes our whole redemption and justification to Christ's blood-shedding, and to His death and passion. *Answer*: Christ's blood-shedding must be considered two ways: first, as part of His passion, whereby we are discharged from punishment; secondly, as part of His obedience, wherein He testified singular love both to God His

Father, and unto mankind; for in suffering He obeyed, and in obeying He suffered. Now because His blood-shedding is part of both, therefore is our whole redemption ascribed thereunto, not excluding, but including His actual obedience therein, it being a part thereof.

2. Secondly, debt in this place betokening sin as it binds unto punishment, sheweth plainly that sin and punishment go always together. And therefore the popish doctrine is false and erroneous which parteth them asunder by making some sins venial, not deserving the punishment of death, which is the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23).

*Forgive us*.

This forgiveness here asked, is a free and full discharge from sin and the punishment thereof, without any satisfaction on our part; and this God doth, when He is content for Christ's sake, not to impute sin unto us, but to account it as not committed, and the punishment thereof as not due unto us; being fully and freely contented with the all- sufficient satisfaction made by Christ in His death and passion. This forgiveness Hezekiah expressed, when he said to God (Isa. 38:17), *Thou hast cast all our sins behind thy back*; and Micah saying (Mic. 7:19), *He will subdue our iniquities, and cast all our sins into the bottom of the sea*. So that our request to God is this, that where our sin binds us to punishment, the Lord would be pleased for His Son's sake, freely to remit all our sins, and never to impute them unto us, and to be fully contented with the suffering of Christ, that the punishment of our sins be never laid upon us.

*Question*: But of what sins do we here ask pardon? *Answer*: Both of sins past and present; for howsoever the child of God hath his sins past fully pardoned at once on God's part, upon his true repentance; yet he is not able so to receive pardon as God gives it, but must receive it by little and little, and as it were drop by drop. This we may see in David, who had the pardon of his sin pronounced by Nathan the prophet (2 Sam. 12:13); and yet after that he penned Psalm 51, wherein he begs mercy and forgiveness most earnestly for that sin which God had already pardoned, aiming no doubt at a more full and comfortable assurance of God's pardon in his own heart. For this cause also in his old age, he prays for the pardon of the sins of his youth (Psa. 25:7). Again, here we pray for the pardon of sins present, both

that they may actually be forgiven; and also that our hearts and consciences may be sealed in the assurance thereof.

The Uses.

1 Use. First, by this petition, we are taught to bewail our carnal security; for naturally we go on from day to day, in following the pleasures and profits of this world, and never think of our debt to God by sin, till the evil day of death or distress approach unto us; like to desperate bankrupts that never regard their debt till the serjeant be upon their back. This is that sin which Christ foretold should reign in the latter days (Matt. 24:39); and I appeal to the conscience in the view of all estates and conditions, whether it be not so; for though iniquity do abound, yet no man saith, *What have I done?* (Jer. 8:6); yea, this is the sin of many professors, for the nature of man is prone to encroach upon God's favour. But we must know that this security cannot stand with this petition; for here we are taught to call to mind our sins, every day praying for the pardon of them.

2 Use. Secondly, here we see whereon we must rely and settle our hearts in all estates, in affliction, temptation, and death itself; namely, on the mere mercy of God in Christ, by faith in His blood for the pardon of our sins. Look to the prayers of all the saints of God in Scripture, and we shall find that they made this their rock and anchor of stay in all distress. (Dan. 9:18,19), *O Lord, hear and beholdÉ. not for our own righteousness, but for thy great tender mercies: defer not, for thy own sake, oh my God*. This we must observe to arm us against the damnable doctrine of the church of Rome, for they will grant that in his first conversion, a man must rely only on God's mercy in Christ's blood; but after a man is made the child of God, he may rest upon his own good merits, so it be in modesty and sobriety. But this is the right way to hell, flat against this petition; for how can we dream of any merit, whenas we must every day ask mercy and forgiveness? For to ask mercy and to plead merit are contraries. Now by our daily sins, we add debt to debt, and so must still plead mercy and not merit, even after we are converted and sanctified; ever praising God that hath delivered us from the slavish bondage of that proud synagogue.

3 Use. Thirdly, here we see what we must do in respect of our daily sins whereinto we fall; we must not lie in them, but renew our estate by true

humiliation and repentance. Also if thou be crossed in the things of this world, the way of comfort and deliverance is to be learned here; for as thou doest daily ask bread, so thou must ask forgiveness for thy sins; and when they are pardoned, thou hast title and interest in all God's blessings. Now this daily humiliation stands in three things: (i) In the examination of ourselves for our debt unto God by sin; (ii) In confessing our debt unto our creditor, yielding ourselves into His hands; (iii) In humbling ourselves unto Him, craving pardon and remission earnestly for Christ's sake, as for life and death. Herein the children of God are precedents unto us (Psa. 32:5,6). David in great distress found no release while he held his tongue, but when he humbled himself, and confessed against himself, then he found mercy and ease; whereupon he professeth that he will be a pattern to every godly man for their behaviour in the time of distress.

4 Use. Fourthly, here we have a notable remedy against despair, wherewith the devil assaults many a child of God, when through infirmity they fall into some grievous sin, or commit the same sin often, which greatly wounds the conscience; for here Christ bids us ask forgiveness of our daily sins whatsoever they be, or how often soever committed. And no doubt, He bids us forgive our brethren that sin against us , though it were seven times in a day (Luke 17:4), if they seek it at our hands, will much more forgive us. This must not embolden any to sin presumptuously, for the Lord hath said He will not be merciful unto that man (Deut. 29:19); but if any fall through infirmity, hereon he hath to stay himself from despair.

5 Use. Fifthly, hereby we see that no man possibly can fulfil the law, for the apostles themselves were commanded to ask pardon of sin every day; whereby it is plain they could never fulfil the law. And therefore much less can any other.

6 Use. Sixthly, that which we pray for we must in all godly manner, endeavour after. And therefore as we pray for pardon of sin every day, so must we daily use the means whereby God gives assurance of remission to His children; as hear the Word, receive the sacraments, and pray unto God publicly and privately; endeavouring to resist all temptations, and to glorify God by new obedience; for it is gross hypocrisy to ask the pardon of sin, and still to live in the practice of it.

7 Use. Lastly, here we see we must pray not only for the pardon of our own sins, but of our brethren's also – *Forgive us*; whereby Christ would teach us to be careful of the salvation of our brethren and neighbours. The good estate of their souls should be dear and precious unto us; and if this were so, happy would it be with the church of God; but alas, men are so far from care of the salvation of their neighbours, that men of the same family are careless of one another's souls; masters regard not their servants, nor parents their children; indeed they will provide for their bodies and outward estate, but for their souls they have no care. Wherein they bewray themselves to be cruel and merciless, having more care of their hogs and brute beasts than of their children and servants; for when their hogs have all needful provision, their children and servants' souls shall want instruction.

2. *As we also forgive our debtors*.

These words are here propounded as a condition of the former petition; and they include a reason thereof (Luke 11:4), *Forgive us our sins, FOR even we forgive every man that is indebted to us*. And this Christ addeth for weighty causes, even to cross the fraud and hypocrisy of our corrupt hearts, who would have forgiveness of God, and yet would not forgive our brethren, nor yet leave off the practice of sin ourselves. But this condition imports that we must exercise mercy towards our brethren, and so break off the course of our sins, if we look for mercy at God's hands. Now the words here used are comparative, betokening a likelihood and similitude between God's forgiving and ours; which must be rightly understood, because our forgiveness is mingled with much corruption through want of mercy; and therefore we must not understand it of the measure of our forgiveness, nor yet of the manner simply, but especially of the very act of forgiving, for thereto sometimes most similitudes be restrained; as (Matt 9:29), *According to your faith be it unto you*. And the force of the reason stands in the circumstance, thus: If we who have but a drop of mercy, do forgive others; then do thou who art the fountain of mercy forgive us: But we forgive other; therefore do thou forgive us.

Touching our forgiving others, three questions must be scanned:

*1 Question*. How can any man pardon a trespass, seeing God only forgiveth sins? *Answer*: In every trespass which one doth to his neighbour, be two

things: the loss and damage whereby man is hindered in body, goods or name; and an offence against God, by a practice of injustice against His law. Now as a trespass is a damage unto man, so may a man forgive it; but as it is a sin against God in the transgression of the moral law, so God only pardons it. As when a man hath his goods stolen, that damage done to him a man may remit; but the breach of the eighth commandment therein, God only can forgive.

*2 Question*: How far is a man bound to forgive others that trespass against him? *Answer*: There is a threefold forgiveness: of revenge, of punishment and of judgment. (i) Forgiveness of revenge is when a man is not desirous of revenge from an inward grudge, but forbears to render like for like to those that wrong him. This is principally here meant; for we must always forgive our brethren in respect of revenge; for *vengeance is mine saith the Lord, and I will repay* (Rom. 12:19). (ii) Forgiveness of punishment is the remitting of that punishment which another man's wrongdoing deserves. This is not always to be granted, especially in the case of offence, which may tend to the public hurt; for then were the state of magistracy unlawful, whose office it is to punish offences. (iii) The forgiveness of judgment is the remitting of that censure which an evil deed doth justly deserve. Neither is this here meant, for being lawfully called thereunto, we may freely censure that which is evil done.

*3 Question*. Whether must we forgive those that wrong us, if they will not confess their fault, nor ask us forgiveness? *Answer*: We must forgive them freely, in respect of revenge. *Objection*: But it is said, *if he repent, forgive him* (Luke 17:3). Therefore, unless he repents, we need not to forgive him. *Answer*: That place is meant of ecclesiastical censures, that those must proceed no further, after the party offending doth repent.

*Debtors*.

Hereby is not meant such as we count debtors in the civil state; that is, such as owe us money, grain etc., but anyone that doth us injury or wrong; for no man's estate is so low, but in some degree God hath given one or more of these four things: honour, life, goods or good name; and he that hinders his neighbour in any of these is a debtor before God, and so standeth till he make recompense to the party, and repent toward God. Yea, further, we

must know that besides the endamaging of our neighbour in these things, the very omission of preserving and furthering our neighbour's life, honour, goods and good name, makes us also debtors before God.

These words thus understood, must be conceived as a reason drawn, not from the cause, or like example, but from the sign and pledge of God's forgiveness; for God hath made a promise to forgive us, if we forgive our brethren their trespasses (Mark 11:25). From whence, merciful men may gather assurance of pardon with God, from that inclination to compassion and readiness which they find in their own hearts, to forgive others that wrong them; for Christ teacheth them to reason thus: If we be those to whom thou hast promised pardon when they ask it, then Lord pardon us: But we are such, for we feel our hearts inclined to mercy; therefore Lord pardon us. So that this reason serves to move us to pray to God for pardon with confidence and assurance. Yea, further, they include a profession to God of new obedience in amendment of life; for under one duty of mercy towards our neighbour, is comprehended the whole practice of repentance, and the performance of our vow made in baptism.

Uses.

1 Use. Mark here that asking pardon of God and testimony of repentance, go together. He that receives the one, must express the other; for where God gives pardon, there also He gives grace to repent, and mercy is not granted but on condition of repentance. (Acts 2:37,38), When the Jews that were pricked in conscience at Peter's sermon, asked what to do to find mercy, Peter said, *Amend your lives* etc. And therefore when he perceived want of repentance in Simon Magus (Acts 8:23), he tells him, *Thou art yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*, though he had formerly baptised him. Whereby we see, first, with what affection we must come to God when we pray for pardon of our sins; namely, with humble and contrite hearts, having a true purpose not to sin wittingly and willingly, but to obey God in all His commandments. And the want of this is the cause of that small comfort in prayer which many find in themselves; for the promise of pardon is not given where the conscience of repentance is not performed. Secondly, this shews the gross and fearful error of the blind world, who sing this song while they live in sin, to their own hearts: *God is merciful, Christ*

*is a Saviour*. But this trusting to God's mercy they deceive themselves, for they trust to nothing; for mercy is not due where repentance is wanting; nay, the Lord hath said (Deut. 29:19), He will not be merciful to that man that *shall bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk after the stubbornness of mine own heart*, etc. Let us therefore see to this: that we practise repentance when we pray for pardon; and look to the purpose of our heart against sin, when we wait for mercy to our souls. We may not sever those things which God hath joined, but look how heartily we desire mercy, so earnestly must we hunger after grace to repent. If we truly seek both, we shall have both; but if we let slip repentance in ourselves, we shall come short of mercy with the Lord.

2 Use. The joining of this condition, implying repentance, to the petition, and the dependence of it on the former, teacheth us every day to renew our repentance, and to humble ourselves for our sins, seeking for a new supply of grace, that so our purpose not to sin may be more and more confirmed in our hearts; which is the infallible sign of a new creature.

3 Use. Here we see wherein the practice of true repentance standeth; namely, in exercising mercy, love, peace, reconciliation and forgiveness; for though forgiveness be only named, yet under it all other fruits of repentance are understood. Indeed to hear the Word, to receive the sacrament, to preach and pray, be excellent works; but yet the heart of man may more easily dissemble in them than in the duties of the second table. The most infallible mark of true grace is the practice of the love of God in works of love and mercy to our brethren. (Jam. 1:27), *Pure religion and undefiled before God, is to visit the fatherless* etc. (Jam. 3:17), *The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits*. And hence it is that love is called *the fulfilling of the law* (Rom. 13:10).

4 Use. Christ knitting our forgiving our brother with God's forgiving us, doth here afford unto us a notable sign of pardon of sin; namely, a ready and willing mind to forgive our brother offending us. Our inclination to mercy in suppressing the desire of revenge when we are wronged, gives assurance to our conscience that we shall find mercy at God's hands. Whereby it is plain that the child of God may know his own estate before God, in regard

of His mercy in Christ, even by descending into his own heart, and there finding the affection of mercy, in forgiving those that have wronged him. And this we must labour for, if we would know God's mercy in Christ to belong unto us.

5 Use. Hereby we are admonished to beware in ourselves of the common sin of this age, engrafted into our nature; to wit, desire of revenge, spite and grudging upon every occasion. For when we pray unto God with such malicious hearts, we do in effect desire the Lord to exercise His wrath, and to revenge His justice on us. And undoubtedly, many a man doth fearfully curse himself in his own prayers, while he is cruelly minded towards his brethren, and God oftentimes saith Amen to such curses most deservedly, seeing men are so cruel to their own souls to curse themselves. And therefore we had need to look to our hearts when we pray to God, that we forgive men, if we would be forgiven of God.

6 Use. Here note a general gross abuse in this age: most men will seek to be reconciled to their brethren, with whom they are at variance, when they come to the Lord's table; but at other times they take their pleasure, thinking they may well enough perform all other duties of religion, though they retain malice and enmity towards their brethren. But here we may observe that we ought to be reconciled with our brethren, whensoever we go to God in prayer; for else, if we come in malice and envy towards our brethren, we curse ourselves and sin against our own souls. In prayer we bring the sacrifice of our hearts, and the salvation of our lips unto God; but before we offer it, we must reconcile ourselves unto our brethren, as we heard before.

7 Use. Here also we may see the gross hypocrisy of our nature; for as oft as we make this petition, we make profession of reformation of life in new obedience (for this one branch of brotherly reconciliation here professed, doth presuppose our conversion from all sin, sith that true repentance for our sin, cannot stand with a purpose to live in any other). And yet, behold, though men say this prayer often, yet still they continue in their old sins as in blasphemy, drunkenness, whoredom, oppression, lying, fraud, etc., as though it were nothing to dissemble with God. But God is not mocked.

Either amend thy wicked conversation, or leave off to make this holy profession.

8 Use. In that Christ tieth our duty of forgiving our brethren to so weighty a condition, as is our forgiveness with God; hereby He would acquaint us with the horrible cruelty of our nature, and proneness to revenge. We must therefore take notice of it, and labour to see and bewail this corruption of our hearts; and on the other side, to hunger after love, mercy, gentleness, meekness, and to endeavour to practise the same continually.

9 Use. Lastly, join both parts of this petition together, and they shew us a way how to keep true peace of conscience for ever; namely, first, we must call upon God for the pardon of our sins every day; secondly, we must follow after peace with men in the practice of forgiveness and reconciliation when offences grow; for when we are at one with God and man, we have a blessed peace; and hence will follow peace in our own hearts, which is that peace which the world cannot give; which while we retain, we need not to fear any evil, no not death itself; for, *if God be with us, who can be against us*? (Rom. 8:31).

# 6:13

"*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen*." Matthew 6:13

"*And lead us not into temptation*"

These words contain the sixth and last petition, which is not needless, as some may think, but for weighty causes set after all the former, though a man had the fruition of all the graces there desired; to wit:

First, to teach us who they be that are most troubled with temptations; namely, the children of God, that set themselves to seek His glory, to advance His kingdom, to do His will, to depend upon His providence, and to rely upon His mercy for the pardon of their sins. These of all others are most subject to temptation, for being escaped out of the devil's snare, he bestirs himself by all possible means to bring them in again. Grievous temptations do always accompany remission of sin, which is joined with endeavour to glorify God, as both the Word of God and Christian experience do fully witness. Which must be well observed, both to stay the mind of those that are deeply humbled through saints' temptations, thinking that they are not the children of God because they are so troubled with sin and Satan, whenas the case is clean contrary; for spiritual temptations, if they be resisted with godly sorrow, are rather a sign of God's love, because the devil's hatred is most toward them whom God loves best; and on whom God shews mercy, toward them will the devil exercise his malice. As also this discovereth the folly of those that sooth up themselves in this fond conceit, that God surely loves them, and they are deep in His favour because they are freed from temptations; whenas indeed they ought rather to suspect themselves to be under the power of Satan; for when the strong man armed keep the hold, the things that he possesseth are at peace (Luke 11:21). Whereby is signified that the wicked of the world being possessed of Satan, are at peace in themselves in regard of temptations; for what needs he to trouble them which are already at his command? But let them begin to repent and to seek mercy for their sins, with endeavour to leave them, and

they shall soon find that God's favour is not enjoyed without the devil's malice.

Secondly, this petition is enjoined with the former to teach us that as we must be careful to beg mercy and pardon for our sins already past, so we must be watchful to prevent sins to come. He that saith, *Forgive us our trespasses*, must pray also *not to be led into temptation*. And therefore, as we would not have our consciences pricked with the sting of our old sins, so we must be careful we fall not into them again, neither be overcome with new temptations.

The meaning.

The words themselves contain only one petition (though some have thought otherwise), consisting of two parts: The first is the petition itself, *And lead us not into temptation*; the second is the exposition thereof, *But deliver us from evil*. For in effect it is thus much: That we be not led into temptation, deliver us from evil.

1. For the first, that we may rightly understand it, we must search out two things: First, what a temptation is, secondly, what it is to be led into temptation.

    1. There be two sorts of temptations, good and evil. I call that a good and holy temptation, whenas God tempts a man, and it is an action of God whereby He proveth and trieth man, to make manifest unto man himself and unto others, what is in his heart. God knoweth well enough before He try him. Thus He tempted Abraham by the offering of his son (Gen. 22:1,2); and the Israelites, by sending false prophets amongst them (Deut. 13:3). And in this sense, afflictions are called temptations (Jam. 1:2), because God trieth man by affliction, as gold is tried in the fire. And all these are good, both in respect of the author, which is God, and of the end, which is the good of His servants (Job 23:10), *He knoweth my way and trieth me, and I shall come forth as the gold*. An evil temptation is a wicked motion, allurement or persuasion, whereby man is provoked to sin against God in the transgression of some commandment. *Example*: When a man is in distress, he shall find provocations to impatience, distrust, and

murmuring against God; as also to the unlawful means to help himself. And in prosperity he shall find sundry allurements to presume upon God's mercy in some evil course, to neglect the ordinary means of grace and salvation; as the Word, prayer etc., and all these and such like are evil motions, arising partly from our own corruptions, and partly from the suggestion of the devil, who by himself, and by his instruments, thus seeks to draw men from their duty to God. And these evil temptations be they which in this petition we pray against.

2. What is it to be led into temptation? *Answer*: A man is led or carried (as the word imports) into temptation, when the temptation possesseth him, and holds him after it hath assaulted him. For we must know that in every temptation there be two actions; one of God, whereby in His just judgment He leaves a man to himself, whereby being left of God, he enters into the midst of the temptation, as it were plunging himself into it. For the better conceiving hereof, we must know that a temptation has four degrees by which it proceedeth, till it bring a man unto destruction, unless it be cut off; to wit, *suggestion, delight, consent and* perfection* (Jam. 1:14,15). *Suggestion* is when the mind conceives a wicked thought, put in by Satan, or arising from natural corruption. *Delight* is when the evil thought conceived, and for a time retained in the mind, descendeth to the heart, and there pleaseth the will and delighteth the affections. *Consent* is when the will yields to the evil motion, and the heart resolves to practise it. *Perfection* is when a sin is often committed, and by custom becomes as it were ripe, whereupon follows destruction. Now in the first and second of these degrees, a man is said to be tempted only; for suggestion and delectation do not defile the heart, but when the will consents, then the temptation takes hold upon him and possesseth him; and by often practice, he is plunged into it, entangled, and held captive under it. Now then (to apply this to the point in hand), a man is led into temptation when he is left of God to an evil motion suggested into his mind, so as he gives consent unto it, and goes on to the practice of it. See this in Judas (John 13:2). Satan cast this evil motion into his heart: *Judas betray thy master*. This he thought upon, and was delighted with the gain that he hoped to reap thereby. And here God left him to himself for his hypocrisy and other sins, and then Satan entered into

> his heart, got consent of will, and so carried him to the practice of this treason. Hereto also the apostle seems to allude (1 Tim. 6:9*), They that will be rich fall into temptations and snares, being left of God to their corruption in covetousness*.

But some will say that God's own children have been thus carried into temptation; as David in the case of his adultery and murder (2 Sam. 11); and Peter in denying his master (Matt. 26:70,74). *Answer*: It may seem that they were carried into temptation, for their evil motions were not only received with delight, but consented unto and practised. Yea, David lay in his sin almost a whole year. But we must consider that they were the children of God by adoption and regeneration, and therefore howsoever God left them to be tempted, yet He forsook them not wholly or finally, but still loved them, so as they were not carried into temptation with full consent of heart; but God's saving grace remained in them, which when God stirred up, they were recovered by repentance. Indeed they went as far as they could, and in regard of themselves, far enough to have cut off their salvation; but that was laid up with God in Christ, for *His foundation remaineth firm* (2 Tim. 2:19), and *whom He loves, He loves to the end* (John 13:1), *His gifts and calling are without repentance* (Rom. 11:29). So then, to be led into temptation is to be carried into it with full consent, being left of God unto the malice of Satan, and the powerful working of a man's own corruptions; and Christ's meaning is as if He had taught us to say thus: *O Lord, we are every way subject to temptations, and by our sins we deserve to be left therein, to the malice of Satan, and in the power of our own corruptions; yet we beseech thee not to forsake us in any temptation, but give an happy issue thereto, still upholding us by thy grace*.

*Question*: How can God lead a man into temptation, and yet not be the author of sin? *Answer*: Well enough; for as temptation is a punishment of sin, so God may lead a man into it by permission, leaving the party to himself, and Satan's malice, for some former transgression. Again, God never puts any evil motion into the mind, but yet He suffers Satan to do it; and though the devil be a most wicked instrument, yet such is God's power and wisdom, that He can use him without sin, in a good manner, and to a good end.

Uses.

1. This petition serves to confute a gross error of the papists, who teach that a man truly justified before God, may finally fall from grace and be condemned. As also, the opinion of some Protestants, who though they will not say that the child of God may finally fall away and perish, yet they hold that he may wholly fall away for a time, and that every grievous sin which he commits, cuts him off totally, till he do repent; for look what the child of God asketh in prayer, according to God's will, by the teaching of Christ Himself, *Lead us not into temptation*; and therefore it shall be granted. Indeed, it stands with the will of God, and the good of His children, that sometimes they should be buffeted by Satan in temptation; and therefore we pray not here to be freed from all assaults, but that we be not wholly left unto ourselves, nor forsaken of God, but so preserved by His grace, that we be not swallowed up in temptation. And this petition being according to God's will, shall be granted to him that asks in faith (1 John 5:14). And hence it is that he that is once the child of God indeed, shall so remain for ever, and cannot finally nor totally fall away from grace. David's fall, and Peter's, were great and fearful, but yet therein, they were not wholly forsaken of God, unless it were in their own feeling for a time.

*Objection*: But David by his two sins became guilty of God's wrath, and so lost his right of this prerogative in being the child of God. *Answer*: If we consider the desert of those sins, that undoubtedly should have been his estate; but yet in regard of God's election, and free grace of adoption, wherein God changeth not, as also in regard of the inward seeds of God's grace in his heart, he remaineth still the child of God, though the signs of God's favour were changed into the signs of His anger and displeasure.

*Objection*: But by such sins a man loseth the graces which formerly he had. *Answer*: The graces of God in man are of two sorts: some are necessary to salvation, as faith, hope and charity, without which no man can be saved; others be very excellent and profitable, but not of like necessity with the former; and the sense and feeling of God's love and favour, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, alacrity in prayer, courage and boldness

with God; and these latter may be lost, but the necessary graces cannot, howsoever they may be greatly weakened; for so it was with David, by his fall he lost for a time the feeling of God's favour, the joy of the Spirit etc., but faith, hope and love were not extinguished, but sore weakened and covered, as fire in ashes.

2. *Wants to be bewailed*.

Here also we are taught to mourn for the corruption of our nature, whereby we are prone to yield up ourselves to every temptation of sin and Satan, and be slack and negligent in resisting. We do not watch and pray against temptations diligently, nor shun the occasions of sin as we ought to do; nay, we order ourselves into temptation, and minister occasion unto Satan, and to our own corruption to assault us often. This we shall find to be true in ourselves, if we search out thoroughly our own estate; and therefore it should grieve our hearts when we feel the law of our members rebelling against the law of our minds, and leading us captive unto sin.

3. *Graces to be desired*.

Here also we must learn to desire of God all such graces as may help us against temptation, and they are many:

1. Spiritual heed and watchfulness to prevent temptations and to avoid the occasions thereof.

2. Grace to pray in the time of temptation, that God would lessen and moderate the violence and force thereof.

3. That in temptation God would be so far from withdrawing His grace from us, that He would then add grace to grace, even new grace unto the former.

4. That in the continuance of temptation, when it abideth long upon us, God would strengthen us to hold out.

5. That He would give us patience to bear the irksomeness and burden of it.

6. That in the end of it, God would give a comfortable issue, for His glory, and our own good.

4. Here also we are let to see how great our weakness is, even when we be God's children and have true grace; for we must daily pray that God would not lead us into temptation. Whereby we import that of ourselves we are so far from withstanding a temptation that if God should leave us, we would give up ourselves as slaves unto the devil. Here then behold thine estate and condition, whosoever thou art, considered in thyself. If God leave thee, thou canst not stand in any temptation, but must needs fall into the bondage of Satan. Yea, so exceeding great is our weakness in ourselves, that in temptation there doth scarce appear any difference between the child of God and a wicked one; for both are subject to the temptations of Satan. Nay, the child of God is usually more assaulted than the wicked. When the evil motion ariseth, or is suggested into the mind, the wicked receive it and delight therein. So did David, and so do we all. The wicked give consent of will, so do the godly, if God leave them. The wicked fall to practise sin, and so do the godly, if God keep back His grace from them. The wicked lie in sin, and so do the godly, till the Lord by grace do raise them up. Where then is the difference? Surely the persons themselves do differ in temptation, for the wicked is carried with violence into sin, and without resistance into temptation; but the godly hath some resistance in himself; when he gives consent to sin, the evil that he doth, he would not do (Rom. 7:19). But the main difference is God's grace and mercy, vouchsafed to the child of God, but denied to the wicked. For if we escape temptation, it is of grace and mercy; if we stand in temptation, and yield not to evil suggestion, if we deny consent of will, or be kept from the practice of sin, it is all of grace. And if we be fallen into sin, and rise again by true repentance, that also is God's special grace, without which undoubtedly we should run on with the wicked unto destruction. Here therefore we must learn to renounce all confidence in ourselves, and to walk in all humility before God, relying wholly upon His grace and mercy in Jesus Christ. We must make His arm our strength, and His grace our shield, to defend us from temptation. This was David's practice, who in all trouble and distress had recourse to God, calling Him, his hope, fortress and

deliverer (Psa. 91:2,3); his secret or hiding place, who preserveth him from trouble, and compasseth him about with joyful deliverance (Psa. 32:7). And when his enemies increased, yet the Lord was his buckler, his glory, and the lifter up of his hand (Psa. 3:3). And thus should we rest upon God, considering that if we receive a good thought, we can hardly retain it; and when evil motions come, we cannot of ourselves resist them.

5. Here we also learn that in temptation, Satan can go no further than God permits him. He could not touch Job's goods, his children, nor his body, till God gave him leave (Job 1:10; 2:6). Neither could the legion of devils enter into the herd of swine, till Christ bid them go (Mark 5:13). We therefore must be patient in temptations, and bear them as coming from God's hand. Neither must we fear the devil overmuch, though he pinch our souls by his violent assaults, nay, though he should torment and possess our bodies really, for whatsoever he doth, is by God's permission. Only we must be careful to please God, and to rely on Him, who will shortly tread Satan under the feet of all His children (Rom. 16:20).

6. That which we ask of God in prayer, we must sincerely endeavour after in life; and therefore as we pray to God not to be carried into temptation, so must we seek to arm and furnish ourselves with grace, that we may be able to encounter with our spiritual enemies, and to withstand their assaults. This is the apostle's counsel (Eph. 6:11ff.), *Put ye on the whole armour of God; that ye may be able to stand against the assaults of the devil*, etc. Then after, he nameth those Christian virtues, which as spiritual armour, the child of God must take unto him and arm his soul withal, if he would persevere in grace unto the end. The first part of this armour is truth, or verity, wherewith the loins must be girt about. And this is an excellent grace, whereby a man professeth true religion, and endeavoureth himself in the practice of all the duties of religion in sincerity, his speeches and his actions are suitable proceeding from an honest heart, that truly meaneth whatsoever the tongue uttereth, or the members of the body doth practice. The second part is justice, or righteousness, when a man leads his life so unblameably and uprightly, that he can truly say with the

apostle Paul, *I know nothing by myself* (1 Cor. 4:4). Indeed the best Christian hath his faults and failings, but yet he must not live in known sins; for then he cannot say, *I know nothing by myself*. The third is the preparation of the gospel of peace, wherewith the feet must be shod. By *gospel of peace* is meant the glad tidings of salvation by Christ revealed in the gospel, which promiseth pardon of sin, and life everlasting by Christ, and commandeth us by way of thankfulness, to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, and to follow Christ. Now when we find our affections thus cleaving unto Christ, though it be through tribulation, then we have put upon our feet this spiritual furniture. The fourth is the shield of faith, by which a man lays hold on the mercy of God in Christ for his salvation, and under it shrouds himself against the fiery darts of Satan. The fifth is hope, by which we wait for that salvation which we apprehend by faith. The sixth is the Word of God, which we must make a rule and square to all our thoughts, words and deeds, seeking to subdue thereby all contrary motions that would take place in our hearts. The last is prayer, whereby we betake ourselves to God in all estates, craving mercy for the pardon of our sins, and strength of grace to resist temptation, and a happy deliverance out of the midst of it. And he that can take to himself these excellent virtues, and put upon him this complete armour of Christianity, is ready and fit to meet with any temptation whatsoever; and howsoever he may be assaulted, yet he cannot be overcome, neither shall the gates of hell ever prevail against him to hinder his salvation.

2. *But deliver us from evil*.

These words contain the second part of this petition, which is added as an exposition of the former; for then are we not led into temptation when God delivers us from it, giving strength to withstand, and a good issue out of it.

The meaning.

Some think that by *evil* here is meant Satan only, *that evil one*, as he is called (Matt. 13:19). But we are to enlarge it further, to comprehend all our spiritual enemies; for first, this title *evil*, is not only given to Satan but to sin also (Rom. 12:9), *Let us abhor that which is evil*; (1 Pet. 3:11), *Eschew evil*. And to the world (1 John 5:19), *The whole world lieth in evil*; (Gal. 1:4),

*Christ gave Himself, to deliver us from this present evil world*. And to the flesh; that is, the corruption of our nature, for that is *the evil treasure of the heart* (Matt. 12:35). Secondly, that advantage which the devil hath against us, is by the world, the flesh and sin; and therefore with that evil one the devil, sin, the world and the flesh must be understood. Indeed the devil is the main and principal evil, that great tempter against whom we pray chiefly; but yet we also pray against sin, the flesh and the world, because they are Satan's agents and instruments in temptation against us. We pray not to be delivered from Satan's presence, for that is not possible while we live in this vale of tears, where the devil is a prince, with an infinite multitude of wicked spirits, all which bestir themselves to get advantage against God's child; neither is his presence so dangerous, though it were visible. But here we have a greater matter in hand which we pray against, even Satan's sleights and policies which he exerciseth against God's children for their ruin and destruction. They indeed are many, but here I will propound six most dangerous policies of Satan, which we are to watch against:

1. When men have many good things in them, as knowledge in the mystery of salvation, beside other moral virtues, as repentance, justice etc., then the devil labours that concupiscence may still reign in their hearts, by their lying and living in some one sin or other, whereto they are naturally inclined. Cain no doubt was brought up in the knowledge and service of God, as well as Abel; for he offered sacrifice unto God (though not with the like truth of heart that Abel did) but herewithal the devil so wrought that the horrible sin of hatred and malice should possess his heart, which brought him to kill his brother, and so to destruction. So Judas no doubt had excellent gifts of wisdom and providence, and therefore among all the disciples he was made as it were the steward of our Saviour Christ's family; he had questionless much knowledge, and his carriage was such in his profession that the disciples knew not he should be the traitor, but everyone was afraid of himself, when our Saviour Christ said, *One of you shall betray me* (John 13:21). Yet for all this, the devil so wrought in his heart that the concupiscence of covetousness should reign in him, which moved him to betray his master, and so brought him to perdition. And this course Satan holds to this present day in the bosom of the church of God. He

labours by might and main to hold the professors of religion in some one sin or other; and therefore we must always pray, as we are here taught, that this natural concupiscence may be daily mortified and made weak, so as it bud not forth in any branch of sin reigning in us.

2. When Satan cannot procure some gross corruption to reign in the child of God, then he labours to get him to commit some offence and sin whereby the name of God may be dishonoured, his profession disgraced, his conscience wounded, and God's children offended. Thus he dealt with David in his sins of adultery and murder (2 Sam. 11; 12:9) and with Peter in the denial of his master (Matt. 26:74). We therefore must pray according to this petition, that we *may be sanctified throughout, and that our whole spirit and soul and body may be kept blameless unto the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (1 Thess. 5:23); and that our *hearts may be established in every good word and work* (2 Thess. 2:17); God *delivering us from every evil work, and preserving us unto his heavenly kingdom* (2 Tim. 4:18).

3. When the child of God is fallen into any sin, then the devil labours to cast him asleep therein, that he may lie in it without remorse, and so never repent of it. Thus he dealt with David, who lay in his sin of adultery and murder without repentance, one whole year alone. And thus he hath dealt with the nation of the Jews, blinding their eyes and hardening their hearts from the knowledge of the Messiah, whom they crucified, even unto this day. And thus he dealeth with many Christians in the church of God. In regard whereof, we must pray in temptation as David did, that He would *not forsake us overlong* (Psa. 119:8); but though in justice He may leave us to ourselves for a time, yet He would please to renew His mercies toward us, and repair us by His grace.

4. When the Lord vouchsafeth to men the means of salvation, as the Word and sacraments, and chastisement for sin, then Satan labours to make the same void and of none effect, that so they may not only miss of salvation, but be condemned more deeply for the neglect and contempt of the means vouchsafed unto them. This Paul knew well, and therefore he sent Timothy to the Thessalonians, *to know their faith,*

*lest the tempter had tempted them, and so their labour upon them had been in vain* (1 Thess. 3:5). For this cause, he is called *the evil one, who steals away the seed of the Word from out of their hearts* (Matt. 13:19); and that *envious man* who soweth tares among the seed (v.28). Here therefore we must pray against this practice of Satan, that as the Lord vouchsafeth the means of grace unto us, so He would give His blessing withal, that they may be profitable unto us; for without this, the means will turn to our deeper judgment.

5. When he cannot work his will in their souls inwardly, as he desires, then he assays to do them mischief by some outward satanical operations; as possession, witchcraft, or striking their bodies with strange diseases, or abusing their dwelling places with fearful noises and apparitions. Thus he plagued Job (Job 1,2) in his goods, and in his body, when he could not prevail against his soul. And when he could not prevail against Christ by temptation, then he vexed Him by transportation (Matt. 4:5,8). And thus *he bound a daughter of Abraham eighteen years* (Luke 13:16). Here therefore we pray for the comfort of God's providence, and for the presence and assistance of the good angels, that we may be preserved, though not from temptations inward in mind, yet from such bodily and outward abuses and injuries as the devil would inflict upon us; for herein he is curbed and restrained ordinarily, in respect of that malice and cruelty which he bears to the children of God. Whereupon (I take it) the child of God may lawfully pray against all the outward crosses and afflictions, so far forth as they are evil, and proceed from that evil one the devil; for this is God's promise to the godly person (Psa. 91:10): *There shall none evil come unto thee, neither shall any plague come near thy tabernacle*; that is, so far forth as it is evil. For otherwise it is most true that *many are the troubles of the righteous* (Psa. 34:19), because it is many times good for them to be afflicted (Psa. 119:71).

6. Lastly, Satan labours to bring God's children to some fearful and miserable end; not so much for the bodily death, as in regard of the inward horror and terror of conscience; for though he seldom spares any man, yet he reserves the extremity of his power and malice to man's last gasp. Indeed he is many times restrained, so as many a child

of God can say at his end, despite of Satan, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace* (Luke 2:29). But where he is not restrained, there he labours to bring men either to presumption or despair. Here therefore we are taught to pray to God for a good and comfortable death in the Lord, and that we may be so preserved therein, and enabled by grace, that our end may neither be evil to ourselves, nor in appearance; but that we may have both time and grace to prepare ourselves, so as our death be never so sudden, yet we be not unprepared. For though sudden death be very uncomfortable, yet it is never dangerous to him that is ready for the Lord. But the unprepared death is the plague of plagues; for after it there is no time nor means allowed unto man to alter the state of his soul (Eccl. 9:10).

Uses.

1. That which we here pray for, we must endeavour to practise; and therefore our special care must be to resist the devil, and to keep ourselves from the assaults of Satan unto sin, whether they come from our own corruption, or from this evil world. (1 John 5:18), *He that is born of God sinneth not, but keepeth himself; that the wicked one toucheth him not*. This we see may be done, and it is a notable sign of our adoption and regeneration. Now the way to do it is set down by the apostle Paul (1 Tim 1:18,19), *Fight the good fight*; which he expounds in the words following, which prescribe two duties: *having faith and a good conscience*.

1. To have faith is to hold and maintain true religion in life and death, renouncing all heresy whatsoever, whether of Jews, Turks, papists, or any other; which, whosoever would do, must not content himself with a shew of godliness in profession, but must get the power of religion fast rooted in his heart, which he must express in his conversation. And for this end these rules must be remembered:

1. First, we must have in our hearts sincere love to God in Christ, and to His church, and true religion. Christ must have the chief place in our hearts, and our love to God in Him must be so strong, that is must overwhelm all other attractions, so as we may truly say with Paul, *I count all things loss, and do judge them to be dung, that I might win*

*Christ* (Phil. 3:8). And this must be the order of our love, we must love God and Christ for themselves, and the church of God, and true religion, for God's sake.

2. Secondly, we must not only know and believe that Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification; but we must labour to feel the power and efficacy of His death, killing sin in us, and the virtue of His resurrection, raising us up to newness of life. He that hath only a shew of religion, may make profession of faith in Christ's death and resurrection; but herein stands the power, when we be made conformable unto His death in regard of the death of sin, and know the virtue of His resurrection by our holy endeavour in new obedience, and do frame ourselves to His example in all such things wherein He left Himself a pattern unto us.

3. Thirdly, we must not content ourselves to know and profess that God is merciful, but withal we must take observation of His loving favour towards us particularly, adding one observation to another, that so our hearts may be rooted and grounded in the love of God. A man may make profession of God's grace and mercy from a mere general conceit and apprehension of it in his brain; but herein stands the power and pith of true religion, when a man by observation and experience in himself, knows the love of God in Christ towards him. And thus is faith and true religion held and maintained.

2. To have a good conscience (which is the second duty in the Christian fight) is to preserve and keep our conscience so, as it may excuse us, and not accuse us unto God, in respect of living in any sin, howsoever there may be infirmities in us. To this end we must observe these rules:

1. First, we must have a double calling: the general calling of a Christian, wherein we must serve God; and a particular calling, according to our place and gifts, wherein we must exercise ourselves for the good of men. These two must not be severed so as either be wanting; but he that would keep a good conscience must practice his general calling in doing the duties of his particular calling. It is an easy thing to profess Christianity in the church, and many a man doth so, that keeps no good conscience in his private calling at home. But this is the evidence of a

good conscience, when a man shews himself a Christian in his calling at home, and conversation among his brethren.

2. Secondly, we must always be exercised in doing some good duty, either of our general or particular calling, or in some commendable furtherance thereunto; for idleness is the devil's pillow, whereon men either plot or devise some evil, or are lulled asleep in security. But diligence in our calling is our way, wherein we have promise of protection by God's angels from the devil (Psa. 91:11). But if we be out of our calling, we lie open to the hurt of the enemy. When Peter without warrant from his calling, general or particular, would needs go warm himself in Caiaphas' hall, what fell out? Upon a final assault by a silly maid, he denied Christ in most fearful manner (John 18:25-27).

3. Thirdly, in every estate of life we must labour to see a special providence of God, and therein to rest contented, be it better or be it worse. It is an easy thing to see and acknowledge God's mercy in health and peace and plenty, and to rest contented therewith. But if we would have peace toward God in our own hearts, we must labour to quiet ourselves with His disposing hand in the day of trouble, sickness or any other distress of life or death.

4. Fourthly, whatsoever we would do when we die, that we must now begin, and continue doing it every day while we live; to wit, repent of our daily sins and leave them, desire earnestly to be reconciled to God in Christ, and steadfastly to believe all His gracious promises. He that hath these graces shall die in peace; and therefore if we would live in the peace of conscience, we must labour for them every day.

5. Fifthly, in all societies and conversings with men, we must be careful either to do good unto them, or to receive good from them; for where neither of these is, there Satan shews his presence, and therefore we must shun such company as give themselves to plot or practise some iniquity; for *evil conversings corrupt good manners* (1 Cor. 15:33).

6. Sixthly, we must lead our lives, not after our own fancy, but according to the rule of God's Word. We must live by faith and not by sight. When we see no sign of God's favour, but rather of His anger and

indignation, yet then must we trust in Him and rely upon His mercy. This is against reason, yet a work of faith, which is *the evidence of things which are not seen* (Heb. 11:1).

2. If we pray God to deliver us from evil, then we must beware of all satanic practices, as means of help in any distress. This is gross hypocrisy, to pray against the evils of Satan, and to give ourselves to the practice of them. Herein many offend; for the papists say this prayer, but yet their religion in many things is a gross practice of magic and sorcery; for: first, the consecration of their host in the mass is plain conjuration; and so are their exorcisms in hallowing salt, bread and water, their calling out of devils by certain words, by the sign of the cross, the application of relics, and such like. Nay, come to ourselves, what is more common among us than to use charms and amulets, to seek to witches and sorcerers when any strange affliction doth befall us? And the setting of a figure, though it be not gross magic, yet therein is a close and privy work of the devil; his hand is deep therein. And the church in former times hath condemned it for witchcraft; for charms, characters and amulets be but the devil's watchword and sacraments to set him a-working. What though the word used be good, yet there is Satan's deeper policy, who turns himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), under fair shews working the greater mischief. But what horrible impiety is this; that when God gives us occasion to come unto Him, we leave Him and run for help to His professed enemies.

3. This branch of the petition serveth to direct us what to do in this case. Say that a dwelling house, or some other place is by God's permission haunted and abused by some evil spirit, whether may a man lawfully frequent, or abide in such a place? *Answer*: By this petition it is plain that he may not; for here we pray to be delivered from evil, and therefore we may not voluntarily thrust ourselves into such a place as is haunted by the devil. Would we come within the compass of the lion's paw, or within the chain of a mad dog, or a hunger-bitten bear? Why then should we rashly thrust ourselves into the danger of the devil, who like a roaring lion seeks continually whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). Many ignorant people are so bold- hardy that they will rail

upon and defy the devil, and command him to be gone. But without a calling thereunto, we may not so do. Indeed, if by God's providence we be called to live in such places necessarily, this we may do, we must not reason with the devil, but betake ourselves to God by humble and earnest prayer, and complain of Satan's vexation, making God our shelter and defence both for soul and body; else if we presume to meddle with him without a calling from God, we may justly be foiled and abused by him (as the sons of Sceva were (Acts 19:14.16)), because we have no promise from the Lord to be protected from him.

*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen*.

These words contain the reason of the former six petitions; touching which we must observe two things in general:

First, that they are not a reason to move God, whose will is unchangeable; but to persuade the child of God that praying thus, that God will grant his requests.

Secondly, that this reason is not peculiar to the last petition, but generally belongeth to them all; as, *Hallowed be thy name, because thine is the kingdom, power and glory*, and so on for the rest.

The meaning.

*Kingdom*. This here imports three things: First, that He is all- sufficient of Himself to do all things whatsoever, needing no help nor instrument beside His sovereign will. (Gen. 17:1), *I am God all- sufficient*. Secondly, that he hath a sovereign right and title to all things in heaven and earth, as a king hath to those which belong to his territories and jurisdiction. Thirdly, that He hath sovereign rule and authority over all things in heaven and earth, governing them as He pleaseth, and bringing them into an absolute subjection.

Further, the kingdom of God is twofold: *The kingdom of His providence*, whereby He rules and governs all things in heaven and earth, even the devil and all his angels and instruments; and the *kingdom of grace*, whereby He

governs His church by His Word and Spirit. And both these are here to be understood.

*Thine*. The kingdom is here called God's, for two causes: First, to shew that God hath His kingdom of Himself and from Himself alone. Thus the kingdom of grace and of providence are both His. Secondly, to distinguish God from earthly kings; for though they have a kingdom, power and glory, as Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar; yet they have all these from God, not of themselves. But God hath them of Himself, and not from any other.

Now, because our nature is blind in the things of God, I will here propound some reasons to prove that God hath such a sovereign kingdom, as also to shew the excellency of it.

First, this appears by that excellent order which God hath set in all His works by their creation; for how fitly do times and seasons, as springtime and summer, autumn and winter, succeed one another? How sweetly do the heavenly creatures, the sun, moon and stars, serve for the creatures here below, as herbs and plants, how do they serve for beasts and fowls? And all of them for the use of man. As this proves against the atheist that there is a God, so it shews the sovereignty and most wise regiment of His kingdom. When a man sees a great army in good array, and everyone keeping his place and standing constantly, he will presently commend the wisdom and authority of the leader. Why then should we not acknowledge the power and sovereignty of the Almighty, in that constant station of the creatures in that sweet order which they observe from the creation?

Secondly, the terror and accusation of a guilty conscience doth argue evidently the absolute sovereignty of God's kingdom; for when a man hath committed some grievous sin, either against the law of nature or the written Word of God, though it be so secretly that no man know of it, yet will his conscience accuse and fright him; which it would not do, unless he were to answer for that fact to God, the sovereign Lord of all.

Thirdly, men of death, that is, such as by some notorious crime deserve death, though through the ignorance or negligence of magistrates they be let to escape, yet ordinarily they are overtaken with some fearful judgment, and

one way or other meet with their desert; which is a special work of God's sovereign providence.

Fourthly, the gospel preached is as contrary to man's corrupt nature, as fire is to water; and yet hath it in all ages won men unto it, to possess it, and to love it so, as they have been content for the gospel's sake to forsake house and lands, wife and children, yea, and life itself. This no word of man could ever do, and therefore it argues plainly that some supernatural power worketh with it, which draws the heart of man unto it.

Here some may say that the devil hath a kingdom contrary to God's kingdom, wherein he reigneth; and therefore God's kingdom is not absolute. *Answer*: If we regard the malice of Satan, or the practice of the wicked, it may seem God's kingdom should not be absolute, because they continually rebel against His revealed will; but consider the power of God, which overruleth Satan and all his instruments, disposing most wisely of all their works, to His own glory, the good of His church, and their own ruin, and then we shall plainly see that God ruleth over all. For howsoever the devil and his angels, and all other his instruments, oppose themselves unto the Word of God, which is the law of His kingdom of grace, yet God willingly permits all such works, and restrains them all at His pleasure; so as that which comes to pass against God's revealed will, is not contrary to His absolute will.

*Thine is the power*.

By *power* is meant an ability in God whereby He can do whatsoever He will, and more than He will do. For the better conceiving of it, note these two things:

First, that God is not only powerful, but even power itself in regard of His nature, as He is goodness and wisdom etc. Men and angels are called powerful, as receiving power from God; but God only is power itself, because His nature is infinite in power, as in all other properties.

Secondly, that power and will in God are one and the same. For the better conceiving of them, they may be distinguished, but in themselves they differ not; for God's willing of a thing is the effecting and doing of it. It is

not so in us; for we will many things which we cannot do; but whatsoever God willeth, that He doth; and that which He cannot do, He cannot will. The scripture saith, *God cannot lie, nor deny Himself, nor die* etc. Now as he cannot do these things, so neither can He will them; for they are no works of power, but of weakness and frailty; and therefore is God omnipotent, because He can neither do nor will the same.

*Thine is*, Here also we say, God's power is His own, that is, of Himself alone, not received from any other, as is also said of kingdom and glory, to distinguish the true God from all creatures who have not power and kingdom and glory of themselves, but from God; whereas all these are of Himself alone.

*And the glory*.

By *glory*, is meant excellency and majesty. And this property rightly ariseth from the two former; for seeing He hath an absolute sovereignty over all things, and power answerable to dispose and govern them at His pleasure; therefore of right all glory, and majesty, and excellency belongs unto Him. Yea, the glory of all creatures is from Him; so that sinful man must say with Daniel, *Unto us belong shame and confusion* (Dan. 9:7-9), but unto God be honour, and glory, and power, and dominion, for evermore.

The Use.

1. This reason thus conceived and understood, contains a notable ground of trust and confidence in God, and of prayer to God in all distress of life and death; for we have a Father whose is kingdom, power and glory. Now His power assures us that He is able to help us. And is He our King and we His subjects? Then He is willing to help us. Is glory His? Why, what can make more for His glory than to shew mercy to His people, in hearing their prayers, and helping them in distress? (Psa. 50:15), *I will hear thee, and thou shalt glorify my name*.

2. These words are a notable form of giving thanks and praise to God; for when the heavenly creatures are said to give thanks to God, they do it to this effect: (Rev. 4:9,11) *Thou art worthy O Lord, to receive honour, and glory, and power*. Again (Phil. 4:6), *Be distrustful in nothing, but in all*

*things let your requests be made known to God with giving of thanks*; where we see that prayer and thanksgiving must go together. Now this being a perfect form of prayer, we must needs comprehend thanksgiving with petitions, as therefore in the six petitions, Christ taught us to ask all needful things of God; so in this reason He teacheth us how to give thanks; for these three, kingdom, power and glory, do generally comprehend all matter of praise and thanksgiving unto God; yea, it is the sum of all the psalms of praise; and therefore when David blessed God, it was to this effect (1 Chr. 29:11,12), *Thine, O Lord, is greatness and power, and glory, and victory, and praise; for all that is in heaven and earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou excellest as head over all; both riches and honour come from thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and strength*, etc.

This point well observed, directeth us in two Christian duties:

First, that we must be earnest and frequent in giving praise and thanks to God; for the first thing we ask is grace to glorify God's name, and the last thing we here do, is to ascribe glory to God indeed.

Secondly, here we see in what manner we must give thanks to God, namely, in every blessing we must ascribe kingdom, and power, and glory unto God; as in the use of meat and drink, first, therein labour to see, and accordingly to ascribe the kingdom to God; that is, acknowledge God's sovereignty in that creature; that the right and interest thereto belongs to God, and that thou hast it from Him, and not of thyself. Secondly, see and acknowledge the power and providence of God in that creature; His providence in that thou hast it; and His power in that it serves for thy good and comfort, in thy nourishment and refreshing. Thirdly, when thou art comforted therewith, give honour and glory to God, so thou shalt be truly thankful. And thus must we be thankful to God for His Word, and all other blessings that we enjoy. Yea, this direction must we observe for our behaviour in affliction; we must labour to see God's sovereignty and power over us as we are His creatures, and that he hath right to dispose of us at His pleasure, and therefore we must humble ourselves under His hand, desiring grace so to behave ourselves therein, that we may glorify His name. And thus shall we honour God even in affliction.

3. Here we see a way whereby we may obtain the things we ask of God; namely, we must confess our own unworthiness, taking shame and confusion to ourselves, and give all praise and honour and glory to God. Thus did Jacob (Gen. 32:10), *I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant*. So (Dan. 9:7), *To thee, O Lord, belongeth righteousness, but unto us open sin*. And thus coming in humility of heart, renouncing ourselves and all that we can do, and endeavouring to give all glory to God, we shall find mercy with the Lord for the obtaining of all our requests.

4. Is kingdom, power and glory God's? Then He is to be feared above all creatures; for howsoever Satan and earthly monarchs have dominion and power, yet it is not of themselves, but from God; they can do nothing but by power and permission from God, but God of Himself can punish and destroy.

5. Lastly, hereby we must be moved to love God, and to yield obedience to Him in all good duties; for to such will He shew His sovereignty and power for all good things, that so they may give the glory of all to God that gives them.

III.

*Amen*.

We have heard the preface and the petitions of this prayer; now we come to the third part of it, which is the conclusion, in this word, *Amen*; which is as much as *verily*, *truly*. It is commonly taken to be a word of wishing in this place, importing as much as, *So be it*, *I wish it to be so*, or such like. But we must know that it hath here a further use, to wit, not only to express our desire of the things we ask, but also to testify our faith in assurance of receiving them according to our desire. For so it is usually taken in the New Testament, where it is used to affirm or aver a thing with vehemency and certainty. Again, our Saviour Christ giving both direction and encouragement to prayer, saith thus (Mark 11:24), *Whatsoever you desire when ye pray, believe that ye shalt have it, and it shall be done unto you*; where He shews two principal things required in prayer: first, an earnest desire of the grace and blessing we ask; the second is faith whereby we

believe that God will grant us the things we ask. Now our desires were sufficiently expressed in the six petitions; and therefore, this being a perfect platform of prayer, here undoubtedly is propounded the testification of our faith, to this effect: *As we have craved these things at thy hands, O Lord, so do we believe that in thy good time thou wilt for Christ's sake, grant the same unto us*. So that it is not here to be taken, as it is commonly, only for a bare assent of the people answering the minister in the congregation; but for a part of the prayer both to minister and people that pray in faith, whether publicly or privately; and that so much more excellent than the former, by how much our faith excelleth our desire. Yea, it is the seal of our hearts, which we must set to every petition, for to ratify and confirm the same unto ourselves; as when we say, *Hallowed be thy name*, our hearts must say, *Amen*; that is, *As I desire grace to glorify thy name, so I believe Lord, thou wilt enable me thereunto*; and so for the rest.

The Use.

1. From the union of this word with the petitions, we learn that every child of God must believe particularly and certainly the pardon of his own sins, and endeavour by grace to attain thereunto, if as yet he cannot be persuaded of it. This the papists deny, teaching that a man must only believe in general that remission of sins belongs unto God's church, and hope well for himself; and they make it presumption for a man to arrogate particular certainty unto himself. But it is no presumption, because we must believe to receive from God, that we ask according to His will. Now God bids us ask forgiveness of our particular sins, and therefore we must believe it, and so by faith, may be assured of it. As for their general faith, it differs not from the faith of devils; for they believe there is remission of sins in God's church. And to say we hope well when we are not assured by faith, is to bewray both ignorance and negligence in the matter of our salvation; for faith is the ground of things hoped for, and therefore their hope without faith must needs be a blind presumption. And here further we may note that by their opinion they abolish a great part of the gospel; for with the gracious promises of mercy in Christ made therein, the gospel commandeth every penitent person that believeth, to apply the same promises particularly to himself; and this part of it they cut off, and so deprive the child of God of all the comfort.

2. This testification of our faith joined to our requests, shews that all prayer ought to be made in a known tongue, for else the assent and affiance of the heart cannot be given together.

*Objection*: The word here used is a Hebrew word, which was unknown to the Greek churches; now if one word of main use in prayer may be in an unknown tongue, why may not many, and so for a whole prayer? *Answer*: Though this word *Amen* be Hebrew, yet by use it became as familiar and well known in the Greek church, and so in other churches, as any word in their own dialect; as many Latin words by common use, become familiar and well known in our English tongue.

The use of the Lord's prayer.

1. The principal use of prayer is to be a pattern and direction whereby the church of God, and every member in it, may frame their prayers to God on any occasion. And because many through ignorance fail on this point, therefore I will stand somewhat to shew how the Lord's Prayer must be made a pattern to our prayers. For this end we must apply the several petitions of this prayer, both to the special times of prayer, as (1) morning and (2) evening, and also to the special occasions whereupon we pray; which may be reduced to some of these three, to wit: (3) Some weighty business we have in hand; (4) Some affliction we are in, or in danger of; (5) Or in regard of death.

Now to apply the petition to each of these severally:

1. *In the morning*. A fit prayer for that time, before we set upon the duties of our calling, may thus be framed from these petitions:

1. We must desire the Lord to give us grace to seek the advancement of His glory that day following, in the duties of our calling, and in everything we take in hand.

2. That He would rule in our hearts by His grace, and guide us by His Word that whole day.

3. Enable us to do His will that day, and not our own, even with readiness and delight.

4. Strengthen us to depend upon His providence that day for all things needful for this life.

5. That he would humble us in ourselves for our sins, and give us repentance for them, and pardon in Christ Jesus, that so no judgment light upon us for them, and that out hearts may be inclined to love and mercy towards our brethren, as we desire mercy with God for our own souls.

6. That God would strengthen us against temptation, that neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil, prevail against us. And of these we must gather assurance, because all sovereignty and power and glory belongs to God.

2. *At evening* also, we must fitly apply these petitions for the comfortable commending of ourselves to God that night:

1. Entreating God to bless our rest unto us, that thereby we may be fitter to glorify God.

2. That we may rest and sleep safely as His true subjects, under His gracious regiment.

3. That we may do His will as well in rest as in labour, in the night and secretly, as in the day and sight of men.

4. That He would bless our rest and sleep, that it may comfortably serve for the preservation of our lives.

5. That He would forgive the sins of the day past, that so no curse, terror nor fear meet with us for them the night following.

6. That He would keep us in our rest from all sinful lusts, from all wicked motions and suggestions either waking or sleeping.

3. *When we enterprise any weighty matter or business of our callings*, we may fitly apply these petitions in prayer to God for ability and good success therein; for whatsoever we take in hand, we must do it in the name of the Lord:

1. We must pray that in this whole business our hearts may be set sincerely to seek the advancement of God's glory.

2. That the Lord would vouchsafe to guide and govern us in doing the work whatsoever it be.

3. That in doing of it, we may make conscience to do the will of God, and to obey Him, from the beginning to the end of it.

4. That we may by faith rely upon God's providence for the issue and effect of our whole endeavour.

5. That none of our sins may bring a curse upon us in the work.

6. That neither Satan nor any other enemy of our souls, may hinder us by temptation, but that God would deliver us from them all.

4. *When any affliction lies upon us or ours*, we may hence frame holy requests to God, entreating:

1. That we may honour God by patience and obedience in that affliction, and not dishonour Him.

2. That God would shew in us the power of His gracious regiment in that affliction, and not suffer Satan or our own corruption to reign in us.

3. That we may obey God therein, as well as in any other estate of peace or ease.

4. That we may see His providence therein, and be patient, relying also upon the same hand of God for our deliverance.

5. That our sins may not turn it into a curse, but that we having the pardon of our sins, may make good use thereof, for our humiliation

and reformation.

6. That we may not in that our weakness be assaulted of Satan above our strength, but that God would deliver us from all temptations.

5. *In the hour of death*, we may most comfortably commend ourselves to God, following these petitions; praying:

1. First, that we may glorify God in sickness and death, as well as in life and health.

2. That God would now shew the comfortable work and regiment of His Word and Spirit in our hearts, even above all that we have felt in the time of our health.

3. That we may as readily and cheerfully obey God dying as living.

4. That God would give His blessing upon all means we shall use for our comfort or recovery, making us contented with His providence, even in death itself.

5. That we may be truly humbled for our sins, and having comfortable assurance of mercy and pardon, may with joy render up our souls into the hands of God in the moment of death.

6. That seeing Satan is most busy and malicious in our greatest weakness, it would please the Lord to magnify His mercy in strengthening our souls against all the assaults of sin and Satan.

Thus we see how in all estates of life and death, we may have sweet and comfortable recourse to God following these petitions. We must therefore labour to know and understand this heavenly prayer, that so we may use it on all occasions to the glory of our God and the comfort of our souls. We cannot give more evident testimony of the grace of adoption, than by the sincere exercise of the gift of prayer, when we can come with boldness into the presence of our heavenly Father. And therefore we must give ourselves to the serious and often imitation of this heavenly pattern, and not content

ourselves to say over the words, but from a feeling heart pour out our souls before God, according to the meaning of this prayer in all estates.

2. These petitions may serve for a notable direction according to which we may frame our whole lives; and therefore according to our requests in these petitions, must we spend our time in a godly endeavour after these six things:

1. Our chief care and endeavour must be every day to bring some glory to God.

2. We must every day yield up ourselves in souls and bodies unto God, submitting ourselves in all things unto His godly regiment.

3. We must endeavour to do His will in all things, every day; making conscience of all sin whereby we rebel against Him.

4. We must apply ourselves faithfully to our callings, yet so as we still depend upon God's providence for a blessing in everything we take in hand.

5. We must humble ourselves every day before God in regard of our daily offences, still confessing our sins, and craving pardon for them at the hands of God.

6. We must daily fly to God for help and succour in our spiritual combat with sin and Satan, striving manfully against our own corrupt nature, against the world and the devil.

3. This prayer of Christ, ministers most heavenly comfort to every child of God, by certifying him of his adoption; for out of every petition he may gather a special note thereof, as:

1. An earnest and hearty desire in all things to further the glory of God.

2. A care and readiness to resign ourselves in subjection to God, to be ruled by His Word and Spirit in thought, word and deed.

3. A sincere endeavour to do His will in all things with cheerfulness, making conscience of everything we know to be evil. This is an infallible note of the child of God.

4. Upright walking in a man's lawful calling, and yet still by faith to rely upon God's providence, being well pleased with God's sending whatsoever it is.

5. Every day to humble a man's self before God for his offences, seeking His favour in Christ unfeignedly, and so daily renewing his faith and repentance.

6. A continual combat between the flesh and the spirit, corruption haling and drawing one way, and great resisting the same and drawing another way. Where this striving and resistance is in mind and heart, there is the Spirit, for else all would go full sway with corruption.

Hereby, then, make search in thyself for these graces of God, and if thou find them in thee, comfort thyself in assurance of thine adoption; and though thou canst not find them all, yet if there be an unfeigned desire after them, when thou puttest up these requests unto God, comfort thyself, for thou art the child of God; for without the spirit of prayer, which is the spirit of adoption, we cannot call God *Father*, nor say, *Hallowed be thy name*, from a true heart, unfeignedly desiring God's glory.

4. Out of these petitions we may observe the plain marks of a carnal man, as:

1. To neglect the glory of God, and to seek his own praise and glory.

2. To follow the sway of his own corruptions, suffering them to be his guide, and to neglect to yield subjection and obedience to the Word of God.

3. To make no conscience of sin, if it fit his humour, so his own will be satisfied, he cares not for the doing of God's will.

4. Not to rest on God's providence for the things of this life, but wholly to rely upon the means; if they fail, his heart is down, and his hope is gone.

5. To go on in sin, without remorse, or humbling himself unto God. This impenitence is a plain mark of a carnal man.

6. To run headlong into temptation, without fear or feeling, so as he finds no occasion to pray for deliverance from sin.

He that hath any of these six things reigning in him, is a carnal man; therefore try thyself, if thou find them in thee, turn unto God by true repentance.

And look what we have said of prayer, according to the pattern of the former petitions, may also be said of thanksgiving, after the example of these words: *For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory*. We have shewed the use of them before, and so accordingly as all God's blessings and works of His providence, for which we must give thanks; we must first labour to see therein the sovereignty and power of God, and then we must ascribe the same to God, with all glory, and praise, and thanksgiving. And not only give assent, but with affiance of heart wait for the fruition of every grace and blessing we ask of God according to His will. *Amen*.

# 6:14-15

"*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*" Matthew 6:14-15.

These two verses contain a reason of the fifth petition, concerning the forgiveness of our sins; which is propounded with a limitation and condition of our forgiving them that trespass against us; the reason here is: *because in this behalf, we shall find such measure with God, as we meet out unto our brethren*.

For the meaning of the words, three points must be discussed:

1. First, whom this reason doth concern, namely, private men for private trespasses. It reacheth not to magistrates and public persons in their function, who be the *ministers of God to take vengeance on them that do evil* (Rom. 13:4); for to such the Lord saith, *Thine eye shall not spare the offender* (Deut. 19:13,19); but according to the quality of the offence, must he execute judgment upon offenders, *for the removing of evil*. And so must parents and masters deal in their families, and ministers in their public dispensation of the Word; for else offences would so abound, that there could be no living for God's people in the world.

2. How do these depend one upon another, *our forgiving of men, and God's forgiving us*? *Answer*: We must not conceive that our forgiving men their trespasses, is a cause why God forgives us; for we are by nature dead in sin, and cannot do any good thing of ourselves till we be enabled thereunto of God. But our forgiving is a sign that God hath forgiven us, being indeed a fruit of our reconciliation with God; for it is a sign of true repentance, which is a fruit of faith, whereby we apprehend the mercy of God for the pardon of our sins in Christ.

3. How should our forgiveness go before God's forgiving us? For so the words seem to import, *If you forgiveÉ. Your heavenly Father will forgive*

*you* etc. *Answer*: The pardon of sin which God gives must be considered two ways: First, as it is given in heaven; secondly, as it is revealed and assured to the conscience of man. Now the pardon of sin in heaven always goes before our forgiving others; but our assurance of pardon with God, follows after our forgiving of men; for a man's sins may be forgiven with God, and yet he may long remain without the assurance thereof in his own conscience. This we may see in David; for when Nathan said, *The Lord hath put away thy sin* (2 Sam. 12:13), no doubt it was forgiven in heaven; but yet his earnest prayer (Psa. 51) for pardon afterward shews plainly that he did not upon Nathan's speech receive the comfortable assurance of pardon in his own conscience. This then is Christ's meaning: That if we forgive men their trespasses, God will assure us in our consciences that he hath forgiven us; otherwise, if we will not forgive, God will deny us that assurance.

The use of this point is:

1. Firstly and chiefly this: We must learn to forgive and forget all private wrongs and injuries done unto us, whether great or small, without desire of revenge. The reasons to move us hereunto are these:

    1. First, it is God's commandment here expressly enjoined, which must needs bind the conscience to obedience.

    2. Secondly, if we will not forgive men, God will not forgive us. This Christ enforceth by doubling the sentence. Now without God's forgiveness there is no salvation, and therefore we must be ready to forgive, as we tender our own salvation.

    3. Thirdly, the frailty of our nature is such that we ourselves are subject to do wrong to others. This is intimated in the phrase: *Except you forgive men their trespasses*; so that every man is prone to trespass against others; and therefore as we would be forgiven when we trespass, so must we also forgive men their trespasses.

Now for the better performing of our duty herein, these rules must be observed:

1. We shall perceive in sundry men many wants and frailties, which men's laws punish not; as in old men frowardness, in others hastiness; and in some ambition and desire of praise. Now these and such like we must in love pass by, without taking notice thereof (Prov. 19:11), *It is the glory of a man to pass by an offence*.

2. If men give us some light occasions of offence, as upbraid us with our ignorance, unskillfulness, baseness, poverty, or such like, we must lightly pass them over, preferring the bond of peace before outward reputation.

3. Though a man do unto us that which is indeed flat injury, yet if it do not manifestly hinder God's glory, or too much prejudice our good estate; by hurting out good name, our goods, or life; we must cause our private grief and hurt to yield to public peace.

4. If men do us such great wrongs as manifestly hinder God's glory, and our good estate, in life, goods, or name; then we must use the help of the magistrate, and the lawful defence of laws provided for that end. Always remembering that in seeking to right ourselves, we lay aside all malice, hatred and desire of revenge, and with a single heart propound God's glory in the reformation of the party that doth us wrong.

2. Secondly, in this reason to persuading to forgiveness we may see that pardon of sin before God, and reformation of life go together. For here by this one branch of a reformed life in brotherly forgiveness, is understood all of the same kind. But where is no reformation of life, there is no pardon of sin before God. Wouldest thou therefore be assured in thy conscience of God's special favour towards thee in Christ? Then reform thy life by every law of God; for this will give thee assurance from God. But if thy life be unreformed, thy hope of pardon is a mere conceit of thine own brain; and therefore if thou want reformation, now begin, and if thou have begun, then hold on, and do it more and more, for thy more full assurance.

# 6:16-18

"*Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*" Matthew 6:16-18.

"*Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*" (v.16)

Our Saviour Christ, having rectified the abuses in alms-giving, and in prayer, doth here come to a third Christian duty, namely, *fasting*, wherein as in the former, first He seeks to reform abuses, and then prescribes the true manner thereof. But before we come to these particularly, I will in general handle the doctrine of fasting, for the better understanding of this text, and exercise of this duty.

1. And first we must know that Christ here speaks not of a civil fast, appointed by magistrates in their dominions for civil respects; but of a religious fast, respecting the worship of God; which appears by this: that He joineth the doctrine of fasting to the doctrine of prayer, which is a special part of God's holy worship.

Now touching a religious fast, I will here handle six points:

1. First, *What kind of work a fast is*. The Scripture speaks of two kinds of works: some commanded by God, others left indifferent. *Works commanded* be good works, and parts of God's service, because He commandeth them, as prayer, thanksgiving, alms-deeds, etc. *Works indifferent* be in themselves neither good nor evil, because they be neither commanded of God, nor forbidden; as to eat, drink, buy, sell etc. And to this kind of works must we refer fasting; for it is not simply

commanded of God, and so no part of His worship in itself, more than eating is. And yet consider fasting in its circumstances, to wit, as a means to further and to testify our humiliation in repentance, and our zeal in prayer, and so it is a good work; for in that use and to that end God commandeth it, and it is a part of His worship. If it be said, there is no commandment for it in the New Testament, I answer, if we consider it in the forenamed use and end, there is; for the same commandment that enjoineth prayer, and humiliation, enjoineth fasting; because it is a means to further them both. For every commandment includeth all necessary furtherances to the main duty. Again we have in the New Testament examples of ordinary fasting, which are without all exception, in our Saviour Christ and His apostles, with the occasions thereof set down, whereupon they fasted. Now this is a rule in divinity: that *the ordinary examples of the godly approved in Scripture, being against no general precept, have the force of a general rule, and are to be followed*.

2. *How a religious fast is to be performed*. In a religious fast, three things are required:

1. First, Abstinence from meat and drink for one day, at least till the evening; for abstinence from morning till noon is no fast. When Esther required the Jews to fast for her, she forbids them to eat or to drink during the fast (Esth. 4:16). And when David fasted and prayed for his child begotten in adultery (2 Sam. 12:16,17,20), *he would eat nothing till he had ended his humiliation, perceiving that the child was dead*. This is a thing granted by all Protestants. And the very names of fasting used in the Old and New Testaments, import a total abstinence for that time; which must be observed to discover the absurdity of popish fasts, wherein they allow men to drink oft if they will, and eat also, so it be not flesh. But in fasting, abstinence must be used from all meat and drink, so far as health and strength will suffer.

2. Secondly, Abstinence from all delights of nature whereby the outward man may be cheered and refreshed, as music, sweet smells, soft apparel, recreations, and such like. This Daniel observed for three weeks of days: *I ate* (saith he) *no pleasant bread, neither came flesh or*

*wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all* (Dan. 10:3). And the like may we see in many examples of the Old Testament. They cast dust and ashes upon their heads (Ezek. 27:30) instead of anointing themselves with oil, and for soft apparel they put on sackcloth next their skin (Neh. 9:1), they waked when they should have slept (Joel 1:13) and lay upon the ground instead of beds (2 Sam. 12:16), the bridegroom went out of his chamber, and the bride out of her bride chamber (Joel 2:16), for mirth there was mourning, and howling instead of singing (Joel 1:11,13).

3. Thirdly, a man must humble and afflict his body in fasting; and therefore must be sparing in his diet and delights before the day of fasting; for a man may so pamper and fill himself that he shall not need to eat or drink for the whole day; but such persons fast not. The time of our fast must be a time of our humiliation; men must afflict themselves therein (Lev. 16:29; Ezra 8:21), as Ezra saith. They must beat down the body and bring it into subjection, as Paul did (1 Cor. 9:17). For though Ahab's fasting was but outward, yet thus he humbled himself before the Lord (1 Kin. 21:27,29). God's children therefore must see in their religious fasts that their bodies be humbled with their souls. Here indeed care must be had that in humbling our bodies we destroy not nature, or so weaken our strength, that we disable ourselves to serve God in our callings afterward; such afflicting of the body the apostle disalloweth (Col. 2:23).

3. *Touching the right ends of a religious fast*; which be four especially:

1. To be a spur and provocation to the humiliation and repentance. For this cause the Ninevites (Jon. 3:7) did not only fast themselves, but caused their beasts to be without food and water, that by hearing that lowing and bleating for meat, they might more deeply be humbled by the consideration of the desert of their own sins, and so more unfeignedly repent. This stands with good reason; for a man's abasing and pinching of his body, shews him his unworthiness of the comforts of God's creatures by reason of his sins. It leads him to see his desert of God's wrath by reason of his transgressions; and so his heart is more deeply stricken with conscience of his own sins; whereupon he doth

more freely confess them unto God, and more carefully turn from them afterward.

2. A religious fast serves as an outward testimony and profession of our humiliation and repentance; for by our abstinence from the delights of nature, and the comforts of the creatures, we solemnly profess our unworthiness thereof, and of all God's blessings; for this the Lord bids: (Joel 1:14), when He would have His people to testify their humiliation.

3. It serves to subdue the flesh and the corruption of nature. This end is necessary, for the soul worketh by the body, the inclination of the affections is greatly swayed by the bodily constitution, and the soul is stained by many sins by reason of the distemper of the body. But yet this end is not so general as the two former; for there be two sorts of men in God's church; some of so weak a constitution of body that their ordinary sobriety and temperance in diet doth sufficiently subdue the rebellion of their flesh; now these need not to fast for this end. Others there be, whom ordinary temperance and sobriety will not serve to tame the rebellion of their flesh, and these are they that must use religious fasting for the subduing of the flesh to the spirit, besides their ordinary moderation in diet.

4. Fasting serves to prepare us unto prayer, and to further us therein; for first, it causeth watchfulness, and so makes a man the more lively and fresh in prayer; whereupon our Saviour often joins these together (Mark 13:33), *Watch and pray*. Secondly, it makes us feel our wants and miseries, and so brings us to some conscience of our sins; whereupon the heart is more deeply humbled, and so stirred up more fervently to call for mercy. And for this cause, the Scripture many times joins prayer and fasting together.

4. *The causes or occasions of a religious fast*, which may partly move us thereunto; and they be seven:

1. When we ourselves have fallen into any grievous sin or sins, whereof our conscience accuseth us, and whereby we procure the wrath of God against us; then to reform ourselves, and to escape the wrath of God,

we have need to give ourselves to prayer and fasting. (1 Sam. 7:6) The Israelites, having fallen to idolatry, put away their strange gods, and turn unto the Lord with weeping and fasting. And when they kept the Day of Atonement, which was a type of their forgiveness by the Messiah, then they humbled themselves by fasting before the Lord (Lev. 16:29).

2. Secondly, when some among us fall into any grievous sin, though we ourselves be clear from it, yet then we must fast, because for the sins of others, God's judgments may justly fall upon us. Hence it was that Paul blames the Corinthians (1 Cor. 5:2), because they sorrowed not for the sin of incest committed among them. And in this regard, every godly person ought to humble himself because of the grievous sins of atheism, blasphemy, oppression etc., which abound among us.

3. Thirdly, when the hand of God in any judgment lies upon us. So did the Israelites (Jud. 20:26) when they fell in battle before the Benjamites. And so ought we to do for many judgments of God that have lain long upon us.

4. Fourthly, when the hand of God in any fearful judgment lies heavy on others among whom we live, though we ourselves be free. In this case David oftentimes humbled himself, not only when his child gotten in adultery was sick (2 Sam. 12:16), but even when his enemies were sick he fasted (Psa. 35:13).

5. Fifthly, when God's judgments are imminent, and as it were hang over our heads. So did Jehosaphat when his enemies came against his country (2 Chr. 20:3). And in this regard, we ought to humble ourselves, for the professed enemies of God's grace are daily plotting our subversion.

6. Sixthly, when we stand in need of some needful blessing of God, especially such as concern salvation. Thus Cornelius (Acts 10:30) besought the Lord in prayer and fasting, when he desired true resolution concerning the Messiah. And so ought we to do, to get assurance of our reconciliation with God in the pardon of our sins.

7. Seventhly, for God's blessing and good success upon the ministry of the gospel. So did the church for Paul and Barnabas when they sent them to preach (Acts 13:3). And so ought we to do this day. These be the just occasions of fasting mentioned in the Word, whereto we may refer the rest. And when any of these befall particular persons, families, congregations, cities, countries or kingdoms, then they ought to humble themselves in fasting before the Lord.

5. *The time of a religious fast*. This now is free in regard of conscience. Indeed in the Old Testament (Lev. 16:29), they had a set time of fasting, to wit, the tenth day of the seventh month; but in the New Testament there is no set time which binds the conscience; only men must fast as just occasion is offered. If it be said that diverse reformed churches have set times of fasting; I answer, these fasts are set for orders sake, and not to bind conscience; and they are civil fasts and not religious, for the church may alter them at her pleasure. The time of a religious fast is the time of mourning, which is uncertain unto any church, and therefore the time thereof cannot be set; which must be marked because the church of Rome doth herein err, in that they bind men's consciences to their set times of religious fasts.

6. *The kinds of a religious fast*. And they are two: private and public.

1. A private fast is that which is performed privately, either by one man alone, for some of the forenamed occasions peculiar to himself, as Cornelius did (Acts 10:33) when he desired to know the true Messiah; or by private family, upon peculiar causes moving them thereto, and so did Esther fast with her maids (Esther 4:16). This fast was foretold by Zechariah (Zech. 12:12,13), *The land shall bewail, every family apart, the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart*, etc.

2. A public fast is that which is performed publicly, by divers families assembling in one or many congregations. And this public fast is appointed partly by the church and partly by the magistrate. The church must judge of the time and occasion thereof, and the magistrate must authorise and proclaim it.

Again, a religious fast may be distinguished other ways, in respect of the time of continuance, and manner of abstinence therein; for sometimes a religious fast is only from one meal for one day (as Jud. 20:26). Sometimes it is from one meal for many days together (as 1 Sam. 31:13). They fasted seven days together for Saul and Jonathan; abstaining from their dinners, and taking some time refreshing in the evening. And so Daniel fasted for three weeks of days, that is, each day from morning until night (Dan. 10:3). And sometimes it is from all kinds of sustenance for many days together, so Esther and her maids fasted three days (Esth. 4:16). Now the two former may be used of us as occasion serveth; but this last is very dangerous, for it is not with us in this regard as it was with the Jews. They lived in hot countries, and so had cold stomachs, by reason whereof they might fast three days without any great inconvenience. But we that live in colder climates have hotter stomachs, and so have need of more and oftener refreshing than they had. Neither can we fast so long without endangering life and health. Now fasting must be to humble and afflict the body, but not to destroy it.

2. Thus much of fasting in general. Now I come to Christ's doctrine of fasting here propounded.

And first, of His reformation of the abuses thereof then used among the Jews. *When ye fast, look not as the hypocrites* etc.

*Question*: How doth this agree with the commandment of God (Joel 1:13,14), where He bids them howl and cry in their fast, which cannot be without a mournful countenance; and indeed in a true fast rightly celebrated, the sorrow of the heart must needs be testified by some convenient signs and gesture in the body? *Answer*: Christ doth not here simply condemn a sorrowful countenance in fasting whenas just occasion of sorrow is therein offered; for Nehemiah looked sad (Neh. 2:2); but only the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who when they fasted had a sad countenance, without a sorrowful heart. For all their heavy looks, they had no broken spirits. This therefore Christ saith*: Carry not a sad and heavy look, when thou hast no sorrowful mourning heart. Mind not thine outward countenance in respect of thy heart and conscience*.

*For they disfigure their faces* etc.

They also may seem not blameworthy, for God's children have in their fasts divers ways disfigured their faces, and been approved. Ezra (Ezra 9:3) *plucked off the hair of his head, and of his beard*; and Joshua (Josh 7:6) and the Israelites *fell to the ground upon their faces, and put dust upon their heads*, which could not but disfigure their faces? *Answer*: The Pharisees are blamed for disfiguring their faces, in divers respects, and that justly; for, first, this was the chief and only thing they looked to in their fasts, even the outward shew thereof, which God hateth. Again, the word translated *disfigure*, signifieth the very abolishing of their favour and visage, which is far more than the ancient Jews ever used to do. They indeed humbled their bodies, and testified their sorrow which God approved; but they sought not to deform their natural complexion, they pined not themselves to make their faces pale, that so men might the better take notice of their much fasting, as these Pharisees did. And such were they in Paul's time, who *spared not their bodies* (Col. 2:23). Thus much for the meaning.

The words thus explained contain two parts, a commandment and a reason thereof. The commandment forbiddeth feigned mourning in fasting, *Look not as the hypocrites*; as if He should say, The hypocritical scribes and Pharisees when they fast, make an outward shew of contrition and sorrow, whenas indeed their hearts are no whit humbled; but you shall not do so. The reason of the former prohibition, is drawn from the practice of hypocrites, which is set out by the end and fruit thereof. Their practice is to *disfigure their faces*, therein is all their sorrow. Their end is ostentation, *that they might be seen unto men to fast*. And the fruit is answerable, *Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward*; that is, reputation and praise of men. Thus when we see that Christ condemns not religious fasting, nor godly sorrow therein, no nor yet the seemly signs of godly sorrow; but only hypocritical fasting, when men have mournful looks without humble and contrite hearts.

The Uses.

1. Here observe the practice of these Scribes and Pharisees in Christ's time. They did not only fast often, as twice a week, but they were careful in observing all outward rites and signs pertaining to a religious fast. Yet as in the two former duties of alms-deeds and prayer, so in this, the principal

thing is wanting; that is, truth and sincerity of heart; for their sour looks came not from sorrowful hearts; they were whole and righteous in their own conceit, and so needed not the Physician Christ Jesus, nor amendment of life. Now in them we may see a true pattern of the property of natural men in matters of religion: they more busy themselves about the outward work than inward truth; they content themselves with outward rites and ceremonies, and little regard the true worship of the heart. See this in Ahab (1 Kin. 21:27), who humbled himself outwardly in great measure, for fear of punishment; but he contented himself therewith, and never came to true humiliation of heart , in sorrow for sin, for he continued still in his old sins; and the Israelites, both in the wilderness, and in the land of Canaan, when God afflicted them, would humble themselves and seek His favour; but yet not in constant sincerity and truth. For as David saith (Psa. 78:34-37), *They flattered Him with their mouthÉ. For their heart was not upright with Him*. They performed the outward ceremonies, and (Isa. 29:13) so *drew near to God with their lips, but their heart was far from Him*. And thus it goeth generally, with natural men. The whole religion of the papists stands in outward ceremonial actions, partly Jewish and partly heathenish; and when they have observed them, they look no further. And so it fareth with many among us that profess true religion. For the ignorant sort (which are very many everywhere) content themselves with the outward actions of religion; as coming to church, hearing the Word read, and sometimes preached, and receiving the sacrament once or twice a year; and when the work is done (though without understanding) yet all is well, they think God is served well enough. Yea, many that have knowledge do yet rest in the outward actions of religion; for do not some esteem the conscionable endeavour of moral obedience to be but preciseness? And so though they bear some shew of religion, yet they reproach the power of it in others. And another sort do only so far forth maintain and profess religion, as it standeth with the good of their outward estate, and their peaceable fruition of wealth, honour and delights, and so make a policy of religion and piety. But let all these take heed unto their souls, and betime repent, for these practices make them hypocrites in religion, whose end will be damnation. And therefore bring thy heart to God with thy outward worship, and content not thyself with the shew of godliness, but get the power of it, and shew it in thy conversation; and embrace religion for it, and not for the world.

2. Secondly, is the Pharisees falling condemned of Christ, because they rested in outward work and did it in ostentation, for the praise of men? Then doubtless popish fasting is abominable, because it aboundeth with mere abuses; for:

1. In their religious fasts they allow one meal, so long as it be not flesh; and besides that, drinking of any kind of wines, or drinks, taking of electuaries, and strong waters, conserves and such like, at any time of the day; which is a mock fast, and nothing else.

2. They make distinctions of meats necessary to a fast, and that not for evil ends, as magistrates may do; or for temperance sake, as private men may do; but for conscience sake, which is a *doctrine of devils*, as the apostle saith (1 Tim. 4:1).

3. They bind men in conscience to many set days of fasting, and make the omission thereof a deadly sin; wherein they take away our Christian liberty; for there was no want of care in our Saviour Christ, to appoint all good means for mortifying of the flesh, and yet he prescribed no set fasts in the New Testament.

4. They make fasting meritorious, teaching that a man thereby may satisfy God's justice; whereby they do blasphemously derogate from the all-sufficiency of Christ's obedience and passion.

Now sith they have thus defaced religious fasting, let us learn by Christ's command, not to fast as the papists do.

3. Thirdly, Christ saying to His disciples, *When ye fast*, takes it for granted that sometimes they fasted, and so ought to do. And here he blames the Pharisees, not for fasting simply, but for their hypocrisy therein. Whereby we see that Christ requires of all the godly, that when just occasion is offered, they should fast, either publicly or in private. And if Christ blames the Pharisees for their bad manner of fasting, then much more will He blame them that fast not at all, though never so just occasion be given unto them. For in this case it is not a thing indifferent, but necessary; for the want whereof, God doth many times renew and increase His judgments, as

we may see (Isa. 22:12-14). Wherefore to move our hearts hereunto, let us consider these reasons:

1. First, we have herein the worthy precedent of most holy men in times past, who carefully performed this duty when occasion was offered; as David, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, our Saviour Christ, and His apostles, especially Paul, who fasted often. Now their examples must be a cloud of witnesses unto us, for we come far short of them in many graces of God, and in obedience, and therefore had more need to humble ourselves.

2. Secondly, we have among us continual occasions of fasting, both in public and private; as:

1. God's judgments present; for when have we been free from some one of these, either famine or pestilence or unseasonable weather?

2. God's judgments imminent and hanging over our heads; for our professed enemies watched for our subversion, and we are in danger to have the kingdom of heaven taken from us in the power of the gospel, the comfort of prayer, and of the sacraments, because we do not bring forth the fruits thereof.

3. We have our own corrupt natures to subdue, and many sins to break off, with particular judgments upon ourselves to remove; for any one whereof we have great need to fast often.

4. Though we had no such cause in regard of ourselves, yet the horrible sins that abound in our land, are cause sufficient to bring us on our knees. Paul (2 Cor. 12:21) feared he should be humbled at Corinth, in bewailing many that had sinned. And shall not the common atheism, the contempt of God's Word and judgments, the blasphemies, oppression, and fearful security of this age cause us to wail and mourn?

5. We should oft humble ourselves for the church of God; and for the continuance of the gospel in sincerity among us, and to our posterity. Hereby we shall best express zeal for God's house, which should eat us

up, as it is said of Christ (John 2:17), and David (Psa. 69:9). God's Jerusalem should be our chief joy (Psa. 137:6); and we must testify it by praying for the peace thereof (Psa. 122:6). Christ prayed and fasted (Luke 6:12,13) when he chose His apostles for the planting of His church. Much more therefore must we do it for the continuance of it.

4. Fourthly, Christ here disallows not only the affectation of praise in these Pharisees, but the disfiguring of their faces by a kind of pining of themselves. Whereby He would teach us that a true fast stands not in the afflicting and weakening of the body. Now albeit few offend this way at this day, for most are given too much to pamper the flesh; yet here may fitly be shewed what care men ought to have of their bodies. And first of all, a twofold care must be avoided; (1) as well *an immoderate care* to pamper the body with meat and drink, for that makes the heart heavy, and the head drowsy, and hereby lust is kindled and sin cherished; which the apostle forbids (Rom. 13:14); (2) as also *too little care*, whereby the body is pined and pulled down to overmuch weakness, which is one thing here reproved. The care required is that moderate regard unto the body, whereby it is so sustained by meat and drink, that it may always become the temple of the Holy Ghost, and a fit instrument for the soul unto works of righteousness, and the worship of God. Now he that would thus order his body must do two things: (1) First, he must observe perpetual temperance in food and raiment, taking that which may well suffice nature, but not fulfil the lusts thereof. (2) Secondly, if this will not serve to subdue the flesh, but that it will still rebel against the law of the spirit of life (as in some it will not), then fasting must be used, in which the body is to be afflicted, and the soul humbled, for the subduing of the rebellious flesh. But yet herein we must beware that we destroy not our health, our strength, or our constitution; for thus we neglect our life, which is a sin of murder; wherein (though few) yet some do offend, who in the meantime live in the practice of foul and gross sins otherwise.

5. Fifthly, here note how far the Pharisees go in outward humiliation. They are content to afflict their bodies, even to the disfiguring of their complexion; but yet they will not repent and leave their sins, no though John Baptist and Christ preach repentance unto them. Wherein behold the property of our corrupt nature in God's service. If outward actions and

bodily exercises will serve the turn, we can be content to bestow much cost, to take great pains, and to endure some affliction; but yet still we desire to live in our sins. This is evident in popery, for who are more austere to their own bodies, in watchings, wanderings, in whipping themselves, fasting etc.? And yet where is more abominable filthiness than among them? And this makes that religion so embraced, because in dispensing with sin, for the performance of these bodily actions, it fits so well to our corrupt nature. Wherefore let us take notice of this our corruption, and though we must not neglect the humbling of the body upon just occasion; yet let us principally look to the mortifying of sin, and the obedience of the heart.

"*But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*" vv.17-18.

Christ, the true doctor of His church, having in the former verse sought to reform the exercise of fasting from Pharisaical abuses, doth in these two verses seek to restore the same to its right use; not so much intending to command us to fast, as to bring us to the right manner of fasting.

The Exposition.

*When thou fastest*.

It seemeth that Christ here speaketh especially of a private fast; for besides that He useth words of the singular number, *Thou, Thine* etc., He enjoineth for concealing of it from others, which cannot be done in a public fast. And yet the main thing here enjoined is the approbation of the heart unto God, which must be observed in all religious fasts, as well public as private.

*Anoint thy head, and wash thy face*.

Here Christ alludeth to the custom of the Jews, who to shew their cheerfulness, used to anoint their heads with sweet ointments, and to wash their faces; as we may see by Naomi's command to Ruth (Ruth 3:3), and by David's practice (2 Sam. 12:20), when he perceived his child was dead, and would testify that he had ceased from mourning for it. As also by the speech of Christ, testifying the woman that anointed His feet with ointment (Luke

7:36-50), *Mine head thou didst not anoint, but she hath anointed my feet with ointment*. For, as David saith (Psa. 104:15), *God gives oil to make the face to shine*. But yet these words are not to be taken properly, neither do they bind us to anoint our heads when we fall, as may appear by these reasons:

1. If the words should be taken properly, then should Christ condemn all the fasts of holy men in the Old Testament, who used neither ointments nor washings, but abstained from all such bodily delights for that time.

2. Christ should command contraries, namely, the use of such things in fasting as were more appropriate to feasting, wherein men used to be joyful and cheerful.

3. He should enjoin that to some countries, which were not in their power, or at least could not be used of them without excessive charges; as in this or other cold countries, where sweet oils are rare and costly.

The true meaning therefore must be gathered out of the circumstances of the place. Now Christ's intent is here, as in the former points of alms-deeds and prayer, *to prescribe unto man the approving of their hearts unto God in fasting, by avoiding ostentation therein, and desire of the praise of men*. And therefore He names such behaviour, as doth no way intimate a fast unto others; meaning thereby that we should conceal our private fasts from men; as if He should say, *When thou fastest privately, so carry thyself, that it may not appear to men thou fastest, and in all thy fasts seek only to approve thy heart unto God*.

The words thus explained contain two parts; a commandment and a reason thereof.

1. The commandment is twofold: First that we should conceal our fasts from men, intimated by *wash thy face, and anoint thy head*; secondly, that we should seek to approve ourselves, not to men, but to God in our religious fasts, in these words: *That thou seem not to men to fast, but to thy Father which is in secret*.

1. In this first branch of this commandment we may learn that the private worship of God must be performed privately unto God, and concealed from men; for that which is here said of private fasting, which is a means to further our prayers, is true of prayer itself, and of every part of God's private worship, for there is the same reason of all. As may thus appear:

1. First, in all actions of God's worship, there must be observed an holy comeliness and decency, which is then done, when they be performed with fit and convenient circumstances; that is, public actions of worship with public circumstances; and private actions with private circumstances. As public prayer must be made by a public person in a public place, with an audible and loud voice; and private prayer must be made in a private place, by private persons, with a still and low voice, and other seemly private gestures.

2. Secondly, when private worship is performed with public circumstances, there are many occasions given to ambition, pride and hypocrisy; but being done privately, these occasions are prevented, and the heart is more free to seek the approbation of God only.

This doctrine serves to direct our practice in God's worship; as:

1. First, that we must not reserve our private preparation to God's public worship, till we come to the public congregation; but prepare ourselves at home privately in our chamber or closet. For though to pray everywhere be lawful, yet because convenient circumstances must be observed in all our actions of worship, therefore private prayer in a public place is not so seemly nor convenient; for public circumstances do not beseem private worship.

*Question*: What if a man wanted time, or had forgotten to prepare himself beforehand? *Answer*: Slight pretences cannot justify any disorder in God's worship; and yet if a man will needs there perform his private preparation, he must conceal all outward signs of prayer, and only lift up his heart unto God; for a good duty may become offensive by inconvenient circumstances.

2. Secondly, this shews how Christian families must order their private exercises of religion, namely so privately for voice and gesture, that they may conceal the same from others, beside their family present. And so must particular persons praying alone observe such circumstances as may conceal their prayers from others; for all occasions of ostentation must be avoided, that so the heart may apply itself wholly towards the Lord.

2. *That thou seem not to men to fast*.

This is the second branch of Christ's commandment, wherein we learn a second duty in a religious fast; namely, that *therein we seek to approve ourselves and our actions only to God*. For which end, we may observe three things:

1. With our fasting we must join a conversion of our heart from sin unto God. (Joel 2:12) *Turn you unto me with all your heart, and with fasting*. There God hath joined them together, and they may not be severed. Now that our hearts may turn to God in fasting, we must have special regard to our behaviour both before, in and after our fast, whether public or private. *Before the fast*, we must prepare ourselves thereto in an holy manner, by a serious consideration of the causes and occasions of our fast. A worthy example hereof we have in Jehosaphat (2 Chr. 20:3), who considering a fearful judgment to be at hand in the approaching of his enemies, was sore afraid, and thereupon set his heart to seek the Lord, and proclaim a fast. *In fasting*, we must labour to have more tender affections, and deeper humiliation than ordinary. (1 Sam. 7:6) The Israelites humbling themselves in fasting for their idolatry in Mizpeh, *drew water, and poured out before the Lord*; which words import their deep humiliation, whether it were by abundant weeping (as some expound the place), or by pouring out water indeed, to signify that they poured out their souls before the Lord. *After the fast*, we must labour for amendment and reformation of life, that our behaviour both towards God and man, may be every way better than before. A notable example hereof we have in the Jews, who having renewed their covenant with God, upon their humiliation (Neh. 9:1),

did not only write it (Neh. 9:38), and seal unto it (Neh. 10:1); but bound themselves thereto by curse and oath (Neh. 10:29).

2. That we approve ourselves and our action to God in fasting, we must be sure we propound unto ourselves therein the right ends of a religious fast, which we have before propounded. For if we fail therein, and propound other ends unto ourselves, we corrupt the whole action unto ourselves.

3. With our fasting we must join the duties of the second Table, in the works of justice, mercy and love to our brethren. For without these, our love to God is not sincere; nay, God rejects that bodily humiliation, which is severed from the exercise of mercy and compassion, as we may see at large (Isa. 58:3ff.). I shewed before that we had just cause to humble ourselves; which when we do, we must be careful thus to approve our hearts unto God.

2. Thus much of the commandment; now followeth the reason thereof, drawn from the promise of God's reward to them that fast in an holy manner.

*And thy Father which seeth in secret, will reward thee openly*.

That is: *Seeing thee intend only to approve thine heart and action unto God in fasting, will give thee an open reward at the last day*.

This text the papists do notably abuse, to prove two heretical conclusions touching fasting:

1. First, that *fasting in itself for any good end, is a part of God's worship*, because it hath a promise of open reward, even life everlasting, made unto it, as before was made to prayer and alms- deeds; and therefore must needs be of the same nature with them. For things indifferent and bodily exercises profit little; that which hath the promise is a part of godliness (1 Tim. 4:8). *Answer*: This promise is made to him that fasteth, not to the work; and that not simply for his exercise of fasting, but for his repentance, conversion and invocation, which go with fasting, and are furthered thereby. But they allege (Luke 2:47) that

Anna served God with fasting and with prayer. *Answer*: In the Old Testament, fasting was a part of God's worship; for it was commanded to be performed the tenth day of the seventh month. And then also was the making and performing of vows, a part of religious worship commanded of God. Now in all likelihood, Anna had bound herself by a vow to God, to that course of prayer and fasting, and therefore was approved of God therein. But now in the New Testament, we have no commandment for set fasts or vows; and therefore the case is not the same, and so her example cannot prove the thing for which they allege it. Indeed we have the vow of moral obedience made in baptism, but that everyone is bound to perform that takes God for his God, though he should not vow it. Again, a man may be said to serve God in prayer and fasting as Anna did, because prayer is a true part of God's worship; and though fasting in itself be not the worship of God, yet being joined with prayer, it is a notable furtherance thereunto; and being so performed upon just occasion, it is a part of His worship, because He requires it.

2. The second conclusion which the papists would gather hence is; that *fasting satisfieth God's justice, and merits remission of sins and life everlasting*; because this promise of open reward is here made unto it. *Answer*: We must know that the promises of God for remission of sins and life everlasting, being grounded upon Christ, are only made to them that be regenerate and believe in Christ; and so they are not made to him for his work's sake, but for his faith whereby he is in Christ, and so indeed are made unto him for Christ's sake only, in whom we grant that God of His free grace makes Himself by His promise to every believer that doth any good work. Yet the debt is not due to us for anything we do, but due to Christ who hath merited it, and in Christ due to us. But it will be said that works are often mentioned with God's promises, and especially faith, which is a work. *Answer*: True; but yet the reward promised is not given for work's sake, nor yet for faith; but for Christ's sake, whose merit imputed to us is received by faith, which faith we testify by works. And so according to our faith and works, we receive a reward of God, but not for them; as Christ said to the Centurion (Matt. 8:13), *As thou hast believed, so be it unto thee*. Thus then must we conceive of this promise made to fasting;

> though in itself it be a bodily exercise; yet being done in obedience to God upon just occasion, by him that believeth in Christ, and being joined with prayer and conversion to God, it is a work of faith, and shall have a reward.

Now this gracious promise made to fasting in this holy manner, must stir us up to a love of this exercise, and to the practice of it, so oft as just occasion is given. And undoubtedly one special cause of the continual renewing of God's judgments among us is because we humble not ourselves by prayer and fasting under God's mighty hand. It were therefore to be wished, in regard of the manifold just occasions, that public fasts were more often commanded by public authority, and private fasts more conscionably used in every family.

And thus much of the fourth part of Christ's sermon, containing a reformation of abuses in alms, prayer and fasting; out of all which we must learn this one thing which Christ principally intends; to wit, *in all holy duties to avoid hypocrisy, endeavouring to do them with that simplicity and sincerity of heart whereby we truly desire to have God and not man the seer and approver of them.* And so shall our works be not only good in themselves, but in us, and acceptable unto God. Otherwise, if we do them in ostentation, or for other sinister respects, the hypocrisy of our hearts defiles our good works, and so makes them unacceptable unto God, and unprofitable to ourselves.

# 6:19-21

"*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*" Matthew 6:19-21.

"*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal*" (vv.19,20).

Here beginneth the fifth part of this excellent sermon, and it continueth to the end of this chapter; wherein our Saviour Christ intendeth to reform His hearers of covetousness, and to work in their hearts a moderate care and desire of worldly things. Now the order of this discourse is this: first, He lays down the substance of His persuasion, and then enforceth and amplifieth the same. The ground and substance of Christ's persuasion consists in a double commandment. The first shews what we must not do in respect of treasures (v.19), the second, what we must do (v.20); both of which He enforceth by their several reasons in the same verses; as also with a reason common to them both (v.21).

I.

For the first commandment: *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.*

The Meaning.

The word here translated *lay up*, is more significant in the original than our English doth express; for it imports two things: first, to *gather together*; secondly, to *hoard, or heap up in store* things gathered, against the time to come (Rom. 2:5), *Thou heapest up unto thyself* etc.

*Treasures*; that is, worldly wealth in abundance, precious things stored up; as silver, gold, pearls etc.

*Upon earth*. Here Christ aims not so much at the place, as at the kinds of treasures; for heavenly treasures may be laid up while we are here on earth; and therefore He forbids hoarding of earthly treasures.

*For yourselves*; that is, respecting your private gain and benefit, all respect to the good of the church and commonwealth laid aside.

So the words bear this sense: *Take heed that you gather not riches together, to hoard up here below, for you own private use and benefit alone, making them your treasures in which you put your trust, and place your joy and delight*.

But yet that we may not mistake the meaning of our Saviour Christ, I will distinctly set down what things Christ forbiddeth not, pertaining to the gathering or keeping of worldly goods; and then what it is which he doth directly forbid. There be three things respecting the world which Christ forbiddeth not, *viz*.:

1. *Diligent labour in a man's vocation*, whereby he provides things needful for himself and those that depend upon him; for else he should be contrary to himself, enjoining man to eat his bread in the sweat of his face (Gen. 3:19), and commanding that *he that will not labour, should not eat* (2 Thess. 3:10).

2. *The fruition and possession of goods and riches*; for they are the good blessings of God being well used, and have been possessed of God's children, as Abraham, Solomon etc.

3. The gathering and laying up of treasures is not simply forbidden, for the Word of God alloweth hereof in some respect (2 Cor. 12:14), *The father must lay up for the children*. And the disciples' understanding of the general famine by the prophecy of Agabus, which should be in all the world (Acts 11:28-30), gathered provision beforehand for the brethren in Judea; and Joseph's provident wisdom (Gen. 41:48; Acts 7:10) is commended by the Holy Ghost, for hoarding up the corn in Egypt against the time of dearth,

for the common good. And the Temple of God (1 Chr. 28:12) had its treasuries by God's appointment, for the upholding and repair thereof; so that Christ doth not simply forbid all gathering and laying up of treasure or wealth.

What is it then which Christ here forbids? *Answer*: Sundry practices of covetousness:

1. Whereas the first is *excessive seeking of worldly wealth*, when men keep no measure nor moderation therein; although God give sufficient, yet they are not content, their desire is so insatiable. And that we may see the danger of this practice, I will here shew how far forth a man may seek for and lay up worldly wealth. For the better understanding whereof, this distinction of worldly goods must be laid down for a ground: They are either *necessary, abundant* or *superfluous*.

    1. *Necessary goods* are of two sorts: either necessary to man's nature, without which no man can live, nor family stand; as meat, drink, apparel, lodging etc., or necessary to a man's state and condition of life, without which he cannot exercise the duties of his calling wherein God hath placed him; as books to a student, tools to a tradesman etc. Now here ariseth the question: How much of these things are to be counted necessary, and so may be provided for and laid up? *Answer*: The opinion and judgment of the covetous man must be no rule in this case; for his corrupt heart is insatiable, like the sea which cannot be filled, and (Prov. 30:16*) like the fire, that never saith, It is enough*. Now because of the diversity of men's estates, by reason of their difference in properties and conditions, there can be no certain rule set down; for that which is enough for one, will not suffice another. And therefore the judgment and practice of the godly wise, who know how to use the creatures as blessings of God's providence, must be our rule to judge what is necessary. Other rules we have not in the Word, but what they judge needful, according to the Word, that must be esteemed necessary, and accordingly provided. Yet further this may here be added, that things must not be deemed necessary, only in regard of the present use, but also with respect to the time to come, wherein they may be needful.

Example: A tradesman having nothing besides his trade to live upon, may provide for things necessary, while his strength continueth, to maintain himself in old age, when through decay of strength or sight, he is not able to work. And so a man having many children, may in the use of lawful means, provide for their portions beforehand, that when their age requireth, he may therewith dispose of them in some good state of life.

2. The second sort of worldly goods is *abundance*, whereby I mean that plenty and store, which serves not only for necessity, but for holy comeliness and delight.

3. The third sort is *superfluity*, whereby I mean such abundance as a man hath neither use of for the present, nor in any likelihood shall have for the time to come.

Now these grounds thus premised, I set down this rule touching man's provision for worldly wealth: *Things necessary for man's person and his calling, a man may seek for and lay up; bur for abundance and for superfluity, no man ought to labour or be careful*. Hereto Christ hath put this bar, *Lay not up treasures for yourselves*. And Solomon prays as directly against superfluity as against poverty (Prov. 30:8,9), *Give me not riches, nor poverty* (saith he), *but feed me with food convenient for me*. And he renders this reason against abundance: *Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord*? Now hence, I reason thus: Look what we may ask of God; that only must we seek for, and no more. But we may only ask for things necessary; for to pray for abundance we have no warrant, and therefore we must only seek for necessities, and not for abundance. Hereto the apostles' rule agreeth well (1 Tim. 6:8,9), *If we have food and raiment, let us herewith be content; for they that would be rich* or abound (as the word signifieth), *fall into temptation and snares*.

*Question*: If we may not pray for abundance, what must we do if God give abundance? *Answer*: If God bless us with abundance, upon our moderate labour and care in our lawful callings, we must receive it thankfully, and as good stewards lay it up to be bestowed on good uses, either in our families, or in the church and commonwealth, as God in His providence shall offer us just occasion.

Now, this being evident, that we must only seek for things necessary, and no more; then we must all learn to beware of carking [*burdensome*] care, and be concerned with things necessary, when God gives them. And to move us hereunto, consider the reasons following:

1. First, it is God's commandment that we should be contented with things necessary (1 Tim. 6:8), and therefore we must make conscience of obedience in the practice of contentment.

2. Secondly, they that are greedy after abundance, have many temptations to bad dealing, and so can hardly keep a good conscience. *They fall into snares* (as the apostle saith (1 Tim. 6:9)) *and into many foolish and noisome lusts, which drown men in perdition and destruction*.

3. Thirdly, in time of persecution (which oft accompanies the gospel), the richer a man is, the more danger he is in to forsake the truth; for the heart of man is naturally so glued to the world, that without God's special grace, it will sooner forsake Christ than worldly wealth. This we may see in Demas, who to embrace the world, forsook Paul (2 Tim. 4:10). Whereupon Christ saith (Mark 10:23), *How hardly can a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven*.

And thus much of the first practice of covetousness, which is excessive care and labour after worldly goods.

2. The second practice of covetousness which Christ here forbids, is *when men seek only or principally for worldly goods, neglecting spiritual graces in regard thereof*. This appears by the opposition of the next verse unto this, *Lay not up for yourselves earthly treasures, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*. This was Esau's practice, who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage (Heb. 12:16). And the sin of the Gadarenes, that upon the loss of their swine, desired Christ to go out of their coasts (Luke 8:37). And this is the sin of our age, where in many things, nay, almost everything, which may yield profit or delight, is cared for above the Word; or else how could there be so much preaching and so little profiting, but that men's thoughts and delights are taken up with earthly things? But this is a preposterous and disordered care, which everyone must labour to reform, as Christ commands (v.31).

3. The third practice of covetousness here forbidden, is *to put trust and confidence in worldly things treasured up*. This is the idolatry of the heart, for look whereon a man sets his heart, that he makes his God, and therefore is covetousness called idolatry (Col. 3:5). Hence it is that Christ makes it so hard a thing for a rich man to enter into heaven (Matt. 19:23,24), because they trust in their riches (Mark 10:24). And if we mark well, we shall find it commonly true that rich men are proud hearted and secure, not regarding God's judgments, nor the means of their salvation; for they take not God for their strength, that trust in their riches (Psa. 52:7). David's counsel therefore must be followed (Psa. 62:10), *If riches increase, set not your heart thereon*.

4. The fourth practice here forbidden, is *when men lay up for themselves only, without regard to the church or commonwealth, or relief of the poor*. This is a devilish practice; for everyone is but a steward of that he hath, to dispense the same for God's glory to the good of other. The poor are God's poor, and members of His family, and therefore He requires that every steward in His family should see they have their portion. God will call the rich to their account, when this will not be taken for good disposing, to say I kept my riches to myself. So much will the slothful servant say, that hides his talent in a napkin. And therefore let us learn to make conscience hereof, with the rest of these bad practices.

*Where the moth and canker corrupt, and where thieves dig through and steal*.

These words contain a special reason of the former commandment, to this effect: *Earthly treasures, as riches, raiment etc., are subject to be carried away by thieves; and therefore we must not excessively or principally seek after them, set our hearts upon them, or hoard them up for ourselves*.

The Exposition.

The word translated *moth*, signifieth a worm that eateth the finest cloth, and consumeth the best garment; yet here it must be taken more largely, for any worm that doth destroy or consume any creature. And so the word translated *canker*, must be largely taken for anything that by rust or fretting doth eat into and consume metal, or any other creature.

Here then Christ noteth a twofold vanity of the creatures, both in respect of their nature and of abuse. For their nature, they are subject to corruption by rust, moth and canker, be the creatures never so pure and costly, as gold, silver, pearls etc., for the heavens themselves are subject to vanity. And for abuse, they are subject to the injuries of ungodly persons, thieves may steal them, and covetous persons may hoard them up that they shall serve for no use. Now if all earthly treasures be subject to vanity both by corruption and abuse, then we must not make them our chief creatures, but seek for them, and use them in a moderate and sober manner.

*Question*: But whence came this vanity upon the creatures? *Answer*: God hath subjected them unto it for the sin of man (Rom. 8:20).

The consideration hereof must let us see the grievousness of our sins, and the greatness of God's anger thereunto, in that He hath imprinted the stamp of His wrath upon every creature for the sin of man, by subjecting it to this twofold vanity. And therefore, when we see a moth upon apparel, or rust and canker upon metal, or other creatures corrupting them, we ought rather be humbled for our sins, than to suffer our hearts to be drawn to immoderate desire and delight after earthly things. Secondly, are the creatures that never sinned subject to vanity for man's sin? Then how vain a thing is man, that by his transgression bringeth vanity upon the creatures. Let us therefore in them behold our own vanity, and when we pity them, learn to lament our own iniquities.

II.

"*but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal*" (v.20).

Christ having shewed what we must not do in respect of treasures here on earth, and knowing man's inclination to be such that he will needs have something for his treasure, doth here come to the second branch of His commandment; shewing what treasure we must lay up for ourselves, and enforceth us thereto by a special reason. The treasures we must lay up are *treasures in heaven*.

*Question*: How should we lay up treasures in heaven? For we cannot of ourselves come there; no man can save himself; the beginning, progress and accomplishment of our salvation is of God in Christ wholly. *Answer*: It is usual with God in Scripture, to ascribe the work of the principal efficient cause to the instrument thereof. Thus in the last verse of Obadiah, preachers are expressly called *saviours*; and (1 Tim. 4:16), *In doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee*; and (1 Cor. 4:15), *I have begotten you through the gospel*; and yet both salvation and regeneration are the works of God alone, preachers are only the instruments thereof. So in this place, to make us rich with heavenly treasures, is the work of God alone; for we rather treasure up unto ourselves wrath against the day of wrath (Rom. 2:5) by our transgressions. And yet because we are instruments by His grace, in the use of means to get this treasure, therefore He giveth this commandment unto us, as though the work were wholly ours, though Himself be the principal author.

But yet that we may the better conceive of, and practise this commandment, two points are to be considered: First, what this treasure is; Secondly, how a man must lay it up for himself. Both these we must mark with reverence, because thy are points of great weight and moment, in the practice whereof standeth our salvation.

1. For the first: In searching it out, we will first consider what is erroneously thought to be this treasure which Christ would have us to lay up. The church of Rome hath for many hundred years, abused the world hereabouts, making the overplus of Christ's merits, and of the merits of saints and martyrs, to be the treasure of the church, which being gathered together and put into a store-chest, is (say they) in the pope's custody; and he alone hath the plenary opening and shutting of this chest, and the ordering and disposing of these merits. By virtue whereof he gives out indulgences and pardons when and to whom he will. And hereby indeed he maintains and upholds his kingdom; for hereby comes infinite wealth and revenues. But this cannot be the true treasure; nay, it is corrupt and deceitful for two causes: For first, hereby they abase the true treasure, which is Christ's merits, by adding supply thereto from the merits of saints. For if Christ's merits receive increase from the merits of men, then it is not all-sufficient of itself, and so but a poor treasure. Secondly, hereby they make

the merits of saints departed, to be the merits of others which live long after them, by the pope's application; which is a thing impossible and absurd; for no man can merit of himself. But say he could, yet should his merits be for himself alone and for none other; for every man in regard of salvation is a private man, and the reward of his works he doth that way can only redound unto himself, only Christ Jesus our Mediator, God and man, who was by God Himself made a public person for this end, can merit for others.

The true treasure then (to let the other pass) is in a word *the true God*, that one only eternal essence in three Persons, who made all things, and governs all things. In Him alone is all goodness and happiness to be found (Gen. 15:1), *I am thy buckler, and thine exceeding great reward*, saith God to Abraham. And (Psa. 16:5,6), *The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance* (saith David), É*.I have a goodly heritage*; which is as much as if he had said, *The Lord is my treasure*. And for this end we must conceive of God as He hath revealed Himself unto us in Christ; for out of Christ He is not our God, and so not our treasure; but God incarnate is our treasure; (Col. 2:3), *In whom*, that is in Christ, *are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. (Col. 3:3), *Our life*, even eternal life, *is hid with Christ in God*, as in a treasure. (1 Cor. 1:30), *Christ is made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption*. And (John 1:16), *Of His fulness*, as out of a full treasure, *we all receive grace for grace*. Now we must not rest in His incarnation, but conceive further of Him as He was crucified for us in our nature, and is set forth unto us in His Word and sacraments. For His obedience, death and passion is our treasure, which is revealed and applied in the Word of promise and in the sacraments. And this is that thing prepared of God for them that love Him, which eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither ever entered into the heart of natural man to conceive (1 Cor. 2:9).

But why (will some say) should Christ crucified be called our treasure? *Answer*: Because He is the fountain and storehouse of all true blessings conveyed from God to man. Wouldest thou have remission of sin, and righteousness with God? Why, Christ was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). Wouldest thou have life everlasting? This same Jesus Christ is very God, and life eternal, and he that hath Him hath life (1 John 5:11,12). Wouldest thou have comfort in

distress, and true delight in temporal blessings? Then get Christ Jesus; for He is life in death; and without Him, the good things of this life be no blessings unto us.

2. Having found what this treasure is, let us now see how everyone must lay it up for himself; for so Christ here commandeth, *Lay up for yourselves* etc. That we may lay up Christ crucified for our treasure, we must be careful to do five things, intimated in the parable of him that bought the field wherein the hidden treasure was (Matt. 13:44): 1. We must find this treasure; 2. We must value it; 3. Obtain and get it; 4. Assure it to ourselves; 5. Use it as a treasure.

1. We must needs *find this treasure* first of all, else we cannot value it, nor obtain it, we cannot assure it to ourselves, nor use it. And thus much is implied in that parable, where it is called an *hidden treasure*; for we cannot have a thing that is hid before we find it. Now the finding of this treasure stands in God's revealing of it unto us, letting us see that naturally we want it, and making us feel that we are poor without it, and therefore stand in great need of it, whereupon we begin to seek it. Every revealing of this treasure is not the finding of it, for God enlightens the mind of man two ways: First, generally, whereby a man in reading the Word is able to conceive the true sense and meaning of it. Secondly, more specially, when beside the general sense, God makes a man feel the truth and power of the Word in His own conscience. And in this special illumination stands the true finding. This indeed is a great blessing of God, but not common to all; for our natural eyes cannot discern it, and the more we are dazzled with the sight of worldly treasures, pomps and vanities, the blinder we are about this spiritual treasure. Yea, this treasure is hid from many that are able to expound the Word of God truly; as Christ saith (Matt. 11:25), *These things are hid* (oftentimes) *from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes*; for till the Lord give this special illumination whereby a man sees his own misery in himself, and his great need of Christ's righteousness, Christ is a hidden treasure unto him. In regard whereof we must descend into our own hearts, and there try whether by the sense of our own misery in ourselves, and our own desire and hungering after Christ, God have revealed this treasure unto us. We

may say (John 9:41), *We see*, with the Jews, and yet be blind, unless we truly feel the want of Christ in our own souls. Oh, therefore labour for this special illumination; for the doctrine of the gospel will never be sweet and pleasant to us, till we find this precious treasure hid therein.

2. Having found this treasure, we must *highly prize and value it*, even above all that we have or can get; nay, more worth than all the world besides. So did the man in the parable (Matt. 13:44) esteem the treasure hid in the field above all his goods. And Paul (Phil. 3:8) so esteemed of Christ crucified, that counted all things loss for the excellent knowledge sake of Christ, and judged them as dung that he might win Christ. This high esteem of Christ is needful, if ever we mean to lay Him up for our treasure; and then have we made good progress in this heavenly purchase, when we truly value Christ in our hearts at so high a rate. And therefore we must endeavour ourselves hereunto, and labour so to frame our whole conversation in speeches and in action, that they may testify at how high a rate we value Christ. And because the Word of God reveals Christ Jesus unto us, in which regard it is called a treasure (2 Cor. 4:6,7), therefore it also must be highly valued, even above all earthly things. Thus David did (Psa. 119:72), *The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver*; (v.127), *I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above much fine gold*. Hereof, Wisdom saith (Prov. 8:19), *My fruit is better than gold, even than much fine gold, and my revenues better than fine silver*. It were happy for us if we did thus value the Word of God. Many hold there is but one truth, and so that be known, it is no matter whence it is learned, whether out of God's Word, or the writings of men; but they are far deceived, for the Scriptures of God only are that truth which is according to godliness; and they alone discover unto us this heavenly treasure, and therefore they must have the preeminence in our hearts, and be esteemed far above all the writings of men; which if we would do, we should feel that power and comfort of the Word in our hearts, which naturally we lack.

3. Having found out, and rightly valued this true treasure, we must *seek to get it for ourselves, and make it our own*. So did the man in the

parable (Matt. 13:44) when he had found the treasure hid in the field; and so Christ here commandeth, *lay up treasures for yourselves*. Now that we may get this treasure to ourselves, we must conscionably use such means as God hath appointed for this purpose; to wit: (i) Hear the Word of God preached, with all reverence, care, and diligence, labouring to mix it with faith in our hearts. (ii) Pray to God in faith earnestly and constantly for the pardon of our sins, and the fruition of this treasure. The reason hereof is plain: for the Word and sacraments are as it were the Lord's two hands, wherewith He reacheth out this heavenly treasure and all spiritual blessings unto us; and our faith is the hand of our soul, wherewith we receive them. Now by our prayers we testify this faith, and sanctify unto ourselves the two former means.

4. Having gotten this treasure, *we must labour to make it sure unto ourselves*. And to this purpose we must follow Paul's counsel and charge to rich men (1 Tim. 6:17-19), *Charge the rich men in this world, that they be not high minded, neither trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God: that they do good, and be rich in good worksÉ. Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may obtain eternal life*. Where mark how by trusting in God, and by liberality and bounty, we are exhorted to lay a good foundation. What (will some say), must we be saved by our alms-deeds and good works? *Answer*: Not so; for the ground of our salvation is God's election and love in Christ, which He Himself hath laid up in heaven for us. But the foundation which we must lay up for ourselves, is in our own conscience, for our assurance in God's foundation; and this we lay by our good works of love, mercy and justice; all which be fruits of faith; and being done in faith, and with singleness of heart to God's glory, they are sure testimonies of our portion in the true treasure Jesus Christ; for *hereby we know we are translated from death to life, because we love the brethren* (1 John 3:14).

5. Having got this treasure sure to ourselves, *we must use it as a treasure*. Hereunto three duties are required:

1. We must have our conversation in heaven, for there Christ our treasure is; and where our treasure is, there will our hearts be. And if our hearts be on Christ in desire, in joy and delight, it cannot be but our lives will be holy and heavenly, though our bodies be here on earth. But let us beware that our affections be not set on things below, for then is not Christ our treasure at all.

2. We must turn our earthly goods into heavenly treasures. This we do by employing them in works of mercy, *for he that gives unto the poor, lends unto the Lord* (Prov.19:17), so that the merciful man hath the Lord for his debtor; for the Lord sends the poor man as His messenger unto the rich, to borrow of him such things as the poor man lacketh. And the Lord's return of payment is in heavenly blessings; and therefore Christ Himself as it were explaining this point, bids (Luke 12:33), *sell that ye have, and give alms: make you bags which wax not old, a treasure that cannot fail in heaven, where no thief cometh, neither moth corrupteth*. This then is the Lord's own direction, for this happy exchange of earthly goods for heavenly treasures, than which, who can wish a better increase.

3. We must rather part with all that we have, than with Christ Jesus; friends, goods, country, liberty, nay, our own life, and dearest heart's blood must all go for this treasure's sake. So doth the good purchaser, part with all he hath, for to buy the field in which this treasure is (Matt. 13:44). But if we will rather part with Christ, than with some, or with all of these, then we use not Christ as the true treasure.

Thus we see how Christ becomes our treasure. Let us therefore make conscience to practice these five duties so long as we live; for when Christ becomes our treasure, mark what will follow: we shall find in our hearts such sweet content therein, that neither prosperity shall lift us up too high, nor adversity cast us down too low; nothing shall daunt us while we have this treasure sure; no kind of death, no, not the day of judgment.

Thus much of the commandment, now followeth the particular reason thereof:

*Where neither moth nor canker corrupteth* etc.

This reason is drawn from the unchangeable certainty and safety of this treasure. Earthly treasures are subject to corruption, and to loss by stealth; but this heavenly treasure is free from all such things. For the highest heaven is not subject to corruption, nor to the violence of thieves and robbers; and therefore our treasure must be there.

*Question*: Why should the highest heavens be free from that vanity, whereto all creatures else are subject by the sin of man? *Answer*: The heavens above, which we look upon, and the earth below, with all creatures in them, belonged to man by the right of creation, but the highest heaven is the throne of God. Now, when man fell, he was punished not only in his own person, but in all the creatures that belonged unto him, which by his sin were made subjects unto vanity. But the highest heaven was free from that curse, because it did not belong to man by the right of creation, but is a supernatural gift, whereto we have right and title only by the grace of adoption and redemption in Christ Jesus. Now sith man hath no right thereto by creation, it was not meet that the sin of man should make it subject to vanity or corruption. If therefore the safety of an enduring substance can allure our hearts to love and like, then let us set ourselves for this heavenly treasure.

"*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*." (v.21)

This verse contains a reason of the former commandments, common to them both; tending to persuade us to the obedience of them both. The reason standeth thus: *Where your treasure is, there will you hearts be also. But your hearts should not be on earth, but in heaven. Therefore lay not up treasures upon earth, but in heaven*.

The Exposition.

By *treasure* (as we said before) must be understood things precious and excellent in our estimation laid up for time to come, wherein we repose our trust, and take a special joy and delight. By *heart*, we must conceive not only the affections, which are seated in the heart, as love, joy, care, desire, and delight; but the more inward powers of the soul in thought and imagination; yea, the effects hereof, in action, as labour, study and endeavour. As if He should say: Your treasure and your heart are joined

together, look where that thing is wherein you trust, and take chief delight, and thereon will your thoughts run; your love, fear, desire, and care will draw unto it; and your chiefest pains, study and endeavour will be after it.

The Use.

Do heart and treasure go together?

1. Then here first we learn to search out and try the state of our own hearts. For though it be a bottomless gulf, and deceitful above all things (Jer. 17:9), so as none can thoroughly know it, yet if we apply this sentence aright unto ourselves, we shall be able to give true judgment of the state of our own heart. *An earthly treasure, and an earthly heart; but heavenly treasure, and an heavenly heart*. These cannot be severed. And therefore look whereon thou spendest thy thoughts, and settest thy love, thy care and delight, and bestowest thy wit, industry and labour, and thereby judge of the disposition of thy heart. If the thing be earthly and worldly, then thy heart is earthly and carnal. Thou mayest plead that thou hearest the Word, receivest the sacraments, and prayest often; yet all this will not prove thee to have Christ Jesus for thy treasure; for thine heart being set upon the world, there undoubtedly thy treasure is, and that proves thy heart to be earthly and carnal. And on the contrary, if thy principal thoughts, thy chief love, joy, and delight be on Christ crucified, thy special care and industry be after His merits and righteousness, then is Christ thy treasure, and thine heart is heavenly.

2. Secondly, hereby we may know whether we have any portion in heaven; for look where our heart is, there our portion is. If our heart in thoughts, desire and industry, be set on earthly things, then is our portion upon earth. But if we mind heavenly things, if we delight in them, and labour after them, then is our portion in heaven. It is not the exercise of religious actions now and then, but the settling of the heart either on earth or heaven that shews where our portion is.

3. Thirdly, this coupling of the heart and treasure together, teacheth us not to regard this world, and temporal life, in respect of heaven and life eternal; nay, in this regard we must despise the world and temporal

life, so far forth as it may be done without ingratitude to God, and without hatred of the works of His hands, and of His temporal blessings. For as earthly creatures are the workmanship of God, so temporal life is His good blessing, given us as a time wherein we are to prepare ourselves for life eternal. And therefore simply we may not despise it, but only in respect of life eternal. Now we must shew this high respect to heaven, and to life eternal, above that we have to this world and temporal life, by heavenly meditations, and by spiritual desires, joy and delight; for if heaven be our treasure, then must our delight be drawn from worldly things, and set on heaven.

# 6:22-23

"*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness*!" Matthew 6:22-23.

These two verses have sundry expositions, which we must discuss before we can see the scope and coherence of them in this place. Of sundry which I take to miss the right scope of Christ in this place, I will only touch one, which is the most probable; and then set down that which I take to be the best. By *single eye* some understand *a liberal mind*; and by *the wicked eye*, an *envious and covetous mind*; and so they make Christ here to speak of liberality and covetousness. Now it is true that the words will bear this sense, for Solomon puts *the good eye*, for the liberal and merciful person (Prov. 22:9), *He that hath the good eye, he shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread unto the poor*; and the evil eye, for the covetous person (Prov. 28:22), *A man of a wicked eye hasteth unto riches*. But though the words will bear this interpretation, yet it is not (as I take it) the proper meaning of Christ in this place; for here, the *light of the body*, the *single eye*, and the *light that is in us*, be all put for one and the same thing. Now, the *light that is in us*, is the understanding and judgment of the mind. Again, the *eye* is here called the light of the whole body; but the liberal mind cannot be the light of the whole body for all actions, but for works of mercy and bounty only.

To come therefore to that which I take to be Christ's true meaning; the words contain in them divers similitudes.

In the first words, *The light of the body is the eye*, is a parable taken from a candle in an house, for as a candle set up in an house lighteth the house and all that be in it; so the light of this eye (which is the understanding) lighteth the whole body, and giveth direction to the whole man in all his actions.

In the next words, *If thine eye be single*, to the end of v.23, is a second similitude, which standeth thus: If a man have a good and clear bodily eye, he can guide himself in the right way, and keep his feet from stumbling and from falling. But if his eye be dim and dark, that he cannot walk without stumbling; and if he want an eye, or that his eye be stark blind, then of himself he cannot walk without stumbling and wandering. So in like manner, if the understanding, which is the eye of the mind, be sound and clear, able to judge of good and evil, then is the whole life well ordered. But if the judgment be corrupt, then is there much disorder in the life; and if it be clean put out, then is there nothing but brutish confusion.

Thus stands the comparison in these words. Now the meaning of them is this. The first words are plain, *The light of the body is the eye*, that is, the eye gives light for the direction of the body; as a light in an house directs the householders in their affairs. *If thine eye be single* etc. By *eye* here is meant the mind, resembled by the bodily eye; and the *single eye* is the understanding mind, able to judge of good and evil, of things to be done, and not to be done. *Thy whole body shall be light*. By *body* is meant the *life*, and by *light* is meant *well ordered and directed*. For the mind is to the life for the directing of it, that which the eye is to the body for the ordering thereof. *But if thine eye be wicked* etc. The *wicked eye* is the *corrupt mind*, having the understanding darkened, and judgment so depraved that it cannot rightly discern of good and evil, what is to be done, and what is to be left undone. *Then all thy body shall be dark*; that is, thy whole life in all thine actions shall be full of sin and disorder. *Wherefore if the light that is in thee be darkness*; that is, if the natural light of reason and judgment left in man after the fall, be quite extinguished. *How great is that darkness*? That is, wonderful shall his corruption and disorder be; yea, so full of confusion, that there shall be no difference between his life, and the life of a bruit beast. And this I take to be Christ's proper meaning.

Now the words thus explained, depend upon the former as an answer to a secret objection which the heart of man might frame unto itself, against those two commandments, to this effect: If there be such necessity of laying up treasures in heaven, and of avoiding to lay up treasures in earth, then why do not the most wise and learned men of our time do so; they seek more for earthly treasures than for heavenly? Hereto Christ answers thus, as

if He had said: Marvel not at this, for they want the single eye, the understanding mind to discern of things that differ, they cannot judge aright of true treasure, and so not knowing the heavenly, they seek the earthly treasure only, Now that we may perceive the words of Christ thus to answer the former objection, we must know that Christ doth here presuppose thus much; that every man's eye is either single, corrupt or blind; and the *single eye* which is a good understanding, befalls not all men, no not all wise and learned men, but them only to whom God in mercy gives it. But the *corrupt eye* befalls every man naturally. And some by sin put out the light of nature, and so become senseless in spiritual things. And hence it is that all men naturally wanting the single eye, and having the corrupt eye, yea, many having the blind eye, do not discern of the true treasure; and so leave the heavenly, and give themselves wholly to the earthly.

Thus we see both the meaning and the coherence, leading us to the main cause of covetousness, with the blind eye of the mind not able to discern of true spiritual treasure. Now in the words, these three points are to be handled:

I. The single eye, with the fruits thereof;

II. The wicked eye, with his fruits;

III. The dark and blind eye, with the fruits thereof.

I. The *single eye* is the mind of man indued with some portion of true heavenly wisdom; and *the fruit of it* is to give the body light. To know this single eye the better, we must search out what true wisdom is. This true heavenly wisdom is no common gift, which every professor may have, but a special gift of God in Christ, peculiar to them that do truly believe in Him. (1 Cor. 1:30), *Christ is made wisdom unto us of God*; not only because He is the matter of our wisdom, we being then only true wise, when we know Christ and Him crucified; but also because He is the root from whence all our wisdom springs; for being ingrafted into Christ by faith, we become, as it were (Eph. 5:30), *flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bones*; and so are not only made just by the imputation of His obedience, but do also receive inherent holiness and wisdom from Him; our wisdom and holiness being derived from His, as the branch is from the stock, and the fruit from the

root. And this wisdom befalls not at all to the devil and his angels, though they know much, nor to all that are Christians in name; but only to the members of His mystical body by faith.

This heavenly wisdom hath two actions:

1. First, to discern aright the things that differ, and to distinguish one thing from another spiritually. This Paul prayed for in the behalf of the Phillippians (Phil. 1:9), That their *love might abound more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment or sense*, that so they might discern things that differ; that is, good from evil, and heavenly from earthly; what to do, and what to leave undone, which is a property of men of age in religion, who through long custom attain hereunto (Heb. 5:14). And hence it is that the child of God can:

1. Discern the voice of Christ, the true shepherd, from the voice of all false teachers.

2. By this gift of discerning, he can put a difference between the water of baptism, and all other water; and between the bread and wine in the Lord's table, and common bread and wine.

3. Hereby the church and every true member of it is enabled to judge rightly of crosses, distinguishing fatherly chastisements from God's plagues and curses for sin.

4. Hereby he can discern the things of God, even his own election, his vocation, adoption and justification; these and such he can perceive in himself more or less.

5. In a word, hereby he can discern the true treasure from worldly; hereby he knows the excellency of heavenly things above earthly. These things the natural man cannot, but *the spiritual man discerneth all things* (1 Cor. 2:15). Look whatsoever befalleth him, therein he can see the hand of God working for his good, therein he can discern God's wisdom, power and providence; in all which we may perceive the most excellent use of this heavenly wisdom.

2. The second action of this heavenly wisdom is to judge, determine and give sentence of things, what is to be done, what is not to be done; what is good, and what is evil in practice and behaviour. And here this one thing must be remembered, that the principal point of this wisdom is to determine of true happiness, whereto the whole life of man ought to be directed; which happiness is the love and favour of God in Christ. Herein David shews his heavenly wisdom, far different from the wisdom of the world (Psa. 4:6), *Many say, who will shew us any good*? There is the worldling's happiness. So Paul coming among the wisest of the Gentiles, professeth that he esteemed *to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified* (1 Cor. 2:2), *for whose excellent knowledge sake, he thought all things to be loss* (Phil. 3:8). And the same should be our wisdom; for though a man had all human learning and policy, yet if he fail in this, rightly to determine of true happiness, all his wisdom would prove foolishness; for (1 Cor. 3:18,19) *the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*; and therefore *if any man seem to be wise in this world, let him be a fool, that he may be wise*; that is, a fool to the world in esteeming the knowledge of Christ crucified only true wisdom; and the favour of God in him, true happiness; that so he may be wise indeed in the sight of God. Another chief part of this heavenly wisdom, is a spiritual and godly providence, whereby we forecast by all means how to compass and come by true happiness. Herein the power of heavenly wisdom is shewed. And without this, though otherwise a man discern the right, yet his knowledge and wisdom is imperfect and unprofitable.

And thus we see the actions of this heavenly wisdom, whereby we may describe it thus: *It is a gift of God's Spirit to them that are in Christ, whereby they are enabled to discern of things that differ, and to judge and determine what is that true happiness, whereto the life of man ought to tend; and withal to forecast and provide by what good and lawful means it may be compassed*. And he whose mind is endued herewith in some measure, hath the *single eye*.

Now the fruit of this single eye is *to make the whole body light*; that is, to bring the whole life in good order, guiding it in the paths of righteousness, and making it to abound in good works. (Prov. 8:19,20), *My fruit* (saith wisdom) *is better than fine goldÉ. I cause to walk in the way of*

*righteousness, and in the midst of the paths of judgment*. (Prov. 16:23), *The wise heart guideth the mouth wisely, and addeth doctrine unto his lips*.

The Use.

1. Considering the mind endued with this wisdom is thus commended; we must hereby learn to labour for it in a special manner. Beside this commendation of it by our Saviour Christ which should be a spur to provoke us to this duty, the singular commodity that redounds hereby to soul and body must move us to affect it. Now that we may the better obtain this heavenly wisdom, we must be careful of these two things especially:

1. First, to get the fear of God into our hearts, which is the beginning of this heavenly wisdom (Psa. 111:10). Now this fear of God is a reverent awe of the heart towards God, whereby a man is fearful to offend, and careful to please God in all things. And this we shall get, if we receive the Word of God with reverence, and apply it to our own souls when we hear it; trembling thereat when it toucheth our consciences, and humbly submitting ourselves unto it without raging or repining; saying as Hezekiah did to the prophet's reproof (Isa. 39:8), *The Word of the Lord is good*.

2. Secondly, we must wholly close up our eyes (the eyes of our mind I mean), and suffer ourselves in all things to be overruled and ordered by the written Word of God. This was David's practice (Psa. 119:67). He gave himself to continual meditation in the Word of God. He made it *a lantern to his feet* (Psa. 119:105), *and a light unto his paths*. And hereby he became (vv.98, 99) wiser than his enemies, and got more understanding than all his teachers. Wouldest thou then be truly wise? Become a fool to the world, lean not to thine own wisdom; but make God's Word thy whole direction.

2. Secondly, hereby we are taught to *walk wisely in our whole conversation*, that so it may appear we have this single eye. Hereto Paul (Col. 4:5; Eph. 5:15) oft exhorteth us. And thus we walk when we practice every action of our life in wisdom, according to these four rules, which are to be observed in every good action:

1. The thing we do must be just.

2. The means of effecting it must also be just.

3. We must keep ourselves therein, within the compass and limits of our calling.

4. We must do the thing with an honest, upright and single heart.

And that we may work wisely according to these four rules, we must ever have the Word of God to tell us what is just; what means be just; what be the precincts of our calling; and when we work with an upright and single heart; so doing, our works shall be in wisdom, and we shall have the approbation of God.

3. Thirdly, seeing this single eye of spiritual wisdom makes our life to shine with righteousness, we must learn to season our natural wit with this spiritual wisdom. Natural wisdom is a commendable gift of God, but without this spiritual wisdom it is foolishness in the things of God, yea, very corrupt in natural actions; and therefore we must join therewith this heavenly wisdom, which may season it, and make it holy; and so shall the use of it tend to God's glory. It is the misery of this age, that men of excellent parts for natural wisdom, have no regard to season the same with spiritual wisdom. Hereby come many aberrations in matters of great importance, for it is justice with God to curse their proceedings that, despising the heavenly, lean altogether on their own wisdom.

4. Fourthly, seeing spiritual providence in forecasting how to compass true happiness, is a special part of heavenly wisdom; we must become careful practitioners hereof in our lives, that so we may attain to true happiness. When (Luke 12:17,18) the rich man's ground brought forth much fruit, how provident was he to lay up store for the time to come; yet God calls him but a fool, because he had no regard or forecast to the state of his soul. And the five virgins are therefore called foolish (Matt. 25:3), because they contented themselves with blazing lamps, and had no forecast for oil in their vessels. And so many at this day content themselves with an outward profession, and do not provide for the graces of salvation. But though a man had all the wisdom of the world, and by his wit could compass upon earth what his

heart could wish, yet if he fail in providing for true happiness, all his wisdom is but madness. See this in Ahithophel (2 Sam. 16:23), whose counsel for worldly things was like the oracles of God; yet wanting this spiritual wisdom to forecast for true happiness to his soul, his end was both shameful and fearful; for in discontent (2 Sam. 17:23), he went and hanged himself. Let us therefore practice this wise forecast for true happiness, and never be well till we get assurance hereof; then do we shew ourselves truly wise. If we fail in this, we fail in all; and therefore like the wise virgins, let us get oil in our vessels, the saving graces of God's Spirit in our hearts, that when our bridegroom Jesus Christ shall come, we may enter with Him into glory.

And thus much of the single eye, with the fruits thereof.

II. The second point to be handled is *the wicked eye, with the fruits thereof*; in these words: *But if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body shall be dark*. The *wicked eye* is the mind of man, having some light of understanding in it by nature, yet marvellously blinded and darkened by the corruption of sin through Adam's fall. And, for our better instruction herein, we must know that the mind of man by Adam's fall receives a twofold blemish:

1. First, it hath left the gift of discerning and judging in spiritual things, mistaking evil for good, earthly for heavenly, things to be refused for things to be chosen. This is plain by our blindness and ignorance in the true knowledge of God and of ourselves.

    1. First, *touching God*, howsoever the mind of man by nature knows there is a God, yet naturally man will not acknowledge *the presence of God*; for if he did, he would not without remorse or fear commit these sins in God's sight, which he is afraid and ashamed to do in the sight of many men. Again, the mind by nature will not acknowledge *God's particular providence*, for in the time of want or distress when means fail, his heart is dead within him; and the promise of help from man doth more cheer him than his hope in God; which shews plainly that he trusteth more in the creature than in his Creator. Thirdly, the mind of man by nature doth not acknowledge *God's justice*, for naturally man thinks that though he sin, yet he shall escape punishment. Fourthly, though man knows God must be worshipped, yet naturally the mind

discerneth not of God's right worship. Herein, the foolish heart is full of darkness, and turneth God into an idol (Rom. 1:21,22). And, in a word, *the natural man perceiveth not the things of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (1 Cor. 2:14); which shews plainly that herein he hath a wicked eye.

2. Secondly, *for ourselves*, the mind herein wants the gift of discerning, for:

1. No man naturally knows the blindness of his own mind. They think themselves to be wise, when in the things of God they be stark fools.

2. Man cannot discern aright of his own sins, nor see the vileness of them naturally, though his conscience oft accuse him; for if he did, he would not sin as he doth.

3. Man naturally doth judge amiss of his own frailty and mortality, for there is no man so aged but he thinks he may live longer. This Moses saw (Psa. 90:12) when he prayed God to teach them so to number their days that they might apply their hearts unto wisdom.

4. Natural men cannot discern aright of the scope and end of their lives; for whereas we ought to aim at the glory of God, and the good of our brethren, to serve God in men's good; by nature we little think on this, but wholly seek our own good, and our own praise.

5. We cannot naturally discern of our own true happiness; for do we not measure it by outward things, esteeming the rich and honourable happy, and the poor man miserable? By all which it is more than evident that the mind hath lost the gift of right discerning.

2. The second blemish of corruption in the mind is, in respect of it, slavish subjection unto those things which it should rule and direct; for naturally it is subject to these three unmet guides:

1. To the corrupt will and affections.

2. To the wicked temptations of the devil cast into it, yea, and that so far that such as the temptation is, such is the mind that is tempted.

3. To the world, and the ill examples therein; for naturally men sway with the times, and think the common course the safest. And in this respect also it is here called a *wicked eye*.

Now the fruit of it is *to make the whole body dark*; that is, the whole life of man full of disorder and unrighteousness. And how should it be otherwise, when that which should discern between good and evil, and direct accordingly, is disabled thereunto?

The Use.

1. Seeing by nature we have this evil eye (for that, Christ taketh for granted), we must labour diligently to discern it in ourselves, and to find that naturally we cannot judge aright of God and of ourselves. This is the first step to true knowledge, to discern our own natural blindness; and till we perceive it in ourselves in some measure, we know nothing as we ought to know. Also when we see it, we must bewail our misery in this behalf, that we have a mind so corrupt, that it causeth disorder in our whole life. Yea, we must tremble and fear at this wicked eye. Bodily darkness causeth fear, but far more dangerous is this spiritual darkness; for hereby the soul is kept from the sight of God under the power of Satan. We therefore, discerning in ourselves this wicked eye, must follow the counsel of our Saviour Christ ( Rev. 3:18), *Buy of me eye salve that thou mayest see*; that is, we must get of Him the enlightening of His Spirit, in the holy ministry of His Word; for this is that anointing which teacheth us all things (1 John 2:27) which, when we do truly receive, then doth our wicked eye become single.

2. Secondly, hereby we see that the course of the world, in regard of the state of their minds, is justly to be reproved; for everywhere where both young and old content themselves with this wicked eye, if they can say, There is a God, and this God is to be worshipped, to be loved, and feared; and that we must love our neighbour as ourselves, and live well, they seek no farther; and yet if a man were brought up in the wilderness, he might see all this by the light of nature; the wicked eye seeth thus much. But we must not content ourselves herewith, for if there be no more, the life is full of

darkness still; and the soul may go to utter darkness with all this. We therefore must remember to get the single eye, else we are no scholars in the school of Christ. Indeed some plead that preachers can say no more in effect but this: Love God above all, and thy neighbour as thyself. But these men know not what they say, blessing themselves in their ignorance. They must know that grace must be put to nature, and sanctify it; and spiritual knowledge joined with natural, or else we remain with the wicked eye. If we have no more but a general confused knowledge in moral points, that serves not to save us, but to make us without excuse at the last day. Again, another common fault worthy of reproof is this: that men content themselves with natural reformation. They will grant that God is to be worshipped, and loved, that we must live well, deal justly, and love our neighbours; but the blind eye seeth thus much. The mere civil man will go thus far, and yet his life is nothing but darkness. All this reformation is but natural. We therefore must labour for renewed hearts by the Spirit of God, and reformed lives according to the gospel; for howsoever a civil conversation may commend us unto men, yet it will not save us in the day of the Lord.

3. Thirdly, is this evil eye in every one by nature? Then beware we be not wise in ourselves, and from ourselves in matters of salvation; herein the Word of God must be our wisdom (Deut. 12:8-11*), Ye shall not do every man that which seemeth good in his own eyesÉ. But that which I command you*. Far be it therefore from us to appoint to ourselves how we will worship God, or how we will be saved. And yet, such is our blind presumption, that we will be our own masters in these things. The Turk hath his religion, the Jew his, and the papist his, all swerving from the truth of God; and yet every one of these look to be saved in their religion; each one of these having a different manner of worshipping God, and all swerving from the true worship. And yet they all persuade themselves that God is well pleased with their service. And thus it goes with natural men among us, though otherwise sufficiently wise for worldly things; they resolve upon their own course for the salvation of their souls, let the preacher say what he will. Some think, if they repent at their end, and then commend their souls to God, it is sufficient. Others look to be saved by their well-doing, and others by their faith (as they call it). But in truth, by their own good meaning and intent to live well; for what faith have they that know not God’s Word and

promises? Thus by their own wisdom will men be saved, and hereby the devil destroys many a soul. But let God be wise, and every man a fool, and let us submit ourselves in the things of God, wholly to be ruled and guided by His written Word, lest Jewishly and papishly, we, going about to establish our own conceits in the matters of salvation, do plunge our souls into the pit of destruction.

4. Fourthly, is the eye of the mind naturally corrupt? Then must we labour for a better eye; that is, *the eye of faith*, by which we rely on God's mercy for our salvation, and on His providence for all needful things in life and death. This eye makes supply to that which is wanting to natural knowledge. Hereby we discern rightly of God, and of ourselves. This enables us to see afar off. Yea, hereby we see things invisible, for it is the evidence of things which are not seen (Heb. 11:1). Hereby Abraham saw the day of Christ and was glad (John 8:56), and all the Patriarchs saw the promise of God afar off (Heb. 11:13). This will enable us to walk in their steps towards the heavenly city; and therefore let us get faith, and so becoming children of the promise, we may be counted for the seed.

And thus much for the wicked eye.

III. The third kind of eye is *the blind eye*, which is set out with the fruits thereof, in these words: *Wherefore, if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness*? For the better discerning of the state of man with this blind eye, we must see what is meant by *light*, and also by *darkness*. By *light* is meant the knowledge of God, of justice, and of good and evil, which is in the mind by nature. Now though this cannot be quite put out (for the most wicked wretch, and the veriest atheist that lives, hath some conscience remaining, which is a work of this light), yet it may be so buried and covered, that no light shall appear, nor any use be made of it; and then it is said to be *darkness*; which is the state of these that are given up to a reprobate sense, as when a man denies that there is a God, or that the Scriptures be the Word of God, or such like. In these men, natural light is become darkness. And the cause of this change in them is their corrupt will and rebellious affections, which overruling natural knowledge and conscience, whereby at length they come to commit sin greedily and without remorse; yea, even against conscience, and the light of nature, and

so bury them both in such sort, that they have no more use of them than if they were quite put out.

Now, where the light of nature is thus put out, the fruit of it is most palpable darkness. *How great is that darkness*? That is, there is nothing in that man's life but brutish confusion in hellish actions, or pride, covetousness, envy, blasphemy, and unnatural uncleanness (as Rom. 1:27-29 etc.).

The Use.

Considering the light of nature may be thus put out, we must hereby be admonished:

1. First, to enter into a serious consideration of our own vileness. For naturally we have in us (even the best of us all) such rebellious lust, and damnable desires, as, unless they be restrained or renewed by grace, will darken and as good as put out that light which yet Adam's fall left in us.

2. Secondly, hereby we are admonished to have special care to mortify our corrupt desires and our unruly affections, that otherwise would extinguish in us the light of nature. Before the fall, the mind ruled and directed the will and affections; but now these inferior powers rule, or rather overrule the mind, and utterly pervert the regiment thereof. They cast a mist and a veil over the eye of the mind that it can see nothing in the ways of righteousness. And therefore as we tender the salvation of our souls, we must renounce our own natural wills and corrupt desires, and strive to bring them into subjection unto the Word of God. Many men think much to be crossed of their natural desires and delights, but it is happy for the soul when God in His providence doth break men of their wills; for the will unsubdued carries the whole man headlong into all disorder. This must be considered of them which have knowledge and learning, for unless the will and affections be ruled by the Word, all knowledge is made fruitless. *Out of the heart* (saith Solomon, Prov. 4:23) *come the issues of life*, if it be kept with watch and ward, and ordered by God's Word. Otherwise, hence come the issues of death, when the reins of the affections are let loose after the corrupt desires of nature. And therefore as we respect woe or joy, so must we have regard to our will and desires.

3. Thirdly, if the light of nature may be turned unto darkness, then may the illumination of the gospel be put out and turned into darkness; for the knowledge of the gospel is not natural, and therefore not so deeply imprinted in the understanding upon the bare knowledge of it. Experience sheweth this to be true in all those temporisers which begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh. And the author to the Hebrews shews five degrees of apostasy, by which the illumination of the gospel is turned into darkness (Heb. 3:12), saying, *Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief* etc., where the first degree is *consenting unto sin*, being deceived with the temptation of it. The second is *hardness of heart*, upon many practices of sin. Thirdly, the heart being hardened, becomes *unbelieving*, and calls the truth of the gospel into question. Fourthly, by unbelief it becomes *evil*, having a base conceit of the gospel. Fifthly, this evil heart brings a man to *apostasy* and falling from God, which is the extinguishing of the light of the gospel. We therefore, to prevent this fearful estate, must embrace the gospel, and practise the counsel there set down; even by looking carefully everyone to his own heart and life, and by mutual admonition and exhortation one of another (v.13), that to the first step of this apostasy, which is the *deceitfulness of sin*, take not place in us.

4. Fourthly, seeing the light of nature may be put out, whether may not true faith, and other saving graces, be quite lost? *Answer*: There is no grace of God, but considered in itself, it may be lost; for it is a creature, and so is changeable; for nothing is unchangeable in itself but the Creator. But in regard of the promise of God touching the preservation of saving grace unto the end in such as be in Christ, hence it comes that faith, hope and charity cannot be lost; for *the gifts and calling of God are without repentance in Christ* (Rom. 11:29). God indeed gave to Adam true and perfect grace, whereby he might have stood if he would; but because He decreed to permit the fall, to make a way for His mercy in Christ, therefore He left man in the hand of his own counsel, and so he fell from his created integrity. But now in Christ, God works both the will and the deed, so as he which doth truly believe (Psa. 125:1) *is as Mount Zion; which cannot be removed, but standeth fast for ever*; for he is (Matt. 16:18) built upon the rock Christ Jesus, and so can never fall; *the gates of hell shall not prevail against him*. God gives a second grace unto the first, and by virtue hereof it becomes unchangeable, though in itself considered, it might be lost. Again, I answer

thus: that as the light of nature is not quite put out, but only buried, in such sort as it is without use, and seems extinguished; so the grace of faith, by the practice of sin, may be hid and covered, so as it shall not appear for a time. But yet it cannot be quite put out, where it is once truly wrought.

And thus much of the blind eye, with the fruit thereof.

Now to end this place, we must remember that the scope of Christ in these two verses, is to shew that the evil and blind eye of man by nature, whereby he is disabled to discern rightly of things that differ, is the cause why in seeking after treasure, he leaveth the heavenly, and seeketh earthly treasure only. And hereby we must be admonished to labour for this gift of discerning, by the illumination of the Spirit in the Word, as we shewed before, that so the eye being single, the whole body may be light; that is, so ordered that with peace and comfort we may walk on in the way of life; whereas otherwise we walk in darkness, and fear no danger till we fall into it irrecoverably.

# 6:24

"*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon*." Matthew 6:24.

Here Christ meeteth with a second objection which the carnal heart of man might frame against the former commandments (vv.19,20); for whereas Christ has forbidden the treasuring up of worldly riches, and commanded the seeking of heavenly treasure; some man might flatter himself with this persuasion: *He might seek both, and lay up both treasures for himself in earth, and in heaven also*. To this, Christ answers, *No, that is impossible*; and He proveth it thus: *No man can serve two masters. But to seek heavenly and earthly treasures is to serve two masters; to wit, God and Mammon. And therefore no man can seek them both*. The first part of this reason is fully set down and proved in the text, by the effect of such service in contrary affections and behaviour; *for either he shall hate the one, and love the other* etc. The assumption and conclusion are necessarily implied in the last words: *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon*; wherein Christ applies the former argument.

The Exposition.

*No man can serve two masters*.

This may well be doubted of; for experience shews that by their mutual consent, one factor may serve diverse merchants. Hereto some answer thus: That it is implied that the masters must be of diverse and contrary qualities; as when one saith, *Come and do this*; and the other, *Do it not*; and then no man can serve them both; and thus the words contain an holy truth. But yet because no clause is expressed implying contrariety in the masters, therefore I take it that the words must be taken as a common proverb among the Jews, which Christ lays down for the ground of His reason. Now in a proverb, it is not required that it should be always true, but for the most

part, and ordinarily (as Luke 4:24), *No prophet is accepted in his own country*; that is, ordinarily.

*For either he shall hate the one*; that is, the one master commanding him; either disliking that he should be his master, or displeased with his commandments.

*And love the other*; that is, the other master in whom he taketh delight, and is well pleased with his commandments.

*Or else he shall lean to the one, and despise the other*. These words are an explanation of the former, shewing how it may appear that a servant hates one master and loves another; namely, his *leaning to the one*, declares his love unto him; that is, his applying of himself to respect his master's pleasure, and to do his commandment. And his *despising the other*, declares his hatred, when he hath no regard to his commandments.

*Ye cannot serve God and mammon*. By mammon, He meaneth riches, lucre and gain. Now He saith not, *Ye cannot serve God and have riches*, for Abraham, Jacob and Job were very rich, and yet served God sincerely; but, *Ye cannot serve God and serve riches*; that is, give yourselves to seek riches, and set your hearts upon them, and serve God also.

In the words thus explained, we may observe sundry instructions:

1. First, here Christ sheweth *what it is to serve God*; a point much spoken of, but little known, and less practised. To serve God therefore is to *love God, and to cleave unto Him*. Everyone will say, He loveth God, and ever hath done; but beware herein of spiritual guile, for true love consists not in word and tongue, but in deed and in truth. And God must be loved, not only as He is a bountiful Father, but as He is a Lord and Master, and doth command us service. The written Word shews His will and pleasure concerning us, what He requireth at our hands; and if we serve Him indeed, we must love Him in His power of commanding, though He should bestow no reward upon us. This David sheweth notably (Psa. 119:125), *I am thy servant, grant me therefore understanding that I may know thy testimonies*. Again, if we serve God, we must *cleave unto Him*, and thereby testify our love. Now what is meant by *cleaving unto*, is notably expressed in the

parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:15), where it is said of him that having spent his portion, *he clave to a citizen of that country*; that is, he resigned and gave himself to his service. So *to cleave unto God* is to resign a man's self unto God's service, in obedience to all His commandments, and embracing all His promises; not suffering himself to be drawn from any part of God's Word by unbelief or disobedience, though all the world should set against us. This David also professed of himself, saying (Psa. 119:31), *I have cleaved to thy testimonies, O Lord*; and (Psa. 119:6), *I shall not be confounded when I have respect to all thy commandments*. On the contrary, when a man withdraws himself from God, by disobedience to His commandments and by unbelief, then he doth hate and despise Him. Indeed the vilest wretch that lives, is ashamed with open mouth to profess hatred and despite of God, but yet the bad practice in life bewrayeth the bad affection of the heart (Prov. 14:2), *He that is lewd or perverse in his ways, despiseth God*; and they that live in the breach of His commandments hate Him (Exod. 20:5), let them profess in word what they will.

Now the consideration hereof serveth:

1. First, to discover unto us the gross blindness and superstitious ignorance of the world; who think that if a man rehearse the Lord's prayer, the Creed and the ten Commandments, he serves God well, let his life be what it will. But here, Christ teacheth us a further thing; if we will be God's servants, we must cleave unto Him both in the affections of our heart and the actions of obedience in our life. Thus did Abraham, when God said unto him, *Thou shalt not kill*, he kept himself from murder; but when he said (Gen. 22:2), *Abraham, kill thy son*, he addressed himself to do it, though he were the son of the promise, and the only son of his old age.

2. Secondly, this sheweth how atheism abounds in all places at this day; for to hate and despise God is sheer atheism. Now they that withdraw their hearts from God, and set themselves to seek the things of this world, neglecting obedience to God's holy commandments, are here accounted of Christ, *despisers and haters of God*; and the number of such is great in every place. I know such men do scorn to be called

atheists, but how they be esteemed in the world it skilleth not, till they reform this wicked practice, they are no better in the sight of Christ.

2. Secondly, whereas God and mammon are here opposed as two masters; hence we learn that mammon, that is, riches, is a great lord and master in the world. This Christ here takes for granted, and therefore doth forewarn His disciples of it. But how (will some say) can riches be a god? *Answer*: Not in themselves, for so they are the good creatures of God, but to the corrupt heart of man, which makes an idol of them to itself, by setting his love and delight upon them, as on true happiness, and trusting in them more than in the true God. And for this cause is covetousness called idolatry (Col. 3:5), and the covetous person an idolater (Eph. 5:5). For look whereon a man sets his heart, that is his lord and his god, though it be the devil himself. Now that men do thus set up riches in their hearts as an idol, and so become servants and slaves to that which God ordained to serve them, I shew plainly thus:

1. For first, they neglect the worship and service of God for lucre and gain, and spend more time with greater delight for earthly riches than they do for the true treasures of God's heavenly graces.

2. Secondly, let a man have worldly wealth at will, and he is full of joy and delight, his riches give him true contentment. But if he lose his goods, then vexation and sorrow doth more oppress him than all the promises of God in the Bible can comfort him.

3. Thirdly, by transgressing God's commandments, a man loseth heaven; but who is so grieved for his transgressions whereby he incurs this loss, as he is for a small damage in some part of his riches?

4. Fourthly, I appeal to men's consciences, whether they be not far more sharp and eager set upon the means of gain than on prayer and other parts of God's worship, which are the means of grace.

All which do argue plainly that they serve mammon, and honour riches for their god. So that howsoever by God's blessing, outward idolatry may be banished out of our church, yet we have many idolaters in our land; for every covetous worldling sets up the idol of wealth and riches in his heart

for his lord. And that these mammonists abound everywhere, appears by the common practices of oppression, extortion and cruelty, in hard dealing towards the poor, by greedy landlords and usurers; as also be the practices of the rich in the time of dearth, for by their hoarding up of store, engrossing of commodities and enhancing of the price, to the augmenting of their private wealth, they mightily increase God's wrath upon the poor. Indeed God hath His servants which have Him only for their God; but the number of them is small, in respect of those that set their hearts upon the world, and make mammon their god.

1. Here then, first, behold the slavish baseness of a covetous heart; for man was made to be the lord of mammon and wealth, and yet through covetousness he subjecteth himself to become a slave and vassal thereunto.

2. Secondly, hereby let us learn to become faithful disposers of worldly riches' and (as Christ saith, Luke 16:9), *make us friends with this mammon of iniquity*, by good disposing of it to God's glory in works of mercy; and so shall we retain our right of creation, whereby God made the creatures to serve us.

3. Thirdly, Christ opposing God and mammon, and saying, *no man can serve them both*, imports plainly that he that seeks to be rich, setting his heart thereon, forsakes God. I say not that every rich man forsaketh God, for when God giveth abundance to a man's moderate labour and industry in his lawful calling, he may lawfully possess it, using it to God's glory. But to seek to be rich, is a denying of God, because so the heart is servant to mammon, and not to the Lord. This may appear by their whole behaviour about wealth, whether we consider their getting, or their keeping, or employing of it; in all which they sin against God: First, in *getting*, for God giveth riches to whom He will, and hath not tied Himself by promise to make any man rich. And therefore he that resolves with himself that he will be rich, cannot make conscience of lying, fraud, injustice, Sabbath-breaking and such like, when the committing of these things makes for his advantage. Secondly, they sin in *keeping*, for he that resolves to be rich, will rather forsake the truth than his wealth in time of trial. And for the saving or recovery of his wealth, he will not stick to seek to blessers, wizards or

conjurors, etc. Thirdly, for *disposing or employing*; he that resolves to be rich sins therein, for he cannot be drawn to works of mercy, at least with any cheerfulness; and hence it comes that sometimes the poor do starve before the rich man's door.

1. The consideration hereof serves, first, to correct our judgment concerning covetous and worldly minded persons; our censure of them is too mild and gentle, we judge them honest men, only somewhat hard and near themselves. But mark Christ's sentence upon them, *Worldly persons forsake God, and thus choose mammon for their Lord and master*; which is a practice of atheism, and therefore not to be so lightly passed over as men think.

2. Secondly, hereby we see it is a dangerous and unlawful course for men to make laws with themselves, how rich they will be; as to have so many hundred, or thousand pounds in stock, and so much lands and rents etc. For what follows upon this resolution? Why surely they must needs give themselves to the compassing of their purpose, and so they fall into the manifold snares of Satan, by practices of injustice, lying, fraud etc.

3. Thirdly, hereby we must be admonished to content ourselves with that portion of goods, more or less, which God sendeth; knowing that a little is sufficient with God's blessing upon it, *Away with covetousness* (as the apostle saith, Heb 13:5), *and be content with that ye have; for he hath said, I will not leave thee nor forsake thee*.

4. Fourthly, whereas Christ saith, *Ye cannot serve God and mammon*; we learn that the heart of man must not be divided between God and the world; the one half to God and the other to the world. No, God will have all or none, herein he will not part stakes with the creature (Prov. 23:26), *My son, give me thy heart*.

The consideration whereof serveth,

1. First, to discover the hypocrisy and spiritual guile of many who think they may live in one sin or other, and yet be God's servants still. This is the conceit of drunkards, adulterers, covetous persons, and such like;

for even while they live in these sins, they will come to God's worship, to the Word and prayer often, and to the sacraments, at least once a year; which they would not do, but that they think God hath respect unto them herein, like to the wicked Jews (Jer. 7:9,10). But they deceive themselves, for *no man can serve two masters*. While a man lives in any sin, the servant of the devil, he can never be accepted of God for His servant.

2. Secondly, this shews that the servant of God is so far forth delivered from sin by regeneration, that no sin reigns in him; for so, he should have two masters, for every reigning sin is a lord and master (Rom. 6:16), *Know ye not that to whomsoever you give yourselves as servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether it be of sin unto death*, etc. And *he that committeth sin is the servant of sin* (John 8:34). This therefore is a sure ground, that no regenerate person lives in any sin.

3. Thirdly, hereby everyone is taught to consecrate both his soul and body to the Lord, endeavouring to serve Him with all the powers and parts thereof; for God is our only Lord and master, and therefore let all that is within us bow the knee to Him (Rom. 6:21), *The servant of God is one freed from sin, who hath his fruit in holiness, and the end everlasting life*. The Queen of Sheba pronounced Solomon's servants happy, that stood before Solomon to hear his wisdom. How much more then are they happy, who in soul and body are God's servants, who for bounty and wisdom infinitely surpasseth Solomon? Here some will say, I would gladly serve God alone, and I desire I might do it with all my heart; but the corruption of my nature is such that is makes me to rebel against the commandments of God, and *I cannot do the good I would, but the evil I would not, that do I* (Rom. 7:19); so as I fear, I serve two masters. *Answer*: This is the state of God's children in this life; but herewith they must stay themselves. When they fail in obedience they must consider whether they do so freely and unwillingly, or against their wills. If thy heart can truly say, thou dost unwillingly commit sin, thou wouldest not do it, and art truly grieved and displeased with thyself for it; then be of good courage, thou dost not serve two masters, for this serveth one only. Now though there be

in thee the flesh and the spirit, the one haling thee one way, and the other another; yet while thou strivest against the flesh, desiring and endeavouring to be wholly subject to the Spirit, though thou fail often in action, yet in Christ be thy sins pardoned, and God accepts in thee the will for the deed. Endeavour therefore to acquaint thyself more and more with the will of thy heavenly master, and seek to please Him in all things, and labour to mortify the deeds of the flesh by the Spirit, and so shalt thou know God to be thy only master, and in due time perceive thy freedom from the bondage of the flesh.

# 6:25-26

"*Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?*" Matthew 6:25,26.

"*Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?*" Matthew 6:25

Our Saviour Christ having forbidden the practices of covetousness, and prevented such objections as the corrupt heart of man might frame to excuse itself therein, doth here strike at the very root of covetousness, and seeks to remove the cause thereof; to wit, *distrustful and inordinate care for the things of this life*, though they be things necessary, as meat, drink and clothing; and in this argument He proceeds to the end of this chapter. Now this verse depends upon the former, as a conclusion inferred upon all that He had said before concerning covetousness from the 19th verse, to this effect: Seeing they that seek earthly treasures, neglecting the heavenly, do want the single eye of spiritual wisdom, to discern of the true treasure, and also are themselves servants unto mammon; therefore I say unto you disciples, be not careful (no not for things needful) immoderately, and in a distrustful manner. And here again He meets with another pretence of a covetous mind, wherewith it pleads for the service of mammon; to wit, that the things they seek for are things necessary, without which they cannot live. Hereto Christ answers, *Yea, but I say, you must not seek, no not for things needful to your life, immoderately and distrustfully*.

The Exposition.

*I say unto you*.

That is, I, that am you master, upon whom you depend for all heavenly instruction and direction in all things needful both for your souls and bodies, *I say unto you*. By this He would prepare them to attention and reverent observation of His commandment following, as being a matter of great importance, whereon depends the life of all obedience, in relying on God's providence. In regard whereof we also must with all good conscience mark the same.

*Be not careful for your life* etc.

Lest we should mistake Christ's meaning, we must know that there be two kinds of care: a godly moderate care, and a distrustful carking care.

1. The *moderate honest care* is enjoined us by God's commandment, (Prov. 6:6). Wisdom sends the sluggard to learn diligence and providence for things needful, of the little ant or pismire. And Paul saith (2 Cor. 12:14), *Fathers must lay up for their children*. And (1 Tim. 5:8), *He that provideth not for his own, especially for them of his family, is worse than an infidel* (1 Tim. 5:8). So that there is a lawful care even for the things of this life. Now the practice of it stands in two things:

1. First, in the diligent walking in a man's lawful calling, dealing uprightly and justly therein with everyone, minding only to get things honest and necessary in the sight of all men,

2. Secondly, in leaving the success and issue of all our labour and endeavour to God, for that belongs to Him. We must use the means soberly and honestly, and leave the blessing to God.

This godly care Moses sheweth notably in leading the children of Israel out of Egypt; for what God commanded him to do, that he did; he goes which way God sends him, although he met with many crosses; and useth the means that God calls him unto, leaving the issue to God. As appears notably at the Red Sea, when they were at a wonderful strait, having the sea before them, the Egyptians behind them, and woods and mountains on each side; yet being commanded to strike the waters with the rod of God, he shews notable trust in God's providence (Exod. 14:13), *Fear not* (saith he), *stand still, and behold the salvation of our God*. And when Abraham at God's

commandment went to sacrifice his son (Gen. 22:7,8), Isaac asks him, *My father, where is the sacrifice*? Abraham answers with words of faith, *My son, God will provide*. And thus David went to fight against the Philistines to Keilah at God's commandment (1 Sam. 23:2), though his own men discouraged him from it. Whereby it is plain that he relied on God for the issue of the battle. Now this godly moderate care is not here forbidden, which hath respect to obedience in the duty, and for success depends upon God's providence.

2. The *distrustful care* is that whereby men trouble themselves about the issue of their labours; and when they have done the work, do not rest therewith, but vex themselves about the success; not relying on God's providence for the blessing, but only on the means. This distrustful care (for our better discerning of it) hath these effects:

1. First, it oppresseth the heart, making it exceeding heavy and pensive for fear of want. Where this fear is, there is this distrustful care; for this argues a man dares not trust God, but would have the success of his labour out of God's hand in his own.

2. Secondly, it allureth and draweth men to use unlawful means to get worldly things, as lying, fraud, injustice in false weights, measures etc.

3. Thirdly, it makes men weary of God's worship, it distracts their minds in prayer, and hearing the Word; and (as Christ saith, Luke 8:14) it *chokes the Word that it brings forth no fruit*. For when the mind is wholly set upon the world, there is no respect to the matters of God. And this is that care which is here forbidden, even a *distrustful carking care*, which as the Greek word signifies, divides and distracts the mind, by troubling and perplexing it about the issue and success of our endeavours.

The Use.

That which Christ here forbids His disciples, is the common sin of our age and time, not in a few persons, but in many. For though this distrustful care be the disease of the heart, yet it shews itself by actions in the life.

1. For, first, what is the cause of so little fruit of the Word preached, as may everywhere be discerned? Is not (among many other) this worldly care our special cause? This we may see in the parable (Luke 8:14), *for the seed that light among thorns, which choked it, is the Word preached to a heart possessed with worldly cares*. Let these men observe themselves, and they shall find that they can neither pray, nor hear the Word, nor meditate therein, without manifold distractions from these worldly thoughts.

2. Secondly, there is no trade or calling without its conveyances of craft and deceit, though it do not appear so much in one calling as in others; and hard it is to find them that make conscience hereof, when gain and profit may come thereby; which comes from this distrustful care in men's hearts; whereby they doubt of God's blessing answerable to their desire, in the use of lawful means only.

But sith Christ forewarns us of this sin, we must beware it take not place in our hearts. And for the avoiding of it, we must follow the counsel of the Holy Ghost in Scripture (Psa. 37:5), *Commit thy way unto the Lord, and trust in Him, and He shall bring it to pass*. Which is oft commanded to us (Psa. 55:22), *Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall nourish thee*. And (Prov. 16:3), *Roll thy work upon the Lord*. (1 Pet. 5:7), *Cast all your care on Him, for He careth for you*. In all which places we have a most worthy instruction to this effect: *Not exempting men from doing the duties of their calling, but teaching them that when they have done their endeavour, in the diligent, sober and upright use of means, then they must leave the event and issue for good success to the blessing of God*. Thus the tradesman, whose living stands by buying and selling, must be careful and diligent about his business, without deceit or lying; and in so doing, refer the success of his bargain to the blessing of God. And so must the husbandman plow and sow, and leave earing and harvest to God's providence. This is the apostle's counsel (Phil. 4:6), *Be nothing careful*, that is, after a distrustful or distracting sort (as the word signifies), *but in all things let your requests be made known unto God with giving of thanks*. Where it is to be marked that *distrustful care* is opposed to *prayer and thanksgiving*, as a hinderer thereof, and therefore our care must only be to use the lawful means moderately for any blessing, and then to pray to God

for good success and blessing, relying wholly thereon, that when it comes we may give Him thanks.

But some will say, it is hard for flesh and blood not to be careful of success; how then should we be able to leave it wholly to God? *Answer*: We must lay to our heart the blessed promises of God, made to them that depend upon His mercy and goodness, and labour to live by faith thereon, (Psa. 127:2), *It is vain for man to rise early, and to lie down late, and to eat the bread of sorrow* (meaning, while he trusts to himself, or in the means), *but God will surely give rest to His beloved*, which serve Him, and trust in Him, in the use of means. (Psa. 34:10), *The lions do lack and suffer hunger*, though every poor beast of the field be a prey to his teeth, *but they which seek the Lord shall lack nothing that is good*. If we had no more promises in the Bible, yet these were sufficient to cause us to rest upon His providence in the sober use of lawful means. Again, this must be considered: how we shall rely upon His mercy for the saving of our souls in the time of temptation and hour of death, that dare not trust in His providence for the things of this life?

*Question*: But what if all things go cross with men (will some say), may I not then stick more to the means? *Answer*: Nay, rather cleave the more to God, for if the blessing were in the means, men would not be so often crossed. God knoweth what is good for thee better than thou thyself, and therefore rest contented with this providence, though He cross thine expectation for outward blessings; want is many times better for God's children than plenty, and affliction than peace and prosperity; as David found (Psa. 119:67,71). And therefore God lays it upon them. Did not good Josiah fall before Pharoah Necho (2 Chr. 35:22-24)? Which he should not have done, but that God would chasten him; for not regarding the words of Pharoah Necho, which were of the mouth of God (v.22), persuading him not to fight against him; and also (2 Chr. 34:28) *that he might be taken from seeing the evil to come*. And was not Hezekiah's heart puffed up in the time of peace, insomuch that (2 Chr. 32:25) *wrath came upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem*. Therefore learn to depend upon God's providence in the moderate use of lawful means, and whether He give thee blessing, or take them away, bless His name; for it is good for thee it should be so.

And thus much for the main commandment.

Now, further, mark in the words, how Christ distinguisheth between *life* and the *body*; and applieth meat and drink to life, and raiment to the body. And yet we know that apparel serves to preserve life also, especially in cold countries. But Christ doth distinguish them for just cause; for though in cold countries, apparel serves to preserve life, as well as meat and drink do; yet the first and more general use of apparel is another matter; to wit, to hide the shame of nakedness, which the sin of Adam brought upon it (Gen. 3:7,21). For before their fall, the man and the woman were both naked, and were not ashamed (Gen. 2:25).

Here then we learn that the proper and main end of apparel is for the body, to cover the shame of nakedness that sin hath brought upon us; which is so great, that if necessity would permit, both hands and face should also be covered. The consideration whereof, as it shews their immodesty and want of shame, that lay open the nakedness of their breasts, or other parts of their body more than need requires; so it teacheth us never to be proud of our apparel, but rather humbled and abashed when we put it on or look upon it, for it is the cover of our shame, and so an ensign of our sin. The thief hath as good cause to be proud of the bolts on his heels, or of his brand in the hand, or hole in the ear, as we of our apparel, for as these are badges of misdemeanour, so is apparel a badge of our sin. And on the other side, that we may have comfort in this ordinance of God for our bodies, we must labour therein to express the graces of God in our hearts; as modesty, sobriety, temperance, frugality, and such like.

*Is not the life more worth than meat, and the body than raiment*?

Our Saviour Christ, having given commandment against the immoderate care for things needful to natural life, lest the same should pass away without effect, doth here begin to enforce the same with divers arguments; the first whereof is in these words, taken from the creation, wherein God gives life and the body, which are better than food and raiment; from whence Christ reasons for His providence thus: *The life is better than food, and the body than raiment. But God by creation gives life and body. And therefore will He much more give food and raiment for their preservation*.

Seeing God gives the greater, we need not to doubt but He will afford the less.

In this reason Christ teacheth us to make right use of our creation; namely, by the consideration of it, to learn confidence in God's providence for all things needful to our natural life, (Job 10:8), *Thine hands have made me and fashioned me, and wilt thou destroy me*? Where Job persuadeth himself of preservation, because God created him; and (1 Pet. 4:19), *Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commend their souls unto Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator*. Because God is a faithful Creator, therefore in death we must rely upon Him. Experience teacheth us that every workman is careful to preserve the work of his own hands, if it lie in his power; why then should we doubt of this in our Creator, who is almighty?

*Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?*" Matthew 6:26.

These words contain Christ's second reason to dissuade His disciples from distrustful care for things needful, drawn from the consideration of His providence over baser creatures than they were, for needful provision.

The reason standeth thus: *If God provide for the fowls of heaven, then much more will He provide for you. But God provideth for the fowls of heaven, and feedeth them. Therefore much more will He provide for you*.

The first part of this reason is here confirmed two ways: First, because the children of God have means of provision, which the fowls of the heaven want; *they sow not, neither reap* etc. Secondly, God's children are better than fowls, and therefore He will not suffer them to lack, sith He provideth for baser things than they be. Both which are so sensible and familiar, that they may induce any man to depend upon God's providence, without distrustful care.

Christ in propounding this reason, bids us *Behold the creatures*, that is, take a serious view of them, look upon them, wisely, and with consideration, as the word signifieth. Whereby we may learn that every child of God ought

seriously to consider the works of God (for that which we must do to the fowls of heaven, we must do to all the works of His hands), and therein labour to behold the wisdom, justice, goodness, love, mercy and providence of God. This is Solomon's lesson (Eccl. 7:13), *Behold the works of God*; and Job (Job 36:24), *Remember thou magnify the works of God which men behold*. Why did God make the creatures distinctly one after another, in six several days, and take a particular view of them all after He had made them, with approbation of their goodness, and also sanctified the seventh day for an holy rest, both by His own example and express commandment? Undoubtedly, among other causes, this was one: to teach us to consider distinctly of all the works of His hands; and among other holy duties, to meditate on the Sabbath day, on the glorious works of our Creator. This was David's practice (Psa. 19), he resembles the heavens to a great book, wherein a man may read the glory of God. And in the contemplation hereof did he exercise himself upon the Sabbath days, as we may see in the psalm which he penned for the Sabbath (Psa. 92:4,5), *I will rejoice in the work of thine hand. O Lord how glorious are thy works*. And they which are negligent in this duty are here called to attendance by our Saviour Christ.

But what must we behold in the fowls of heaven? How *they neither sow, nor reap, nor carry into barns* etc. That is, they use not the means of provision that man doth, which shews they have not that care which man hath. Man may lawfully be careful to use these means, for God ordaineth them for man's provision; but the fowls of the heaven go not so far to have care of any means. And this privilege of man to the means doth strongly enforce Christ's dissuasion against distrustful care; for the fowls wanting such means are free from that care.

*Question*: How then are they provided for? *Answer*: They expect for food at God's hand (Job 38:41), *The birds cry unto God, wandering for lack of meat*. (Psa. 104:21), *The lions roaring after their prey, seek their meat at God*. (Psa. 145:15), *The eyes of all wait upon God, and He giveth them meat in due season*. (Psa. 147:9), *He giveth to beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry*.

*Question*: But how can unreasonable creatures cry to God? *Answer*: They do not use prayer as men do, but yet they are said to *cry unto God*, and to

*wait on God*, because by a natural instinct given them by creation, they seek for that food which God ordaineth for them, and are contented therewith; so that by these phrases God would teach us that they depend upon His providence wholly for provision, and rest contented therewith.

Here then we are to observe that the unreasonable creatures, made subject to vanity by the sin of man, do come nearer their first estate, and better observe the order of nature in their creation, than man doth; for they seek for that which God provideth for them, and when they receive it are content; but man is deeply fallen from the state of his creation, in regard of his depending on God's providence for temporal things; though he have the use of means which the fowls of heaven want, yet his heart is full fraught with distrustful care, whether we respect the getting or employing of earthly things. This sheweth that man is more corrupt than other creatures, and more vile and base in this behalf than brute beasts; which should humble every one of us deeply under the serious consideration of our sins, that have so depraved our nature that we are more rebellious to the law of our Creator , and more distrustful of His providence, than the brute and senseless creatures.

*And yet our heavenly Father feedeth them*.

In these words is touched a forcible reason whereby Christ would persuade His disciples, and in them all believers, to depend upon God's providence without distrustful care. *God* (saith He) *is your Father, yea, your heavenly Father, and you are His children, therefore depend upon Him*. For if earthly fathers will provide and give good things to their children, much more will your heavenly. In this reason also is touched a means and way whereby a man may come to rest upon God's providence. In the Word of God, there be two kinds of promises: some of everlasting life and salvation by Christ; others, or inferior gifts and blessings concerning this life. Now if we would rely on God for temporal blessings, we must first labour to lay hold by faith on His spiritual and eternal promises; get assurance of thine adoption in Christ, and labour to know and feel that He is thy heavenly Father; and then thou wilt easily depend upon His providence for temporal blessings. If thou be once persuaded truly that He will save thy soul, how canst thou distrust Him for provision for thy body? If a king's son know his father will make

him heir, he will not doubt but he will afford him food and raiment in the meantime.

*Feedeth them*.

That is, the fowls that neither sow, nor reap, nor carry into barns. Here we may observe God's special and particular providence; for in reason those creatures that make no provision for summer, should starve in winter, wherein the earth affordeth no such means of nourishment as it doth in summer; and yet experience teacheth that they are for the most part fatter, and fitter for the use of man in winter than in summer. What argueth this but God's special providence attending upon the silly fowls of heaven, and feeding them in the dead winter? Oh then, how should any child of God distrust His providence; will He feed birds, and neglect His own children? It cannot be. And yet this must not nuzzle an idle person, or bolster him up in the neglect of lawful ordinary means for his provision; for God would have every man to eat his own bread, deserving His provision by diligence in the duties of some lawful calling; for *he that will not labour should not eat* (2 Thess. 3:10). Howbeit we may here learn, when all means fail (without our default) yet still to rely upon God's providence; for He feeds the fowls in the dead of winter, and we are better than they.

Lastly, is God so merciful to the poor fowls of heaven, to provide for them? Then must we that profess ourselves to be God's children shew ourselves to be like our heavenly Father in exercising mercy towards all God's creatures. *God is the Saviour of all men, but especially of them that believe* (1 Tim. 4:10). And we must be followers of God as dear children, extending mercy to the poor of mankind, because they be our own flesh; do good unto all, but specially to them that be of the household of faith. This is needful to be urged upon our souls, for in times of dearth men *grind the faces of the poor* (Isa. 3:15) by hard bargaining; the rich take advantage of poor mens' want, and so make themselves fat by sucking the blood of the poor.

# 6:27-30

"*Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?* And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. *Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*" Matthew 6:27-30.

"*Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?*" Matthew 6:27

Here Christ propoundeth His third reason against distrustful and carking care for worldly things, from the unprofitableness and vanity of it in man. The words of this reason are propounded by way of question; which kind of phrase imports the affirming or denying of the thing spoken of with more vehemence. And here it hath the force of a more vehement negation as if Christ had said, Undoubtedly not any of you by taking care can add one cubit to his stature. A cubit is a measure taken from a part of man's body, being the length of the arm from the elbow to the end of the longest finger. Now God in framing man's body, brings it from this length in the mother's womb, by continual increase adding cubit unto cubit, till at last it contain many cubits in stature, according as He hath ordained and appointed. And look how many cubits long God hath ordained every man to come unto, of that stature and tallness he is, and no man by all his wit, skill and careful industry can add one cubit unto his stature, for that is the proper work of the Creator. He that gives the body, appoints the stature, and by His providence brings it thereto by daily increase. Now hence Christ reasons thus, from the like: *As no man by taking care in all the means he can use, can augment his stature one cubit, he cannot do the least thing this way*, as St Luke noteth (Luke 12:26); no more can any man by his distrustful care better his outward estate for things needful to this life any whit at all. And therefore

sith it is vain and fruitless to vex our hearts herewith, we must beware of this distrustful care.

From this reason, we may observe and gather sundry instructions:

1. First, that man's labour, care and industry is altogether vain and fruitless, without the blessing of God's providence (Psa. 127:1,2), *Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the keeper watcheth in vain. It is in vain for you to rise early*, etc. (1 Cor. 3:7) *Neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth* (meaning of themselves), *but God giveth the increase*. This point the Lord doth notably express by Haggai, saying (Hag. 1:6,9), *Ye have sown much, and bring in littleÉ. And he that earneth wages putteth it in a bottomless bag. É. Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little, and when it came home, I did blow upon it*. The consideration whereof must teach us to commend all the sober care and labour of our lawful callings to God by prayer for His blessing; for it is *His blessing that maketh rich* (Prov. 10:22). If Paul and Apollos, two most worthy men, could do nothing of themselves, what shall we think to do? And when we find God's blessing upon our labour, then must we give thanks.

2. Secondly, hence we learn that no man can better his outward estate in the world for wealth and dignity, by all his care and diligence, above that which God hath appointed him to come unto. For as God hath determined of man's bodily stature, which no man by taking care can add unto or alter, so hath He appointed in His decree what shall be man's estate, for wealth or poverty, dignity or disgrace, which it lies not in the power of man, or any creature, to alter. Indeed the diligent use of lawful means is an argument of God's blessing in outward things, and therefore must be followed and exercised in sobriety and godliness of those that wait for such blessings, because ordinarily God conveys His blessings by such means; but yet the state of man depends not on the means, but on God's decree and pleasure (Psa. 75:6,7), *To come to preferment is neither from the east nor from the west; but God is judge: He maketh high, and He maketh low*; and (Prov. 22:2), *The poor and rich meet together, and God is the maker of them both*. In regard whereof we must learn to depend upon God in the sober use of lawful means, and to rest contented with His blessing thereupon, be it more

or less; for whatsoever it is, it is that position which God hath allotted unto us.

3. Thirdly, hereby are sundry erroneous opinions confuted and overthrown:

    1. As, first, the opinion of them who think that the temporal life of man may be prolonged by art, above the period set by God in nature. But then there may be addition made by art to the set period of man's stature; for the will and providence of God doth equally rule in them both. The prolonging of man's life is no less an action of the Creator, than the augmenting of man's stature. Indeed, art may help to preserve life till it come to the period in nature, but further to prolong it, is beyond the art and power of man; for (Eccl. 8:8) *Man is not lord over the spirit, to retain the spirit*; (Job. 14:5), *God hath herein appointed his bounds which he cannot pass*.

    2. Secondly, the opinion of some magicians and witches is hereby also confuted, who think and avouch that by enchantments they can turn their bodies into the bodies of other creatures, as cats, hares, etc., and also to make their bodies to pass through a keyhole, or such like narrow place, but this were to change nature (which yet Christ here denies to be in the power of men), and therefore it is impossible. These things are the illusions of Satan, whereby he blears the eyes of such as regarding lying wonders. As for that which is said of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:16), that he should be turned into a beast, because it is said he ate grass like an ox (v.25); this we must know and hold: that the substance of his soul was not changed, neither the substance of his body, nor the shape thereof into the shape and substance of a beast, but only the hand of God was heavy upon his mind, striking him with brutish frenzy and madness, whereupon his behaviour became brutish, and he lived among the beasts of the field.

    3. Thirdly, the opinion of the alchemists is hereby also refuted, who pretend that they can turn base metals into better, as brass, or lead into gold; but that is to change the nature of creatures, which is more than to add thereto by augmenting their quantity, which yet Christ denies and makes impossible to art in the stature of man.

4. Fourthly, the opinion of the papists for their merit of works is hereby also confuted. They teach that by good works a man may merit for himself a greater degree of glory in heaven. But consider, if a man by all that he can do, cannot augment his bodily stature, nor his outward estate in this world (as we have shewed); then much less can he add unto his estate of glory. If the increase of nature be the work of God, then much more is the gift of grace, and the increase of glory. As therefore He determines of the stature of the body, so much more may we resolve that the state of the soul for glory is decreed of God, and man cannot add thereunto. Indeed the more we glorify God by well doing on earth, the more is our assurance of greater glory in heaven, but yet the merit thereof is the work of Christ alone, and our fruition of it the gift of God, according to the good pleasure of His own will.

"*And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*" (vv. 28-30).

In these three verses, Christ returneth to His former commandment against distrustful care contained in v.25. And here He urgeth one part thereof concerning care for raiment, and the other for meat and drink in v.31. Now what meaneth Christ by this manner of handling this heavenly doctrine, not only to propound it, and to urge it by strong and forcible reasons, but again to repeat it, and urge it by piecemeal? Surely, hereby He declares Himself to be the true Doctor of His church; for having a weighty point of doctrine in hand, which the nature of man is unwilling to receive and practice, He doth beside the propounding and confirming of it, thus urge it by piecemeal, that hereby it may the better take place in our heart, and be the more effectual to bring forth obedience in our lives. And this fidelity must everyone shew that is to reach the Word of God to others; not only ministers, though it be their duty specially, but also masters and parents (as Deut. 6:7), *Thou shalt whet them upon thy children* (as the word signifies) that so it may more deeply enter into the heart.

Thus much of the manner of prosecuting this argument. Now we come to the words.

*And why care you for raiment*?

This interrogation hath the force of a prohibition; and so it is the same with this branch of v.25, *Care not for your body what you shall put on*. Now all care for apparel is not here forbidden; for there is a lawful godly care, whereby men seek and labour uprightly, and in a sober manner, for such apparel as is meet for their callings, and needful to the health and comfort of their bodies. But the care here forbidden is an inordinate care for apparel, joined either with distrust and fear of want, or else with a discontentedness with that apparel which is meet and necessary. And this is the common sin of this age, as the sundry bad practices of men and women about apparel, proceeding from this inordinate care, do evidently declare; as first, the affecting of superfluity and abundance in apparel, and the following of strange and foreign fashions so soon as they are taken up. Secondly, the wearing of too costly apparel, above their ability and degree; as when servants are as fine as their masters, tradesmen like gentlemen, and gentlemen as nobles. Thirdly, the spending of much time in the curious trimming and attiring of the body, which might be spent in better duties. This proceeds from some dislike in God's workmanship, as though He had not done His part thoroughly to their bodies, or they by their curiosity could make themselves better.

Now that Christ might remove out of men's hearts this inordinate care, He doth here enforce the commandment by a fourth reason, taken from His providence over the lilies of the field. And His reason is weighty, though the subject of it be mean and simple. It may be framed thus: *If God clothe the lilies of the field, then doubtless He will clothe you. But God clotheth the lilies of the field. Therefore much more will He clothe you*.

This reason is fully set down in these three verses, though the parts be inverted, by reason of their amplifications. For, first, Christ propounds to our consideration the subject matter whence His reason is drawn: *Learn how the lilies of the field do grow*. Where this must be marked, that Christ speaks of field lilies, which have not the help of man, as garden flowers have. Then He lays down a proof of His assumption, that *God clothes them*,

by removing from them the ordinary means of clothing. *They labour not, neither spin* (v.28), amplifying this work of God upon them by a comparison, wherein He prefers the glory of them before the glory of Solomon in his princely array (v.29). And then by way of inference propounds the reason, omitting the assumption (v.30), where the first part and conclusion are both propounded and amplified, as we shall see when we come to the handling of them; for I will follow the order observed by Christ.

*Learn how the lilies of the field do grow*.

Here Christ makes the lilies and herbs of the field a schoolmaster unto man, yea, to His own disciples (for He spake to them). And this He doth for especial causes: First, to teach them and us, that the silly creatures in the field do in their kind yield more obedience unto God than man doth, and that man is more rebellious unto God than they are. Hence Isaiah (Isa. 1:2) calls heaven and earth to hearken to his rebuke of the Jews for their ingratitude; and the prophet rebuking Jeroboam (1 Kin. 13:2) for his idolatry, cries, *O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord*. Jeremiah rebuking Jeconiah (Jer. 22:29), calls the earth to hear; and Ezekiel (Ezek. 6:3), must prophecy to the mountains. By all which they would shew that if these insensible creatures had reason as man hath, they would be more obedient to the will of their Creator than man is. Secondly, hereby Christ would teach His disciples and us, that though we have the creatures, and behold and use them daily, yet partly through blindness and ignorance, and partly through negligence, we do not discern in them, nor learn from them, those good things which we ought to do; *For the invisible things of God, that is, His eternal power and Godhead, being considered in His works, are seen by the creation of the world* (Rom. 1:20). This then is a check to our dullness and negligence in the things of God. For what shall we do in matters of salvation, when in these inferior matters we may learn of the insensible creatures?

But what must we learn in the lilies? *How they grow*. And this is a thing to be marked, for in the winter season they lie dead in the earth, as though they were not; they are covered with frost and snow; and yet in the springtime and summer, they spring up with stalks, leaves and flowers of such glorious

colours as passeth the glory of Solomon in all his royalty. Now whence comes this, but of themselves, or from man? Surely neither, for they are field-lilies, this only comes from the word of creation given out by God, when He made the creatures, saying, *Let the earth bring forth the green herbs* etc. (Gen. 1:11), from this working and operative Word of God, comes the earth to have power and virtue to send out the glorious lilies and every other herb. Now then (to apply this to the purpose intended by Christ), the same God that by His operative Word gives the glorious being every year to field-lilies, hath given out a word of providence touching His servants, that if they trust in Him, using lawful means moderately, they shall have raiment sufficient, and all things else that be needful to this life. Here then is nothing wanting but trust in God in the sober use of ordinary means, for such shall be as sure of raiment by God's providence, as lilies are to grow and blossom in the springtime and summer. And this were sufficient to persuade us unto moderate care, though nothing more had been said.

But He addeth,

*They labour not, neither spin*.

This denial of the use of means unto them, whereby they should be arrayed, as it proves directly that God alone arrays them with glorious colours; so it strongly enforceth the duty of contentment upon us, relying on God's providence, without distracting care; because beside our title to God's providence not inferior to the lilies of the field, we have allowed unto us for our raiment the use of means, which they want. And therefore howsoever no man, under pretence of depending on God's providence, may hence take occasion to live idly, neglecting the ordinary lawful means to procure things honest and needful. Yet hereby Christ would give assurance to al that trust in Him and serve Him, that though all means should fail them (so it be not through their default), yet will He provide things useful for them.

*And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these*.

These words contain an amplification of the second part of Christ's reason, to wit, that God doth not only clothe the lilies, but clothe them in most glorious array, even above the glory of Solomon in all his royalty. And this

amplification is to be marked, because Solomon's glory was extraordinary, by special gift from God, above his desire or expectation, as we may see (1 Kin. 3:13). And yet, Christ saith, that each field-lily is more gloriously arrayed by God's providence than Solomon was at any time.

This amplification serves, first, to check and control the folly of them that are proud in apparel, and nice and curious in arraying themselves. This is the common sin of this age, wherein for attire, every sort almost exceed their ability and degree. But why should we be proud of any apparel, for when we have done all we can to make ourselves never so gay, yet we come short of the flowers of the field in glorious array? For what cloth is so white as the lily? What purple is like the violet? What crimson or scarlet comparable to divers flowers of such colours? Art indeed may do much, but herein it must stoop to nature. Now if we cannot come near the herbs and flowers which we tread under our feet, and cast into the furnace, why should we be puffed up with any gayness in our apparel?

Secondly, this teacheth us that all worldly pomp is but vanity; for in glory and beauty it comes short of the flower of the field, and yet what is more frail and transitory than the flower, that is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven? This the Holy Ghost would teach us by comparing the glory of man to *the flower of grass* (1 Pet. 1:24), and seeing that *the fashion of this world goeth away* (1 Cor. 7:31), wherefore, as the apostle saith, we must *use this world as though we used it not*. For Solomon's conclusion is true of all earthly things (Eccl. 1:2), *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*. And yet we must not here imagine that Christ condemns the glory of Solomon, though He thus debase it below the flower of the field; for it was the gift of God in extraordinary favour (1 Kin. 3:13). So that howsoever the Word of God condemn pride and curiosity in attire, and superfluity therein, yet it alloweth unto princes, and personages of great state, the use of gorgeous and costly raiment; and therefore Joseph, being advanced to dignity, was arrayed *in garments of fine linen, had a ring on his finger, and a chain of gold about his neck* (Gen. 41:42). And that which Luke saith of Agrippa and Bernice (Acts 25:23), that they came in with great pomp to hear Paul, may as well be taken in good part, as in evil.

"*Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*" (v.30)

Here Christ propounds and applies this reason to His disciples and hearers; and in this application enforceth it, by putting a manifest difference between men and the herbs of the field, preferring man far before them. The pre-eminence of man above the flowers of the field, stands in these things:

1. First, the herbs were made for man's use, and not man for them; for besides other uses, they serve for fuel to the oven, as Christ here noteth.

2. Secondly, the herb of the field is today, and tomorrow is not, for being burnt or consumed, it ceaseth to be at all. But it is not so with man, for though he be burnt or consumed, yet he is not brought to nothing, but his being remaineth still, by reason of his immortal soul, which, though it had beginning, yet shall never have end. And herein he far excelleth them; for though herbs and trees live for a time, yet their life ariseth from the matter whereof they consist, and so vanisheth with it; but the soul of man is a different substance from the body, and vanisheth not, though the body perish. This difference is plain in the Creation; for God commanded the earth to bring forth herbs and trees with their life and substance (Gen. 1:12); but when He created man, *his body of the dust of the earth*, yet *his soul came from God; for He breathed into his face the breath of life* (Gen. 2:7). And herein man excels not only the herbs of the field, but all beasts and fowls; for though they, besides life, have sense and motion from their souls, yet their souls (whether they be qualities or substances, it here skilleth not) arising from the matter whereof their bodies subsist, are mortal and vanish to nothing when the body perisheth; so as a beast burnt up is no beast, but dead man is a man though his body be burnt to nothing, because his soul lives for ever, yea, and his body, though eaten up of beasts, or consumed with fire, by virtue of God's ordinance, shall one day rise again, and be reunited to the soul. Yea, the dead bodies of the elect, by virtue of the Covenant of grace, have not only relation to their souls, but a spiritual union with Christ; for (1 Thess. 4:14) *they sleep in*

> *Him*, and by His power shall one day be raised up to glory. And this pre- eminence Christ would teach us, when He calleth God, *the God of Abraham* (Matt. 22:32), who was dead in regard of his body long before; and yet, saith He, *God is the God not of the dead* (that is, which have no being at all), *but of the living*. Now this preferment of man above the creature, doth greatly enforce the duty upon him to depend upon God's providence without distrustful care; for if God clothe baser creatures with glorious array, doubtless He will not suffer man His more noble creature to want, as the conclusion following doth declare.

*Shall He not do much more unto you, O ye of little faith*?

That is, shall He not much more clothe you? Now He amplifieth this conclusion by a reproof, whereby He would enforce His reason more strongly upon them, saying, *O ye of little faith*. In which reproof two points are to be considered: the persons reproved and the cause thereof.

1. The persons are Christ's chosen disciples, whom He doth not here reprove for want of faith simply, but for the weakness and small measure of it; because their doubting and distrust in God's providence was greater than their faith.

Here then we may observe *a distinction of faith* in regard of degree and measure, to wit, that beside that full assurance whereby a man so resteth on God's promises, that he nothing doubteth through unbelief, as it is said of Abraham (Rom. 4:20). There is a weak faith mingled with much doubting, such as was in Christ's disciples at that time. And howsoever that doubting, which is in weak faith, be evil, and here reproved; yet the faith itself is true faith, and such as brings a man to the state of adoption and of salvation; for Christ before this reproof acknowledged of His disciples that they were God's children, calling God their *heavenly Father*. If any shall say or think that this weak faith cannot save a man, because his unbelief, being more than his faith, shall have more force to condemn him than his faith to save him; *I answer*: that no man is saved by his faith because it is perfect without doubting, but because thereby he layeth hold on God's mercy in Christ. Now a weak faith may do this truly, though not so perfectly and with such comfort as a strong faith doth; and the doubting and unbelief that is in weak

faith cannot condemn us, if so be we bewail our unbelief, and use means diligently to come by a full assurance; for by this weak faith we are in Christ; and in Him all our wants and sins are pardoned. Which point must carefully be observed and remembered, for the stay and comfort of their souls, that have in them but this weak faith, and are troubled much with distrust and doubting. And this is many a true child of God's estate; for everyone cannot attain to Abraham's full assurance. But be not discouraged, *O thou of little faith*; thy doubting and distrust may trouble and grieve thee; only labour diligently in the means for further increase, and by thy weak faith desire to lay hold on Christ; and so shall all thy wants be covered, and thy sins pardoned; for endless is God's mercy in this behalf, *He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax* (Isa. 42:3).

2. The cause why Christ doth thus reprove them for their small faith is their distrust in God for raiment; as if He should say, Whereas you doubt whether your heavenly Father will provide sufficient raiment for you, notwithstanding you see He arrays His baser creatures in glorious manner; even for this cause are you to be blamed for small things.

Here then we are to observe a special point touching the property of saving faith; namely, that it doth not only lay hold on the mercy of God for the pardon of sin, and life everlasting in Christ; but on His promises also for temporal blessings that concern this life. Neither must this seem strange to any; and to make it plain, consider that the promises of God in Scripture are of two sorts: principal and inferior. The principal promise is of Christ our Redeemer, God and man, and of remission of sin, and life everlasting by Him. The inferior promises are of temporal blessings; as food, raiment, health, peace, liberty etc., and these depend upon the main promise of Christ, so far forth as they are for our good; for (2 Cor. 1:20) *in Christ, all the promises of God*, whether they concern life eternal, or this temporal life, *are yea, and Amen*, that is, sure and certain to God's children. And hence it is that when by true faith a man lays hold in the main promise of God in Christ, he doth withal apprehend the promises of God for temporal blessings. The heart that saith by faith, *God will pardon my sin, and save my soul*, will say also by the same faith, *God will give me food and raiment, and all things sufficient for this life*. Thus Abraham (Gen. 18:10) by the same faith whereby he was justified, believed God's promise that he should

have a son in his old age; and Noah (Gen. 7:1) believed God's promise of His preservation in the ark, by the same faith whereby he was made heir of righteousness. This point must be observed, and the order remembered, wherein faith lays hold upon the promises: First, it apprehends mercy in Christ, and then providence for this life. Now hence we learn that as we look to be saved by our faith after death, so must we live by faith in this world; if we rely upon His mercy for our souls, we must depend upon His providence for our bodies. How this is done we shall see afterwards; for how should we cast ourselves upon God's mercy for the kingdom of heaven, if we cannot depend upon His providence for food and raiment?

Lastly, hereby we may try our faith what it is, true or feigned; weak or strong; for this Christ here tells us, that the more we are distracted with worldly cares, the less is our belief in God; for distrustful care comes from unbelief in God's providence; and the less we trust in God for temporal things, the less do we believe eternal mercies, for the same faith lays hold on both. But if we can truly depend upon God for temporal blessings in the sober use of lawful means, then we shall rely upon His mercy for the salvation of our souls. This trial is not made in prosperity, for when God sends abundance, everyone will trust in Him; but when want comes, then is the trial of thy faith; if then thou rely on God, though means fail, thy faith is strong; but if thy heart be oppressed with sorrow and fear, and thou make no conscience of unlawful means, so it may supply thy want; then suspect thyself, thy faith is weak, or none at all; for *the just shall live by faith* (Hab. 2:4) in all estates.

# 6:31-32

"*Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*" Matthew 6:31-32.

"*Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*(v.31)

Here, Christ again repeateth His commandment against distrustful care given in v.25. The reasons of His repetition be these: First, to set an edge upon the commandment, that so it may more sharply and deeply enter into their hearts, as we said before. Secondly, to further His disciples in the practice of faith, for by this often repetition He gives them occasion to meditate and think upon the duty the oftener, whereby their faith must needs be much confirmed; for this we must know for our direction to get and strengthen true faith in our hearts, that a man is not a mere patient in the receiving and strengthening of this grace; it comes not from God to us, as visions did to the prophets in a dream in the night, or as the print of the seal is set into the wax, but God works it in the use of ordinary means. And therefore if we would have faith wrought or increased in us, we must do that which by nature we may do; to wit, hear the Word preached and read, we must meditate therein, and labour so to urge the promises of God upon our own hearts; yea, we must do what we can to stir up in our hearts a desire to believe, and to strive against doubting and distrust, and therefore must give ourselves to prayer, with sighs and groans to God, for the working of His Spirit in our hearts.

Now touching this commandment against distrustful care, we handled it in the 25th verse, shewing how far our care must go for things needful, and where it must stay. It must extend itself to the diligent use of lawful ordinary means to procure things needful, and there stay; giving place to faith to wait upon God's providence for the blessing of our endeavours. The distrustful care which perplexeth the heart about the success of our lawful

labours, is that which Christ forbids, and it is that evil sickness which infects most men's souls, as they may easily discern by observing these things: *What it is that oft breaks their sleep in the night; what comes first into their thoughts when they awake; and what their minds turn most upon all the day long; and whereabouts they can take greatest pains, with most delight and least weariness*. If it be for the things of this world, then distrustful care infects their souls, which we must strive against, and learn to live by faith.

Here only observe how Christ describes this unlawful care by the effects of it in distrustful persons, bringing them in, saying, *What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Or Wherewith shall we be clothed*? And thus indeed they used to complain, especially when they have great charges and slender means, or else do sustain any great losses, then, *How shall we live? What shall we do*? And such like speeches of distrust; which Christ here justly reproves, because they blame God for His dealing towards them; as though He had no care of them, or would not provide things for them. We therefore must learn to shut our mouths against distrustful thoughts, and beware we murmur not nor complain of His dealing towards us. When (Lev. 10:3) Aaron's two sons Nadab and Abihu were both slain for offering strange fire, Moses tells him *it was the Lord's doing, who would be glorified in all that come near Him*; then the text saith, *Aaron held his peace*. And David notably testifieth his contentment in God's providence (Psa. 39:2), *I held my peace and said nothing*; yea, (v.9), *I should have been dumb and not have opened my mouth, because thou the Lord didst it*. Excellent is that saying of the Lord (Isa. 30:15), *In rest and quietness shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength*; meaning that by patience and contentment, a man shews strong confidence in God; so that though God's dealing seem never so hard, we must beware of impatient words and murmuring thoughts, endeavouring to say with Eli (1 Sam. 3:18), *It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth good in His eyes*; and with Job (Job 13:15), *Though He kill me, yet will I trust in Him*.

"*(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*" (v.32).

This verse contains Christ's fifth and sixth reasons to dissuade His hearers from distrustful care. The fifth is drawn from the practice of the Gentiles, and it standeth thus:

*That which the Gentiles do, which know not God, you must not do (they doing amiss). But the Gentiles seek thus distrustfully for things needful. Therefore you must not do so*.

The words in the original whereby Christ declareth this behaviour of the Gentiles, be more emphatical than our translation doth express; for they import that the Gentiles *set themselves to seek, or seek with all their might*. Which must be observed, because it is not a sin simply to seek things necessary, but wholly to give ourselves thereto that is the sin, because it proceeds from distrust in God.

*Question*: Why did the Gentiles wholly give themselves to seek to things necessary? *Answer*: Because they knew not the true God, nor His providence; they were not acquainted with His Word, as David saith. And this was the state of all the world before Christ's coming, the Jews only excepted, and their forefathers, with some few proselytes, who, by conversing with God's people, were converted to true religion.

This point well observed;

First, overthrows the opinion of *universal grace*, as a mere device of man's brain; for if the Gentiles knew not the true God, how should they know the way to life? If God gave them not so much grace whereby they could depend upon His providence for the things of this life, much less did He give them grace to believe and to be saved if they would.

Secondly, this shews that they who set their hearts upon the world and give themselves to seek earthly things, are Gentiles and pagans; they have not yet attained to this principle of Christianity: to depend upon God's providence by faith. They see no providence, and so rely only upon the means whereby they sacrifice to their own pains and industry, and so make themselves their own god. This is the state of many among us, who bear the name of Christians, but in deed and practice are as Turks and pagans. And

this reason alone well weighed, is sufficient to move any Christian heart in a moderate care to seek earthly things.

Thirdly, mark the ground of this reason: Christ's disciples had the true God for their God, which the Gentiles had not, and therefore they must differ from the Gentiles in their behaviour. This teacheth us that in all things God's children must be unlike the heathen; for, *in evil things we must forsake them, and in all things that be good we must excel them*. The son of a prince will not shew himself like a beggar in anything; no more should the child of God, in anything conform himself unto the world. O, then, how worthy do we walk of our vocation; for the very sins of the heathen are rife among us, as uncleanness, drunkenness, slandering and oppression; nay, many among us exceed the pagans in merciless dealing towards the poor; for they never knew that Christ came for relief in the person of His poor, and yet many among them were more merciful than many nowadays that bear the name of Christians; for do not the poor sometimes die for want of relief? And do not many among us make a gain of God's judgment upon the poor, selling their commodities dearest, when the poor have greatest want and need? Well, if we will approve ourselves to be God's peculiar ones, let us be ashamed to be like the heathen in any evil, or not to go beyond them in that which is good.

*For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

These words contain Christ's sixth reason to His disciples against distrustful care, drawn from God's special providence over them. And it also includes an answer to a secret objection against Christ's command; for some man might say, If we may not be careful for things needful, who shall provide them? Christ here answers: *You must not be distrustfully careful, for you have a Father in heaven, who knows whereof you have need, and careth for you. Now look whereof God takes care in your behalf, you need not trouble yourselves further than the sober use of lawful means. But God your heavenly Father takes notice of your estate, and will provide that which is best for you. And therefore you need not to vex your minds thereabout*.

A most worthy reason, and alone sufficient to drive us from distrustful care; for this acquainteth us with God's particular and special providence over us, taking notice of our estate whatsoever it is, and disposing it to the best. In

regard whereof, we must learn contentment in all estates of this life, in sickness, as in health; in trouble, as in peace; and in want as well as in abundance; for whatsoever our estate be, it is according to the good pleasure of our heavenly Father, who is infinite in power and wisdom, both knowing what is best, and able to turn all to our good, as we shall surely find by comfortable experience, if by faith we depend upon Him. This David knew well (Psa. 23:4), and therefore saith, *I will not fear, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death*. Why? *For thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff*; that is, thy Spirit, thy Word and providence comfort me. If our hearts were settled in this point, we should not be impatient in distress, nor dead hearted in want; nay, it would make us cheerful in the hour of death; for hereby we should be assured that these estates were better for us than peace, wealth, or life itself, because they come by the will of our heavenly Father, who knoweth whereof we have need. And therefore let us labour by faith to be assured of our adoption, that we may know God to be our Father, and then by the same faith we shall be easily assured that He will turn all things that befall us unto our good.

# 6:33

"*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*" Matthew 6:33.

Our Saviour Christ having by six several arguments dissuaded His disciples from distrustful care, doth here shew unto them what care that is which ought always to possess their hearts; to wit, *care after the kingdom of God, and His righteousness*. And this care He imposeth upon them by express command, saying, *First seek ye the kingdom of God and His righteousness*; and then urgeth the entertaining of it by an effectual reason: *and all these things things shall be ministered unto you*.

The Exposition.

There be two things here enjoined us to seek: God's kingdom and righteousness; and of both these, Christ saith, *First seek*, that is, before all, and above all worldly things, let your principal care and endeavour be to procure these unto yourselves. By *kingdom of God* is here meant *a state and condition of man in this life, whereby in Christ he enjoys the favour of God, and hath right to everlasting life*. This very estate of man is in Scripture called *the kingdom of God* and *the kingdom of heaven*, because whosoever is in this estate, hath sure right and interest to God's glory in heaven, and God here rules in him, as a king ruleth in his kingdom. The *kingdom of God* is only one, and yet it hath two degrees; the first in grace, and the second in glory. The *kingdom of grace* is that spiritual regiment which God exerciseth in man, or in His church, by His Word and Spirit in this life; and it is the first step or entrance into God's heavenly kingdom. The *kingdom of glory* is the full fruition of immediate fellowship with the blessed Trinity, by means of Jesus Christ in the highest heavens after this life. Now both these degrees are here understood by the *kingdom of God*. The second thing to be thus sought for is *His righteousness*, that is, the righteousness of God, and not as some translate it, *the righteousness thereof*, that is, of God's kingdom; for the words will not bear that translation. And the seeking of God's righteousness is here added for special cause: to let us see by way of

explication, when we have obtained for ourselves the kingdom of God; for God's kingdom stands in righteousness, and then doth God rule in man, when He makes him partaker of His righteousness. Now by *righteousness of God*, we must here understand the obedience which Christ our Mediator performed for us in fulfilling the law, and in His sufferings. This is the very groundwork and foundation of God's kingdom among men. Hereof Paul speaketh oft (Rom. 1:17), *For by it* (that is, the gospel), *the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith*; and (Rom. 3:21,22), *Now is the righteousness of God made manifest* etc.; and (2 Cor. 5:21), *God made Him to be sin for us, which knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*. And it is so called for divers respects: First, because it is freely given us of God to be our righteousness in His sight; and man cannot attain unto it of himself by any work of nature or of grace, without the gift of God. Secondly, because God will accept this obedience of Christ at the day of judgment, for His elect, as satisfying His justice, and the rigour of the law, which no righteousness of man can do. Thirdly, because it is the righteousness of that person who is God; for Christ is both God and man, and, though He obeyed the law and suffered death as He was man, yet that obedience was performed by that Person who was also God. Adam's righteousness by Creation was in himself, but he lost it by his fall; but our righteousness is in Christ, out of us; and therefore He is said to be (1 Cor. 1:30) made righteousness unto us of God. But how should we get this righteousness, seeing as it is in Christ? *Answer*: It is made ours by imputation, for when we truly repent of our sins and believe in Christ, God accepts the obedience of Christ for us, as if we had perfectly satisfied His justice, and done His will in our own persons. Now with this imputed righteousness, we must understand and join the fruit hereof in us, which is *sanctification*, or *renewed holiness*; whereby we are enabled to walk before God in new obedience, bringing forth the fruits of righteousness; for these two are never severed. Whom God justifies by the righteousness of Christ, them He sanctifies by His Spirit.

The full meaning then of Christ's commandment here is this: *First seek* etc., that is, above all things in this world, let your principal care be to procure unto yourselves the kingdom of God; that is, that state of grace whereby you may enjoy God's favour in Christ, being justified by His obedience, and sanctified by His Spirit, whereby you walk in good works.

The Use.

1. First, by this commandment of Christ to seek God's kingdom, we may gather that by nature we are all out of God's kingdom, destitute of the grace and favour of God, and indeed under the power of Satan, and in his kingdom of darkness. This the Holy Ghost shews in calling Satan (2 Cor. 4:4), *the God of this world*; and (John 12:31), *the prince of this world*, because all the world naturally are vassals unto him, yielding him homage in the works of sin; and therefore is he called (Eph. 2:2) *the prince that ruleth in the air, that works in the children of disobedience*. And this natural misery is justly come upon us; for seeing we refuse to yield subjection unto God in His kingdom, are we not worthily left to the power of Satan, to be made his slaves and drudges? Now that men live naturally out of Christ's kingdom, may appear by the course of their lives; for howsoever most men can be contented to bear the badge of Christ in outward profession, hearing the Word and receiving the sacraments; yet in heart and life they do homage to the devil, for they pull their necks from the yoke of Christ, and run with greediness to the work of sin; they account a strict endeavour after moral obedience to be curiosity and preciseness, and when they be dehorted from unlawful gain, and vain pleasures, they will not hear nor consent; whereby in effect they say to God with wicked men (Job 21:14), *Depart from me, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*; and with the wicked citizens (Luke 19:14), *We will not have this man to reign over us*.

2. Secondly, here Christ would teach us that our principal care above all other things must be to win for ourselves the kingdom of God. I shall not need to prove this to be our duty, seeing it is the only thing which Christ here intends to commend unto us, and that by express command. But some will ask, How shall we win and get for ourselves the kingdom of God? *Answer*: We must do three things for the obtaining of it: First, we must come to the place where this kingdom is to be found. Secondly, we must then enter into it. Thirdly, we must wait for the full possession of it.

1. For the first, This kingdom is not to be found in all places, but there only where God doth manifest and reveal the same to the sons of men; and that is in the assembly of the saints; where the public ministry of reconciliation is dispensed; for there God holds out this sceptre, and

offers Himself to be Lord and King unto men. And therefore David calls this ministry of the Word, *the rod and sceptre of God's power* (Psa. 110:2). And in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:19), the gospel preached is called *the Word of the kingdom*, because hereby God reveals the kingdom unto men, and translates them into it (Col. 1:13). And for the same cause, in the parable of the field (Matt. 13:24) is the same ministry of the gospel called expressly *the kingdom of God*. And therefore when the church demands of Christ where she shall find Him, He bids her follow the steps of the flocks to the tents of the shepherds (Song. 1:8), that is, the assemblies of the saints, to the preaching of God's ministers. And therefore, if ever we look to get this kingdom, we must diligently frequent the ministry of the Word, and labour to profit by it, because hereby God doth not only reveal, but convey His kingdom unto men.

2. Secondly, when we have found this kingdom, we must seek to enter into it; for it is not enough to be where it is, or to have it among us, for so the Pharisees had in the time of Christ (Luke 11:20). Now we cannot enter in of ourselves without the special work of God's Holy Spirit. So saith our Saviour Christ (Matt. 18:3), *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God*; where two things are required in him that would enter into this kingdom: *To become as little children*, and *to be converted*. We become as little children in humility and meekness, and freedom from pride and disdain; for we know the child of a prince will without disdain associate himself in the play with a poor man's child; and so we in conscience of our own sins, must be humbled in ourselves, and made base in our own eyes, laying aside our natural pride, and self-love, and disdain of others; for a heart swelling with pride and self-love cannot enter into the strait gate of this kingdom. Again, we must be converted and regenerate by the Spirit of God; for (John 3:5), *Except a man be born again of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God*. This conversion is not a change of the substance of the soul, or of the body, or of the faculties or parts thereof, but only of their evil qualities and actions; whereby the image of Satan in sin and corruption is abolished, and the image of God renewed, for knowledge, righteousness and true holiness both in heart and life.

When this work of regeneration is truly begun in us, then do we enter into God's kingdom, even in this life; for herein the ignorant deceive themselves, that think we enter not before the time of death.

3. Thirdly, we must wait for the fruition and full possession of it. This we cannot get before the day of death, and therefore we must endeavour ourselves all our life long after our conversion, to keep faith and a good conscience, walking in righteousness and true holiness before God, and in the practice of love, uprightness and mercy towards our brethren. When the question is, *Who shall dwell in God's tabernacle, and rest in His holy mountain* (Psa. 15:1), the answer is (v.2), *He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness*. Hereby we testify ourselves to be already entered; for God's kingdom stands in righteousness (Rom. 14:17). And thus have God's children done, that have waited for this kingdom. (Matt. 25:4), The wise virgins took oil in their vessels to light their lamps when the bridegroom came. And Joseph of Aramathea, that noble counsellor, who waited for the kingdom of God, *was a good man and a just* (Luke 23:50,51).

Thus we see the way to get this kingdom for ourselves. Now the necessity of our endeavour in these duties with all care and diligence appears by this: That out of this estate, for true interest to this kingdom, is nothing indeed but woeful misery under the curse of God, and the power of Satan in the kingdom of darkness; but in the fruition of this kingdom is true happiness. Here is (Rom. 14:17), *righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*; yea (1 Pet. 1:8) *joy unspeakable and glorious*, for (1 Cor. 2:9) the things that *eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither ever entered into; the heart of man to think, hath God prepared for them that love Him*. And they are all to be had in this kingdom. Wherefore as we desire to escape the woe and misery of the devil's kingdom, and to be partakers of the joys of heaven; so let us look unto the performance of the former duties, shewing herein the resolution of the wise merchant that parted with all he had to get the *pearl of price* (Matt. 13:46). This kingdom of God is here set out unto us, like a city with suburbs, and two gates; the suburbs of this city are those assemblies where the Word of God is truly preached and dispensed; and hereinto come not only the elect and godly, but hypocrites and reprobates. The first gate is the *true state of grace*, whereinto the elect of God alone do

enter by regeneration; in which estate they continue in this life, going on from one degree of grace unto a greater, with endeavour in all things to keep faith and a good conscience both towards God and men, and so wait to enter the gate of glory, which is set open unto them, and they enter in at the house of death. And therefore let us not deceive our own souls, as the foolish virgins did with their burning lamps, and content ourselves that we come to church, and live civilly; though these be good things, yet an hypocrite may go thus far. All this while we are but in the suburbs of this kingdom. But if ever we look for the glory of heaven, we must in this life enter the state of grace by regeneration, and become new creatures.

This much for the commandment. *The reason* to enforce it is a gracious and bountiful promise:

*And all these things shall be ministered unto you*.

The words are very significant in the original; for the phrase which Christ useth is borrowed from bargainers, to this effect: as those who sell, come, or other things by measure or weight, use to give some over-plus to better the bargain on the buyers part; even so the Lord promiseth to those that seek His kingdom and righteousness, beside the fruition thereof, to give, or *cast unto them*, as the word imports, food and raiment, and all things needful to this life.

*Question*: How is this true, seeing we read that God's children have been many times destitute of things necessary; as Paul was *oft in hunger and thirst, in fastings, in cold and nakedness* (2 Cor. 11:27), and many whom the world was not worthy of were *destitute, afflicted and tormented, wandering up and down in sheepskins and goatskins* (Heb. 11:37)? *Answer*: Christ's promise in this place, and all other made of temporal blessings, must be understood with the exception of the cross; that is, they shall have such and such blessings, unless it please God by the want thereof, to correct them for some sins, or to exercise their faith in the trial of their patience.

The Use.

1. First, by this promise of Christ, we have the most excellent direction of Him that is wisdom Himself, how to order ourselves in seeking for all

temporal blessings needful to this life, namely, we must *first seek God's kingdom and His righteousness,* in the performance of those duties that may bring us thereunto; and then *all these needful things* for this life, as food and raiment, shall be cast unto us, in the sober use of ordinary means. The reason hereof is plain: for God's kingdom is man's chief good and happiness, and all temporal blessings depend thereupon as appurtenances to the principal, as it were entailed thereon; and therefore he that would have these dependents, must get unto himself the kingdom of God, which is the principal. While the ark of the Covenant was in Obed-Edom's house, *God blessed him and all that he had* (2 Sam. 6:11). How much more then shall God bless them that receive His Holy Spirit to rule in their heart by grace? For, as David saith (Psa. 1:3), the godly man shall be *like a tree planted by the rivers of water; and whatsoever he doth shall prosper*. By the blessing of God we have had His kingdom among us for many years in this nation, and God hath given us with it peace and protection with great abundance of temporal blessings. Indeed, God hath sundry ways corrected us, and laid His heavy hand upon us in sundry judgments; as plague, famine etc., and often shaken His rod at us in the hand of our enemies, and all because we have not received the Word of His kingdom, nor yielded obedience to it as we ought. Yea, and we may fear the fulness of His wrath, unless we repent and amend of this sin especially. But if we would set ourselves to seek this kingdom, we needed not to fear the want of any needful blessing; for so God promised to His people, to give them abundance of all things, if they would obey His commandments, which are the laws and statutes of His kingdom (Deut. 28:1ff.).

This point then is to be observed for our direction in particular. Art thou a poor man, and wouldest have sufficient food and raiment for thy temporal life? Then, first, set thy heart to seek God's kingdom, follow the Word, and labour therein for regeneration and new obedience; and doubt not that if thou be upright and diligent in thy lawful calling, thou shalt find sufficient for this life.

*Question*: If this be the way to get sufficient, how comes it that we have so many beggars that wander up and down from door to door? *Answer*: They are (for the most part) a cursed generation, which have no regard for God's ordinances, either for their souls or bodies; they join not themselves to any

settled congregation for the obtaining of God's kingdom, and so this promise belongs not to them. But God suffers them to wander in an idle course all their life long, destitute of this blessing, to eat their own bread.

Again, art thou a rich man, and wouldest continue in that estate, to thine own comfort, and for the good of those that depend upon thee? Then set thy heart to seek God's kingdom with a special care, seek to plant religion in thy family, and thou and thine house shall flourish.

Art thou a student, and desirest the blessing of God upon thy labours, with all things sufficient to thy state and calling? Then first seek God's kingdom and righteousness and true holiness, and God will lade thee with His blessings.

In a word, whatsoever thou art, magistrate, minister, merchant, tradesman etc., man or woman, young or old, and desirest God's blessing for thyself, or any that belong unto thee, remember the practice of this duty, and use the lawful means which God lays before thee in thy calling; and nothing doubt, but (though all means fail) yet God will send sufficient.

2. Secondly, this promise of temporal blessings upon the faithful seeking of the kingdom of God, lets us see that food, raiment, and all things needful for this life, and appurtenances and dependents on God's kingdom; that is, such things as over and besides His kingdom God will give to them that principally seek His love and favour by the righteousness of Christ, and labour for grace and sanctification by His Spirit; for if He have given us Christ, *how shall He not with Him give us all things also* (Rom. 8:32).

The consideration hereof serves for special uses:

1. To discover unto us the preposterous course that men take in seeking for temporal blessings; for most men generally neglect the main good, which is God's kingdom, and wholly addict themselves to seek the things of this life. They take little or no thought for the eternal state of their souls, but spend their wit and strength in providing for their bodies; which is nothing else but to grip at the shadow, and to let the substance go. Wherein we shew ourselves foolish and simple, like to

little children, who are better pleased with the gift of a nut or an apple, than with the promise or rich revenues, or great inheritance.

2. This teacheth us with what mind we must seek the temporal blessings of this life; namely, with the same honest mind wherewith we seek the kingdom of God, for they are appurtenances thereunto, and depend upon it. And therefore with an upright heart, we must only use lawful means moderately for the getting of them. And when we have them, this may direct us in the right end whereto we must use our temporal blessings; namely, to the furtherance of ourselves and others towards the kingdom of God. So we *honour God with our riches*, as Solomon bids us (Prov. 3:9).

3. This teacheth us that they which have no right to God's kingdom, nor part in Christ's righteousness, have no good interest into any temporal blessings; as food, raiment and such like, for they are dependents upon God's kingdom and righteousness. As for the heathen before Christ's coming, and Turks and pagans, and all profane persons that live in the church at this day, who both heretofore, and now also, do enjoy temporal blessings in great abundance; this we must know: that they have thereto a civil right by God's permission, so as it is sin, without good cause to deprive them thereof; but yet of themselves they are usurpers, in regard of true title and sanctified use before God. For by Adam's fall we lost our right and sovereignty in the creatures, and it is only restored and renewed in Christ, so as they which have no part in Christ cannot have this true title. This we must observe, first, to instruct ourselves the better in the knowledge of our own miserable state by nature; for what wretched creatures are we, that cannot make good claim nor title before God, to the apparel upon our backs, nor to the meat we put in our bellies? Nay, of ourselves we have no right to the breath we draw in at our nostrils. And out of question this is the state of every natural man, though he be never so great a monarch in the world, while he is out of God's kingdom, wanting righteousness and regeneration by Jesus Christ. Secondly, this also must persuade every one of us to put in practice the former instruction, endeavouring above all things to get God's kingdom for ourselves; for till we have part herein, we can have no sound comfort in the use of God's

creatures, which necessarily serve to our temporal life. This reason alone, if there were no more, should spur us on to all diligence in this duty. What shame and grief is it to eat our bread in the sight of God, as thieves and usurpers do in the sight of men? And therefore let us give no rest unto our souls, till we attain to some good assurance in this blessed estate. The way we must remember, is by true conversion and regeneration; and we shall discern ourselves to be regenerate by these fruits of the Spirit in us; to wit:

1. A true touch of conscience for our sins, both original and actual.

2. A godly sorrow and grief of heart for offending and displeasing God by our transgressions.

3. An earnest desire, or true spiritual hunger and thirst after Christ and His righteousness, testified by our constant and diligent use of those means, the Word, prayer and sacraments, wherein God gives grace and assurance of mercy.

4. An unfeigned turning unto God from all sin by new obedience, having a constant purpose of heart not to sin, and a godly endeavour in life to please God in all things.

These are the marks of the new creature, who hath true title to God's kingdom; which we must labour to find in ourselves for our comfort in the use of God's creatures. And if we find them in us, our title is good, not only to His creatures, but to His kingdom, notwithstanding our own unworthiness by our former iniquities.

4. In this, that temporal blessings are dependents on God's kingdom, we must learn contentment and patience in all temporal losses whatsoever, though we lose friends, goods, lands, liberty, reputation, or life itself, yet we must not be overwhelmed with sorrow or grief; for if we be God's children, and retain His favour, the kingdom of heaven remains sure unto us. While a man's stock remains, though some appurtenances be taken from him, he counts himself well enough; and so must we in all worldly losses, while our title is good to God's kingdom. Herewith our Saviour Christ comforts His disciples (Luke 12:32), *Fear not little*

*flock, for it is your Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom*. Now if God give us that with His favour in Christ, we may be sure He would give us all temporal blessings, if He saw them to be good for us, for *if He hath given us Christ, how shall He not with Him give us all things also* (Rom. 8:32).

3. Thirdly, this promise of Christ, to give His kingdom to them that seek it, and beside, to cast all temporal blessings unto them, if they seek His kingdom principally, doth notably commend unto us the bountiful goodness of God; for here we see He gives to His children more than they ask or seek. And this bounty of God Paul expresseth as a ground of our praising God (Eph. 3:20,21), *To Him therefore that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, be praise in the church, by Jesus Christ*. Where we must observe that He speaks of God's ability to be bountiful, as brought into action in His children, so as He is not only able but willing hereunto. And hereof we have daily experience in the blessings of God which we do enjoy; for when we pray for spiritual graces, God gives them unto us, and many temporal blessings also. This David confesseth (Psa. 21:3), *Thou didst prevent me with liberal blessings*. And Solomon found it to be true, who asking only a wise and understanding heart, received thereupon riches and honour besides his wisdom (1 Kin. 3:13). And so did Jacob, who asking only God's protection, and meat to eat and clothes to put on (Gen 28:20); though he went out but with a staff, yet returned with two bands (Gen. 32:10).

Now the consideration of this bounty of God must teach us these duties:

1. First, *to beware of all sin*, whereby we do offend and displease our God, who is so gracious and so bountiful unto us. If our outward estate did depend on others, we would then be careful so to carry ourselves towards them, as that we would not willingly give them any offence, or cause of dislike. How much more ought we then to seek the continuance of God's favour towards us by all good behaviour, seeing on Him depends our whole estate both temporal and eternal?

2. Secondly, *to trust God with our lives, health, bodies and all we have*, for food, raiment and protection, in the sober use of lawful means, for He is a

bountiful God.

3. Thirdly, to seek for help and succour from God in all distress and want, for He is bountiful. *He giveth to all men liberally, and reproacheth no man* ( Jam. 1:5); and therefore we must be ready and forward to call upon Him, and to make our moan unto Him.

4. Fourthly, to love so bountiful a God , yea, to enforce our hearts to all duties of love towards Him. Solomon saith, *Every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts* (Prov. 19:6), but none is to be compared to God for the riches of bounty; and therefore our love to Him should abound.

5. Fifthly, to be thankful unto God for all the good things we enjoy; for whatsoever we have comes from His bounty; and therefore we must say with David, *What shall I give unto the Lord, for all His blessings are upon me* (Psa. 116:12,13). In a word, we must labour continually in heart and life, to walk worthy of the Lord, and to please Him in all things, *being fruitful in all good works* (as the apostle saith, Col. 1:10).

# 6:34

"*Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" Matthew 6:34.

Here Christ the third time repeats His commandment against distrustful care, propounded first in the 25th verse; in which often repetition, He intends to make us more careful and diligent, both to learn and practise the same. And hereto He also addeth a seventh reason to enforce and further our obedience, drawn from the daily grief and trouble which accompanies every day of our life.

The Exposition.

*Care not for the morrow*.

That is, for the time to come. This may seem a strange commandment, tending to patronage sloth and negligence, but we must know that there is a double care for the time to come. 1. A godly lawful care. 2. A distrustful and inordinate care.

1. The godly care is that whereby a man provides for in time present, such things as are needful in the time to come, and cannot then be provided. This lawful care we may observe in our Saviour Christ; for He had a bag to keep provision for Himself and His disciples, which Judas bare (John 13:29), and when Agabus foretold of a general famine, the disciples provided aforehand, to send succour to the brethren which dwelt in Judea (Acts 11:28,29). And thus may many a tradesman provide for maintenance while his strength and sight is good against the time of his age, wherein he may be unable to follow his calling. And thus do men in fit season provide for food and raiment. And we may provide today, that is, in the time present for any needful thing, when tomorrow will not afford it.

2. The inordinate and distrustful care for the morrow, is that whereby men vex their minds, and turmoil themselves, to provide beforehand for such things as may well enough be had in the time to come. This parts and rends asunder the mind, as the word signifies; and this our Saviour forbids. It is indeed the common care of the world, and we may observe the practice of it in three ways especially:

1. When men provide so much worldly goods for themselves, as would serve for many families, or for many generations. There may be such gather-goods, which scrape together as though they should never die, and they scarce know any end of their wealth. This practice our Saviour Christ here forbids. If any in a land might seek for superfluity, it is the king, whom bounty at all times well beseemeth; and yet God forbad the king over His own people; to multiply overmuch his horses and furniture, his silver and his gold (Deut. 17:16,17).

2. When men seek to prevent all losses and casualties, and so plot for themselves that howsoever it go with others, yet they shall feel no want. Though others starve and go naked, they shall be full, and well clothed.

3. When men provide for today and tomorrow together beforehand, whenas the morrow's provision may sufficiently, safely and soon enough be made on its own day. This Christ doth chiefly aim at, as crossing the practice of faith, whereby we should depend upon His providence.

*For the morrow shall care for itself; the day hath enough with his own grief*.

These words contain Christ's seventh reason against distrustful care; the effect whereof is this: every day of my life hath care enough and grief sufficient, through the business that falls out thereon and belongs unto it, and therefore we are not to add thereunto another day's care and grief, for so we should bring upon ourselves more care and grief than needs.

*The morrow*, that is, the time to come, *shall care for itself*.

Here Christ answers a question which might be made from the former commandment; for having forbidden care for the morrow, some might say, How shall we do on the morrow, and the time to come? Christ answers, This day's care must be today, and tomorrow's care tomorrow, each day must have his own care. Such care as is fit and needful for the time present must now be taken, and such things as are now needful must now be sought for. But such care as is fit to be taken in the time to come, must be put off to his proper time; and things then needful must be then sought for, when their fit time falleth out. Every time and every day must have his proper care alone.

In this reason we have a most notable rule for the well-ordering of our lives; to wit, that every man must know the duties of his lawful calling, and how the discharge thereof will yield him things necessary and convenient from time to time, and so accordingly must walk therein; that is, doing only such duties diligently as the present time requireth at his hands, for the procuring of things then meet and needful. And so proceeding by dependence on God's providence, do such care and labour as is fitting for the present occasion, time and season; but for time to come lean on God's providence, respiting the care thereof till God require it at thine hands.

The practice hereof Samuel enjoineth Saul (1 Sam. 10:7), *when these signs* (of establishing thee in the kingdom) *shall come unto thee, do as occasion shall serve*; that is, do the present duties of a king that lie before thee, without troubling and vexing thyself through fear or care of things to come, till God offer them to thy hand. And this should be every man's practice in his calling. And so should their present diligence testify their obedience, and clear them from presumption, and their respiting of future care till time require it, argue their faith in God's providence; and thus they should neither foolishly feed upon uncertain hopes, nor needlessly vex themselves with untimely cares.

*The day hath enough with his own grief*.

That is, every day by reason of man's sins, hath trouble and grief enough, through that care and labour for provision which God thereon requireth at our hands; and therefore we should let every day content itself with his own care, and not add thereto another day's grief.

In this branch of the reason, Christ sets out the continued misery of man's natural life; Jacob said to Pharaoh, *The days of my pilgrimage have been few and evil* (Gen. 47:9). And Job saith, *Man that is born of woman is of short continuance, and full of trouble* (Job 14:1). But our Saviour Christ here goes beyond them both, saying, *Every day of man's life hath grief enough of his own*. This being well considered, may teach us these things:

1. To walk in our callings soberly, without entangling ourselves in worldly cares; for the daily discharge of the duties of our callings will bring sorrow and grief enough upon us, we need not to add thereto by our carking care; for the more we care, the more miserable is our life.

2. To labour to withdraw out hearts, and to estrange our affections from delight in things of this natural life, or in this life itself; for it is full of grief; and therefore we must so walk in our callings, that we may wait for a better life in heaven, where we shall have freedom from all sorrow and grief. The good prophet Elijah was weary of his life, by reason of the miseries of it, through the calamities of the time; and therefore entreateth the Lord to take away his soul (1 Kin. 19:4). And Paul cries out, one while upon the miseries that he felt through the body of death that was in him (Rom. 7:24); and at another time desires to be dissolved, and to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23); not simply, but because there was freedom from all sin, and the miseries thereof.

3. Every day to commend ourselves in souls and bodies, and all that we have, morning and evening, to the blessing and protection of God; for each day and night hath grief enough, by reason of our sin, which of ourselves we cannot undergo without the help of God. When our Saviour Christ was to die upon the cross, he commendeth His soul into His Father's hands (Luke 23:46). And none of us have assurance of our continuance in life, but though we be well in the morning, we may be dead in the evening; or alive at night, and dead in the morning; and therefore we must not forget the practice of this duty. David did it in the time of trouble, though he were in health (Psa. 31:5), and though we were free from peril of death, yet our daily vexations should move us hereunto; for who can learn any good thing without labour and pain? Who can do a good work without let or opposition? If we would repent, we are either clogged with corruptions, or

overwhelmed with temptations. And if we seek to walk in new obedience, we have the world, the flesh and the devil, all endeavouring to turn us back to our old course in sin. So that if we would either avoid evil, or do good, or support with some comfort our daily vexations, we must commend ourselves, and all ours, into the hands of God every day. And thus much of this reason, and of Christ's dehortation from distrustful care.

# 7:1-2

"*Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*" Matthew 7:1,2.

In these words, and so forward to the end of the fifth verse, is contained the sixth part of this sermon of our Saviour Christ, concerning judgment. And it consisteth of three parts: First, a commandment, *Judge not*; then certain reasons of the commandment, in the words following to the fifth verse; and thirdly, a remedy of evil and rash judgment in the fifth verse.

Touching the commandment, *Judge not*,

The Meaning.

This commandment forbids not all kind of judgment, but must be restrained to unlawful judgment; for there be four kinds of lawful judgment, two whereof be public, and two private.

1. Of public, the first is civil judgment, belonging to the magistrate, who is to enquire into the manners of men, and according to the positive laws of the country to give judgment, either in punishing offenders, or rewarding them that do well.

2. The second kind is ecclesiastical, belonging principally to the minister, who in the public dispensation of the Word, judgeth men's manners, by reproving and condemning their sins, whether they be thoughts, words or actions. In this sense the unbeliever is said to be judged when his thoughts and actions are controlled by the Word (1 Cor. 14:24), and thus *Noah judged and condemned the old world* (Heb. 11:7).

3. Of private lawful judgment, the first is private admonition, whereby one man doth in Christian and loving manner, reprehend another for his sins,

and thereby judgeth him. This is also commanded in the Word of God, and therefore it is not here forbidden.

4. The second is just dispraise, when the gross faults of notorious persons are reproved and condemned for this end alone, that others may take warning thereby. Thus Christ judged the Pharisees both for life and doctrine before His disciples, calling them hypocrites that *said and did not* (Matt. 23:1-3), and their doctrine *leaven* (Matt. 16:6); and that most justly and wisely, that His disciples and others might beware of them. And thus He called Herod *a fox* (Luke 13:32), so discovering his subtlety, for the admonition of others.

The thing then here forbidden is rash judgment, which one man doth unjustly give of another. And the reason why we so understand this place, may be drawn from the third verse, where instance is given of the judgment here forbidden, in a quick espial and sharp censure of small faults in others, not seeing far grosser and greater in ourselves. Also St Luke setting down this prohibition, *Judge not*, expounds it in the next words by *condemn not* (Luke 6:37); which must be understood of rash censure, as is plain by St Paul (Rom. 2:1), *In that thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself*, because thou dost rashly condemn him of that whereof thou thyself art guilty. Now that we may better know the thing forbidden, first I will shew what rash judgment is, and in the second place make known the common practices of it.

I. *Rash judgment is when of an evil mind we judge amiss of others, for some evil end*. In this description:

1. First, observe the root and ground of all rash judgment; to wit, *an evil mind*, whereby we love ourselves too well, and want the love of our neighbour. This we testify by being sharp sighted to pry into the lives and behaviour of others, and are as blind as beetles to see into ourselves; as also by giving ourselves exactly to censure other men's sayings and doings, and with delight to hear their faults tipped up; but for our own courses, we would not have them called into question, nor controlled.

2. Secondly, here note the manner of rash judgment, which is to judge amiss of others. And this they do which judge of other men's persons and doings

without a calling, or urgent necessity. Secondly, which give out sentence of men's doings, but not according to the law of charity, which binds a man to judge and say the best of others always, so far forth as may stand with good conscience and the Word of God.

3. Thirdly, here note the end of rash judgment; for it is ill grounded and guided, so it aims not at the reformation of the party, nor the detestation of sin in ourselves and others, but it is directed to some wrong end; as, first, to testify the hatred of the party, and desire of revenge; secondly, to delight ourselves with the faults of others; thirdly, to defame our neighbours, and to bring them to an ill name, that our names may bear away the praise without comparison; and lastly, that we may seem more holy than others by being much in censuring sin in others.

II. The practice of rash judgment consists in two things: first, the evil mind of man prepares matter of wrong judgment; and secondly, gives sentence accordingly of the sayings and doings of men, and likewise of their persons.

1. For the first, the evil mind prepares matter of rash judgment thus: it sets itself to pry and enquire narrowly into the lives and behaviour of men, and to see if it can find any matter in word or action worthy of reproof. Indeed there is a virtue whereby one man doth observe another in his ways, but that is directed to a good end, namely to rectify and reform him in his wants, and to further him when he doth well; but for one man to observe another for this end, to find out matter of defamation and reproach, is a fault directly forbidden by our Saviour Christ in this place.

2. Secondly, when matter is found, the evil mind accordingly gives censure. This censure is given, first, of the persons of men, then of their speech and actions.

1. Rash censure of men's persons is when a man thinks otherwise of the person of another than in conscience, and by God's Word he ought to do. Example of this we have in Satan; for when the Lord commends Job for his fidelity (Job 1:8-11), Satan tells the Lord that Job indeed served the Lord, but it was only for his own profit; for (saith he) *withdraw thou thy hand from him, and thou shalt see whether he will not curse thee to thy face*. This then we see is a devilish practice, and

ought to be far from every one of us. We must remember what an ancient divine hath taught us heretofore, that there are three things exempted from the judgment and censure of men: the Scriptures, the counsel of God, and the condemnation of any man's person.

2. Rash censure of men's speeches and actions is given many ways:

1. When things are well done, to carp and cavil at them without any just cause. Thus the profession of religion at this day is accounted of many to be but counterfeit holiness, and the due obedience to the moral law is nicknamed and termed preciseness, and the professors thereof called Puritans and Precisians, for this cause only, that they make conscience of walking in obedience to God's law.

2. When actions or speeches indifferent, are taken in the worser part. Thus was David's kindness ill accepted of Hanun King of Ammon (2 Sam. 10:3,4), when David sent his servants to comfort him after the death of his father; for his nobles told him and persuaded him that David sent not unto him because he honoured his father (though David undoubtedly sent with an honest and upright heart) but as it were craftily to search out the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it. Now hereupon David's servants were badly entreated, and shamefully sent away; whence grew the war that ensued between them.

3. When upon light occasion and uncertain reports, we suspect and surmise evil of our neighbour. Suspicions indeed are sometimes good, being conceived on a good ground and retained for a good end; as to beware of the party and of his evil; but when they are conceived upon light causes, and for some sinister respect (as the common practice is, upon no good ground to conceive most badly), this is rash judgment.

4. When we see any want in our neighbour's speech or behaviour, to make it worse than it was meant, or than indeed it is.

5. When we spread abroad and publish the wants of men, to defame them, which might better be concealed, and in conscience and charity ought so to be.

6. When we speak nothing but the truth of another, but yet withal do insinuate thereby some evil of the party into the hearts of the hearers. This practice is as pestilent and dangerous as any of the former. Thus Doeg told Saul of the fact of Ahimelech unto David, how he gave him victuals, and the sword of Goliath, which was true; but withal he did therein insinuate that David and Ahimelech intended conspiracy against Saul. And this telling of the truth in that sort, cost the lives of fourscore and five persons that wore the linen ephod, as we may read (1 Sam. 21:7, compared with 22:9,18).

7. When in hearing the Word preached, and sins reproved in the congregation, some hearers misapply the same. As for example, the minister reproves the sin of swearing, of drunkenness, or any such sin; then someone guilty hereof, doth not only surmise, but also break forth into this speech: *Now the preacher means me: he speaks this of me: he censures my facts and speeches*. Hereupon follows spite and malice against the person of the minister, and also rash censuring and condemning of his ministry. They also sin in this kind, that apply the reproofs of sin to the person of others; as when they say: *Now such a one is touched: there is a good lesson for such a one if he would learn it*. Yea, others go further and say: *Now the preacher means such a man: now he speaks against such a man*. But this is also rash judgment in hearing of the Word. They misconceive of the purpose of the minister, for his manner is not when he standeth in the room of God, to tip up the secrets and lives of some particular hearers; but to deliver the will of God concerning such and such sins unto all. It is the power of the Word, not the mind of the preacher, that causeth it to touch thy conscience; and therefore everyone ought to apply the Word unto his own heart, and not to lay it upon others, or else take it to be spoken of himself for his disgrace; for it is to misapply the Word, and to judge amiss of the preacher. And this is a common sin, which is the cause why many men reap so little profit by the Word preached as they do.

8. The eighth practice of rash judgment is when in towns and cities some persons are wrongfully reputed and taken for witches. This is as common a sin throughout the world as the former. One man will say: *Such a one is a witch, because he in conscience is so persuaded*; and

> yet the ground of this persuasion is nothing but his bare conceit. Another man saith: *Such a one is a witch because a wise man or a wise woman hath so reported of him or her*; and yet this testimony is but the testimony of the devil, *who is a liar, and the father thereof*. If he tell the truth, it is with purpose to deceive. Again, another is judged to be a witch, because coming to a man's house to borrow something, and being denied thereof, he took it unkindly, and thereupon gave these, or such like threatening words: *It had been as good you had lent it me*; or, *I will meet with you*; and hereupon, someone in the family fell sick, or some cattle died, and other things did miscarry. It is no question, but witches be too rife among us, and ought to be sought out and severely punished; and there be lawful ways of convincing a witch. But upon these bare presumptions to judge any one to be a witch, is an unchristian practice of rash judgment; for why may not the hand of God befall thee in visiting someone in thy family, or in the death of thy cattle, as well as the annoyance of the witch, after some hard speeches of another. A witch therefore must first be lawfully convinced, and then judged to be a witch, and not before. This thing especially jurers ought to look unto; else if they have but the ordinary discretion of common people, to judge one for a witch upon these presumptions, they may easily defile their hands with innocent blood.

Thus much for the sin of rash judgment, and the practices thereof, which are condemned and forbidden in this place.

Now because it is so common a sin in all places, and with most men counted no sin; for the common talk in all meetings is of other men, and self-love makes the heart glad to hear other men's faults ripped up, yea, this sin will take hold when other sins leave a man, which caused Christ to forewarn His disciples hereof in this place. Therefore it is our duty to labour and strive the more earnestly to be purged from this evil mind; and preserved from these evil practices of rash judgment; for which end let us lay to our consciences the reasons following:

1. The practice of rash judgment cannot stand with Christian charity; for charity binds a man to walk in love, and love suspecteth not evil, but thinks the best always, and if it be possible, thinks well of all.

2. When thou seest a man speak or practice any evil, for which thou beginnest to think hardly of him, then consider well of thine own self, how thou hast both that and all other sins in thee, if we regard the root of sin, and therefore do not rashly condemn him for his act, because thou thyself hast done the like heretofore; or else in time to come mayest do the like or worse than he hath done whom thou now condemnest.

3. Consider that God the Father hath committed all judgment unto His Son; who now executeth public judgment by the magistrate in the commonwealth, and by the minister in the church; and private judgment of admonition, and just dispraise, by them who He calleth thereunto. If therefore thou judgest another, not being called thereto, thou thrustest Christ out of His office, and robbest Him of His honour, which is a grievous sin, and cannot be unpunished.

4. Consider also that thou art unable, whatsoever thou art, to judge aright of other men's actions, being ignorant of many circumstances thereof; for thou knowest not with what mind, or to what end the action was done. Thou knowest not the cause why he did it, nor the state of his person, nor manner of his temptation thereto. And therefore, why judgest thou rashly of him?

5. He that gives rash judgment of another is worse than a thief that steals away a man's goods; for he robs him of his good name, which (as Solomon saith) *is to be chosen above great riches* (Prov. 22:1). Again, riches may be restored, so cannot a man's good name, being once blemished in the hearts of many. Again, a man may defend himself from a thief, but no man can shun another man's evil mind, or his bad tongue. Nay, the backbiter is worse than a murderer, for he killeth three at once: first, his own soul in thus sinning; secondly, his neighbour whose name he hurteth; and thirdly, the hearer, who receiveth this rash and unjust report. And for this cause, the slanderer is numbered among those that shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Psa. 15:3; 1 Cor. 6:10), and the apostle chargeth Christians to account of such railers as of persons excommunicate (1 Cor. 5:11).

Here some will say: If we may not give our opinion of others freely as we have done; what must we do when we have occasion to speak of them? *Answer*: Thy carriage towards others must be according to these rules:

1. If thou know any good thing by the party of whom thou speakest, when thou hast occasion think and speak of that. If thou know evil by him also, conceal it from others; and if thou mayest, admonish the party thereof; or else tell it to those who have authority to correct his faults; and thus shalt thou win thy brother. Some will say: I do indeed sometimes censure my brother for his faults, yet only in detestation of his sin. I love the party never the worse; and I only do it to some private friend that will not tell it again. *Answer*: But this excuse, and all such like, are frivolous. No colour of good intent can excuse rash judgment. If thou lovest him, why dost thou make known his fault to another, for *love covereth the multitude of sins* (1 Pet. 4:8)? And if thy conscience answer, it will tell thee that either ill will to the party causeth thee so to do, or self love, whereby through his defamation thou thyself seekest to be advanced above him in the thoughts of others. In thy censuring therefore look to thine heart, whether malice move thee not thereto; and take heed to the end also; for if it rise from a bad ground, or tend to a wrong end, the whole action is naught.

2. We ought to think as well of every man as possibly we can, yea, of our enemy and of his actions; for *love thinketh not evil*; and in the practice of love towards our enemies, we become followers of God (Matt. 5:44,45).

3. If thou mark thy neighbour's life and behaviour, do it for this end, to withdraw him from sin, and to further him in well doing.

4. Lastly, in all thy societies and dealings with others, labour either to do them good, or to receive good from them; and by this means thou shalt eschew the sin of rash judgment.

Here, two questions may be moved concerning rash judgment, and that necessarily, because surmises will arise upon very small occasions:

1. *Question*: When may a man doubt or suspect evil of another? *Answer*: In all suspicion, recourse must be had to the ground thereof, whether it rise of just and sufficient cause or not. A sufficient cause of suspicion is that which in the judgment of wise men, being well considered with all the circumstances thereof, is judged sufficient. And on the other side, that is

insufficient, which wise men well weighing with the circumstances thereof, do judge insufficient. If then the cause of suspicion be thought insufficient in the judgment of the wise and godly, we must suspend our suspicion; as thus: suppose some evil is reported abroad of such a man; as that he is a thief, an adulterer, or such like; yet this fame riseth only of some one in his report, which because it may proceed from an ill mind on a private grudge, we are not to yield thereupon to suspect ill of the party. This report may well cause us to search further into the case, and move us to look unto ourselves that we be not hurt by him. But if the cause be thought sufficient in the judgment of those that are wise and discreet, then we may without offence or breach of conscience, yield to suspect and judge evil of another.

2. *Question*: How may we give upright judgment of all men with whom we live and have to deal? *Answer*: This is as necessary to be known as the former, for as we are prone to think ill, so we are also forward in judging rashly. Therefore there are three things required in the judging of others:

1. First, we must have recourse to the cause of our judgment; for if the cause be insufficient, then our judgment is rash and unlawful. Before the Lord brought upon the world the confusion of languages. He is said to go down among them to see their act (Gen. 11:6). And before He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone, He is said to come down from heaven, to see whether they had done according to the cry that was come up to the Lord (Gen. 18:21); whereby the Lord would teach us that before He enter into judgment with any man, or any people, He first takes good consideration of the fact which causeth his punishment.

2. Secondly, we must have authority and warrant by calling to give judgment, or else something which is answerable thereto, though the judgment be private; as to give admonition or just dispraise; yet without a calling we must not do it. He that giveth judgment must be able truly to say: *The Lord hath called me thus to do*. The magistrate, the minister, the master, and every superior hath authority to judge those that are under him; and for private men in private judgment, though they want this authority by calling, yet if they have that which is answerable hereto, that is, the affection of Christian love, so as they

can say with Paul, *The love of God constraineth me* (2 Cor. 5:14), then they may judge.

3. Thirdly, we must always have a good end of our judgment, as well as a good beginning; that is, the reformation and amendment, not the defaming of our brother. And these three concurring in all hard speeches, they cease to be rash and unjust censures. John Baptist calls the Pharisees and Saducees, a *generation of vipers* (Matt. 3:7). Our Saviour Christ calls them *hypocrites*, and *painted tombs* (Matt. 23:27); and Herod a *fox* (Luke 13:32). The prophet Isaiah calls the princes and people of Judah and Israel, *Princes and people of Sodom* (Isa. 1:10). And the apostle calls the Galatians, fools (Gal. 3:1); and the Cretans, *Liars, evil beasts, slow bellies* (Tit. 1:12,13). All which are hard speeches, but yet no slanders; because they had all of them a calling so to do. And likewise did this on good ground, and for a good end.

Thus much for the commandment. Now follows two reasons to induce us to make conscience of rash judgment. The former is laid down in these words: *That ye be not judged*. And it may be framed thus: *If ye judge, ye shall be judged of men again with rash judgment. But ye cannot abide to be judged of rashly. And therefore judge ye not*. The second part is understood, but yet necessarily collected. The conclusion is the commandment itself, *Judge not*.

This reason doth afford us two instructions:

1. It giveth us a taste and view of our own natural pride and self- love; for when we hear God dishonoured by swearing, or our neighbour's name defamed by slandering, we are not only grieved, but oftentimes are the cause thereof, and take great delight therein, especially in hearing other men's faults ripped up to their disgrace. But yet we can in no sort brook or suffer our own good name to be called in question. If ourselves be evil spoken of, we are presently filled with malice and envy, and cannot be at rest till we be required or revenged. Nay, though we be in a good manner admonished of our fault, even in love, and after a friendly sort, yet we can very hardly brook it; though the party admonishing make known unto us that he doth it only for our good, without all purpose of disgrace unto our persons.

2. Here also our Saviour Christ affordeth unto us a notable way whereby we may come to the knowledge of our own sins, and of the heinousness thereof. When we behold sin in ourselves, we hardly judge it to be sin. We must therefore look upon our own sins in the persons of others, and learn to judge of it in ourselves as we judge of it in others. When we consider of rash judgment in others against ourselves, we count it a vile and grievous sin, yea, odious and intolerable. And in like sort ought we to think of rash judgment in ourselves towards others. And so for every other sin in ourselves, we ought to judge of it, as we do when we see it in the persons of others against us. Otherwise if we look only to ourselves, we shall sooth up ourselves in sin, making great sins little sins, and small sins none at all.

"*For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*" (v.2)

This verse contains a double confirmation of the former reason, drawn from the event.

1. The first, in these words, *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged*; as if Christ had said: If ye judge men rashly, then men again, by the appointment of God in His wisdom and providence, shall accordingly give rash judgment upon you. But if ye judge men righteously, then men again, by God's appointment and providence, shall judge well of you. For so I take the words to be meant of men's judgment by God's appointment in His providence, and not of God's judgment immediately.

Now in this proof:

1. First, we may observe one true and main cause of that personal defamation which is common in the world; and it is to be found in the person himself that is defamed: he hath rashly and unjustly censured others, for which God in His providence, doth most justly cause others to defame him again; so as men themselves do most of all wound their own good names, and by their bad carriage towards others, justly cause their own disgrace. In regard whereof, we must learn:

1. First, to set a careful watch before our mouths, to keep the door of our lips, governing out tongues by the Word of God; for when we censure

others rashly, we do procure judgment unto ourselves.

2. Secondly, to be patient under the rash censures and slanders of others. For we must think that we ourselves have heretofore done the like to others; and therefore it is justice with God to reward us in the same kind wherewith we have wronged others. This is Solomon's counsel (Eccl. 7:21,22), *Give not thine heart to all the words that men speak, lest thou do hear thy servant cursing thee: for ofttimes also thine heart knoweth that thou likewise hast cursed others*.

2. Secondly, in this proof we may also observe the right way how to get and keep a good name; to wit, by judging others with Christian judgment, carrying a charitable opinion of everyone, speaking the best of them in all companies, so far forth as we can with good conscience, and never judging hardly of any, till we be indeed lawfully called thereunto, having a good ground for our action, and doing it for a good end. *If thou wouldest live long* (saith the prophet, Psa. 34:12,13) *and see good days, refrain thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile*; that is, speak not evil of any man, though thou know ill by him, till thou be lawfully called thereto.

3. Thirdly, from the consideration of this providence of God whereby He ordereth and disposeth that defamers of others shall be rewarded in their kind, and that by others; we may gather that God knows every unadvised thought of the heart, and every rash censure which we speak or think of others; else how could this be true, that rash judgers shall be so rewarded in their kind, seeing men may conceal their thoughts, and many times their words from the eyes of men? To this purpose Solomon admonisheth (Eccl. 10:20), not to curse *the king, no not in thy thought, nor the rich man in thy bedchamber: for the fowl of heaven shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall declare the matter*. And this must teach us for to make conscience of all our speeches and thoughts that concern others, yea, then when we ourselves are judged. When David was railed upon by wicked Shimei, he stayed himself with the consideration of this: that God knew it, and appointed Shimei to curse David (2 Sam. 16:10).

4. Lastly, here it may be doubted how God can be cleared from the guilt of rash judgment, seeing in His providence He causeth it by His decree. *Answer*: Though He decree it, yet is He free from the fault thereof; for: First, He decrees it not to be the cause thereof Himself, but to permit it among men, leaving them to be the authors thereof. Secondly, He decrees to dispose of it well, and to order it as a just punishment of the rash judgment of others, and so in no sort is the cause of evil in rash judgment; howsoever He dispose hereof for the just punishment of offenders in this kind.

2. The second confirmation of the first reason is contained in this parable, which tendeth to the same end with the former sentence: *And with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again*; that is, the Lord hath ordained that men shall be rewarded in their kind, like for like. Hence we may observe this rule of God's justice in the punishment of sin: namely, to reward men in their kind, punishing them in the same things wherein they offend. David sinned by committing adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah; and God by way of punishment raised up evil against him out of his own house in the same kind; for his own son Absalom deflowered his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel (2 Sam. 12:9,11 and 16:22). And experience shews that blood will have blood; for though the murderer escape the hands of the civil judge, yet the terror and vengeance of God doth ordinarily pursue him to destruction. A notable example hereof we have in the holy league (as it is called) but indeed the bloody league; wherein the enemies of God's grace and truth did confederate themselves to root out true religion and the professors thereof from the earth. But the Lord hath rewarded them in their kind, and turned their own swords against themselves, causing them to spoil one another; according to the prophecy of Isaiah, *Woe to thee that spoilest, and was not spoiled; and dost wickedly, and they did not wickedly against thee. When thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled* (Isa. 33:1). This rewarding justice of God well observed, doth discover unto us, yea, and denounce a fearful woe, not only against all those that give out rash judgment of others; but against all usurers and oppressors, who mete out hard measure unto others, even cruelty without mercy; but so shall they be served again. God's heavy hand hath heretofore lien sore upon this land for many years in dearth and scarcity, which also in some sort hath been made more grievous upon the poor, by hard hearted

rich men, who are like to great fishes that devour the lesser; for they grind the faces of the poor, and pluck off their skins from them, and their flesh from the bones by their wicked covetousness. Yea, doubtless their cruelty costs many a man's life. Some in higher place by enclosing and racking of rents. Others of meaner sort, by engrossing and withholding the commodities of the land from the common good till a time of dearth come, wherein (as the prophet saith, Amos 8:5) they make *the ephah small, and the shekel great*; that is, sell little for much, lessening the measure, and enhancing the price. And indeed, such a time of dearth is the worldling's day, wherein they do enrich themselves by the spoil of the poor. But they must know that a fearful woe belongs unto them: for the like merciless measure shall be measured to them again, and when they cease to spoil, then shall they be spoiled; for when the hand of God is heavy upon the poor, then no doubt is vengeance preparing for hard hearted rich men, who increase the same. The Lord forbiddeth to *trouble the widow or fatherless child* (Exod. 22:22-24), *for if thou vex and trouble such, and so he call and cry unto me, I will surely hear his cry: then shall my wrath be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless*. This is God's Word, and it must stand. The Lord Himself foretold that toward the latter day, *iniquity should abound and charity should wax cold* (Matt. 24:12); and are not these the times whereof Christ spake? For what power hath the gospel to withdraw men's hearts from iniquity? And when was there ever less charity than is now? Well, these are forerunners of greater judgments; and therefore in the fear of God, let us make conscience of this and all other sins, even in consideration of this, that the Lord will pay us home in that kind wherein we offend.

# 7:3-5

"*And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*" Matthew 7: 3-5.

"*And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?*" (vv. 3,4)

These two verses contain a second reason to enforce the former commandment against rash judgment. The meaning of the words is thus:

*Why seest thou?*

That is, upon what ground, for what cause, with what conscience *seest thou*? And so in v.4, *How sayest thou*? That is, with what face, with what honesty and conscience *sayest thou*? So much these interrogations *how* and *why* import.

*Seest*

Sight, here is not a light or sudden beholding of the mote, but a seeing with attention, a serious considerate observation thereof.

*A mote*

The word used in the original may as well be translated a *straw*, or a *piece of straw*, as a *mote*, as it hath been in former times; for it will bear either translation. Yet the word *beam* seems rather to have reference to a *straw* than to a *mote*. But which way soever it be taken, it signifies small and little

sins, as sins of ignorance and infirmity, such as the best Christians do commit, and cannot be free from in this life. Again, it signifieth supposed sins; such as are not indeed sins before God, but only in his opinion that giveth rash judgment.

*And perceivest not*

This perceiving is properly an action of the mind, standing in *consideration* and *thinking*, which follows after *seeing*. Thus the word is used (Luke 12:27), *Consider the lilies of the field*; that is, look upon them, and then consider well thereof in your mind. And (Jam. 1:23), *He that hears the Word and doeth it not, is like unto a man that beholds his natural face in a glass*; that is, to one that sees and considers of his shape. So that Christ's meaning is as if He had said, It may be thou seest, but why doest thou not well weigh and consider with thyself of the beam that is in thine own eye?

*Beam*

By *beam*, is here meant great and notorious reigning sins in man's heart; such as wound the conscience, which are like unto a beam in the eye; which doth not only blemish, but quite dash out the sight. Some may here ask, in what sense this is spoken, seeing the eye is not capable of a beam? *Answer*: It is spoken by way of supposition, as if it had been said, *If it were possible that a beam could be in the eye, the rash censurer's fault is as a beam in the eye*. This kind of speech is usual in Scripture; *If I could speak with the tongues of angels*, saith St Paul (1 Cor. 13:1), that is, suppose angels had tongues, and that I could speak as eloquently as they.

The words of the fourth verse are for substance all one with the former. The difference between them is only this: In the third verse Christ speaks only of rash judgment conceived in the mind; but in the fourth verse He speaks of rash judgment uttered in speech: *How sayest thou to thy brother*, etc. So that in both verses, the words are a parable bearing this sense: *With what face, honesty or conscience canst thou find fault with thy brother, either in thought or speech, thou thyself being tainted with greater faults and offences*? And hence the second reason may be thus conceived:

*He that hath greater faults, must not censure him that hath lesser.*

*But he that giveth rash judgment hath greater faults that he whom he censureth.*

*And therefore, no man ought to use rash judgment.*

The proposition or first part is omitted; the assumption expressly set down in the third and fourth verses whereupon the conclusion follows against rash judgment.

1. Upon this form of speech, *How seest thou*? *Why sayest thou*? that is, *With what face and honesty, and upon what ground*? we may learn this instruction: that our speeches, yea, our very thoughts must be conceived and uttered upon good ground, and in a good manner. *Establish thy thought by counsel* (saith Solomon, Prov. 20:18), *and by counsel make war*; teaching us to have direction from the Word of God for the ground and manner of our very thoughts, and for all our affairs. Our Saviour Christ bids us take heed how we hear God's Word (Luke 8:18); and Solomon would draw us to this heed and attention in prayer also: *Be not rash with thy mouth, nor let thy heart be hasty to utter a thing before God* (Eccl. 5:2). Now that which they speak of divine exercises is in this place by our Saviour enlarged to every thought of the heart, and word of the mouth that concerns our brother.

Further, in these words, *Seest thou*; that is, *with attention and consideration beholdest*, our Saviour Christ acquaints us with a common fault wherewith our nature is generally stained and corrupted; to wit, that we are over sharp sighted in other men's lives and offences. This appears in that men can easily discern small faults in others, and cannot see great offences in themselves, nay, when they can find no just fault, yet they will make these faults which indeed be none at all. Example hereof we have in the Scribes and Pharisees, in their censures against our Saviour and His disciples. They themselves were hypocrites tainted with grievous sins, and yet they pried to find motes in Christ's eyes; for when He wrought miracles, cured the diseased, and did good unto us all, they blamed him as a breaker of the Sabbath day, and as a companion of publicans and sinners, though He conversed with them for their good. So they blamed His disciples for eating with unwashen hands, and for plucking up the ears of corn on the Sabbath day to satisfy their hunger, and for their seldom fasting. This fault was in the Corinthians, who censured Paul and his ministry for want of eloquence

and excellency of words, which was in other teachers amongst them, as may appear by his rebuking of them (1 Cor. 4). And the Christian brethren among the Romans condemned one another in the observation of days and times, and in the use of the creatures of God (Rom. 14); which is nothing else but rash judgment. And this no doubt is a fault which reigns in our congregations, even among the better sort at this day; for deeply is our nature stained with this corruption, and so prone it is to this sin, that even they which have received true grace can hardly abstain from the practices of rash judgment.

The considerations hereof must teach us these duties:

1. First, to take knowledge of this corruption of our nature, and of the want of brotherly love in us; for why should we so soon spy a fault in another but because we want the love and charity to his person? We may consider the vileness of this practice by resemblance in some brute creatures; for we account most basely of those ravening fowls which delight in nothing but in filthy carrions; and such for all the world are these rash censurers, all their delight is in other men's faults, which make them so sharp sighted to spy them out.

2. Secondly, when we are about to censure any man, we must (in regard of this corruption) suspect ourselves, and our speeches, and call ourselves back to a view and consideration of that which we are to speak; for oft-times we see that which we ought not to see, and thereupon speak that which we ought in conscience to conceal. Physicians give this note of a frenzy, *to begin to take up straws*. Now when the mind looks not into itself, but pries into other men's actions, then no doubt it is not right, but is corrupt and infected with a spiritual frenzy, and therefore the danger of this disease must cause us to look unto ourselves.

3. Thirdly, here we may observe a reason of the strange behaviour of men in regard of sin. For this we may easily perceive, that men with open mouth will condemn those things in others which they like and approve in themselves. Now the cause hereof is, for that the affections do follow the mind; such as the mind is, such are the affections; and man's mind naturally looketh outward, not inward, it sees very little

> faults in others, but will neither see nor condemn the same faults, nor greater, in itself. Nay, rather it causeth man to love those sins in himself which he detests in others. And therefore in the amendment of our lives, we must begin in our own hearts, and turn the eye of our mind inward to see our own sins, and labour first to have our hearts touched with sorrow for them, and to hate them first in ourselves, and then to proceed to hate them in others. It is a preposterous course, arising from the corruption of nature, to begin with the hatred and dislike of sin out of ourselves.

2. Further, here in this reason our Saviour Christ makes a difference of sins: some are as motes, some as beams. Every sin indeed is death and condemnation, and yet all are not equal, but far different in degrees: as some men are drowned in the channel and middle of the sea, some by the shore side, which places differ in depth and danger, though all is one in regard of death. Some men endure damnation in deeper measure, some in lesser, yet both are condemned. But the papists abuse these words, and would gather hereon a distinction of sins which God doth not allow; to wit, that some sins are *venial*, which deserve not death, and these are here called *motes*; some again are *mortal*, deserving death, and those are called *beams*. But the mote and beam are both mortal sins. A mote or a straw may sometime put out the eye, though indeed the beam be more forcible to dash it quite out. And so do small sins wound the conscience, and damn the soul, though greater sins do more deeply wound the conscience, and plunge the same into hell. Small and great sins both destroy the soul, though in a different degree. The very mote is deadly sin, though in nature the beam be more mortal. This distinction they borrowed from former ages, but abusing the primitive church from whence they had it; for the ancient fathers called some sins venial, not because they deserved not death, but because they were pardonable in regard of the church, and did not incur the censure of excommunication; and those they call mortal or criminal sins, which had the censure of excommunication passed against them; so that the papists abuse both fathers and Scripture in this distinction.

3. Thirdly, Christ naming the very eye, and not the face or other parts of the body, would hereby give us to understand what is the property and scope of rash judgment; namely, to deface the very intention of his heart of whom

censure is given. When David sent his servants to Hanun king of Ammon, to comfort him after his father's death; the princes of Ammon told their lord that David's servants were but spies that came to search out the city (1 Chr. 19:2-4). Thus they judged rashly of David's fact, and their intent was to corrupt the honest mind of David; persuading the king that David and his servants had another intent and end of their coming than they made known to the king. So that the rash censurer seeks to blemish the good mind and conscience of his brother. And hence we may well be warned to take notice of our natural corruption, how that without God's special grace do we plainly hate our brother; else we would never so suspiciously pry into his ways, as to deprave his good meaning. We must therefore content ourselves with the speeches and actions of our brother, and take heed how we deal about the eye; that is, with his intent and meaning; but we must leave to God, who only knows the heart. And for his actions and speeches (if it may be) we must always expound them in the better part. If we cannot defend a man's doing, yet we must excuse his meaning. If we cannot excuse his intent, yet we must think the best of his conscience. If we cannot excuse his conscience, yet we must judge it to be but a sin of ignorance. If we cannot do so, yet we must think that it was done in some grievous temptation, and that if we ourselves had been in like case, we should have done far worse. We know not when God may give grace to men, or when He leaves them to themselves, and therefore in regard of the mind and conscience, we must compromise our judgment at all times.

*And perceivest not*.

That is, though it may be thou seest it, yet thou doest not well consider of it. Here our Saviour noteth out a second main fault in man's nature to be thought upon; namely, carnal security, whereby though in some small measure men see their offences, yet naturally they never think on them heartily and seriously as they ought to do. St Paul saith (Eph. 5:14), *Awake thou that sleepest*, signifying that by nature we lie slumbering in sin; so as though we may sometime have a little glimmering thereof, yet we never thoroughly behold and consider them as we should. The Lord Himself complains of this security in sin in His own people: *No man saith, What have I done*? (Jer. 8:6). This was the sin of the old world: *They knew nothing till the flood came* (Matt. 24:39). It may be they had now and then

some conceit thereof, but they thought not seriously thereon. Now as the days of Noah were, so shall be the days of the coming of the Son of man, *in regard of security*. And these are those days wherein we now live. For howsoever we sometime think of our sins, yet we look not on them with both eyes, as we do on our neighbours' faults. We must here be warned to take heed of this sin; for it is a fearful case, either not to see our sins, or, seeing them, to pass them over without serious consideration. The apostle saith, *When men say, Peace, then comes sudden destruction* (1 Thess. 5:3). Now men do then most fearfully cry, *Peace, peace*, unto themselves, when they either will not see their sins, or seeing them, do not well consider thereof in their hearts. We therefore must labour for this grace to have a clear sight into our sins; for without that we can never sorrow according unto God, nor repent unto life as we ought to do.

*How seest thou* etc., *and how sayest thou to thy brother*

In both these phrases consider how Christ would have all those which are to give judgment of the offences of others, to be themselves without reproof and blame. Else they are no fit persons to give censure of those that be under them. And therefore the magistrate in the town and commonwealth, the minister in the church, the master in the family, and every superior in his place, must labour to be unblameable; for if they be tainted with gross sins, they can never thoroughly purge them that be under them. *A minister* (saith Paul) *must be unreproveable* (1 Tim. 3:2), and so likewise the magistrate, who is God's vicegerent, and every governor in his place.

4. Lastly, in both verses observe the condition of those that are given to rash judgment; namely, that of all men they are the worst. Christ maketh them to carry beams in their eyes, when others have but motes or straws. The man that is given to censure others, would seem to be of all men most holy; but the truth is, there is none so bad as he though he be a minister, yea, be he what he will, nay the better is his place, the worst is his fault; and the more he is given to this sin of censuring, the worst he is, for the less he sees his own sins; nay, let him live unblameably before men, yet he hath a heart full of pride and self-love, and full of disdain towards his brother. And therefore let us take heed of this sin, even when it begins to creep upon us.

*Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*" (v.5)

This verse contains a remedy against rash judgment. It depends upon the former verses as an answer to a secret objection that might thence arise; for whereas Christ had said, *Judge not*; and *Why seest thou a mote in thy brother's eye* etc., some man might say, belike then it is not lawful to correct my brother by speech, and by reproof to seek amendment of his fault. To this Christ answers that He forbids not brotherly correction and admonition, but the evil, corrupt and unchristian manner of giving admonition and correction; whenas men take a preposterous course in censuring, and do not begin with themselves in the first place, but with their brethren. As if our Saviour Christ had said, Hypocrite, thou hast greater faults than he whom thou judgest; and therefore if thou wilt take a right course in thy correction, begin with thyself, reform the great sins that be in thyself, and then shalt thou be fitted and better able to correct and reform thy brother. So that these words contain two parts: 1. The remedy of rash judgment, *Hypocrite, first pluck out the beam out of thine own eye*. 2. The fruit hereof, which is true wisdom, to be able to discern aright of our neighbour's fault, and also how it is to be cured, in these words, *And then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye*. Of these in order.

1. The remedy against rash judgment is for a man first to begin with himself, reforming first his own offences; which because it is here propounded by our Saviour Christ of set purpose, as a special remedy against this sin, I will stand a little to shew how a man may cast out the beam out of his own eye. Hereunto four things are required:

(1.) A man must turn the eye of his mind inward, and cast his cogitations toward his own life and conscience, that so he may see and know the principal sins of his own heart and life. To this purpose serveth the moral law, which is as a glass to let us see our main and principal sins, which be the beams in our eyes here meant. And for direction herein, I will note out some special main sins, which be in all men naturally; and which every one must well consider of, that will cast this beam out of his own eye:

1. The first common sin of all men is a guiltiness in Adam's first offence; that is, his sin is made ours by relation or imputation; for his eating the forbidden fruit was no particular or private sin, but the sin of man's nature; and every one sinned in Adam, that was to descend of him by ordinary generation; for though we were not born when Adam sinned, yet by his sin we stand guilty of eternal death before God.

2. The second common sin is a natural disposition and proneness to everything that is evil and against God's law, when occasion is offered, the sin against the Holy Ghost not excepted; for the same corruption and proneness to evil which was in them that have committed this sin, is in all men naturally; the difference stands only in this: that all do not fall into it. And this proneness to evil is the second head of original sin.

3. The third common sin is inward idolatry. This is a most heinous sin, and may be thus perceived: Every man by nature takes his heart from the true God, and bestows it on some other thing he makes his god; and by nature we love ourselves, our sins, and the world more than God, and yield obedience to the devil, rather than to the true God. The like may be said of our fear, joy and dangers, and of our trust and confidence, all which affections we set upon the devil, the world, and iniquity; yea, upon the creature; forsaking the Creator, who is blessed for ever; and he that sees not this in himself, hath idolatry as yet reigning in his heart.

4. The fourth sin is hypocrisy, which naturally reigneth in all men, till grace expel it. This hypocrisy stands in this: when men are about any good thing, they are more careful to please God in the outward action than with the service of the heart. Again, they seek more to please men than God. And, lastly, they rather endeavour to perform the outward duties of the first table than of the second. This is a large beam in every man's eye naturally, which each one ought to see in himself, as well as the former.

5. The fifth sin is pride, not outward in apparel, but spiritual inward pride of the heart, which stands in this: that a man thinks himself out of Christ to have in him some natural goodness, whereby he stands in God's favour, and hath in himself perfect love, and perfect faith. This

sin all men will condemn, and yet it cleaves fast to every man by nature. The church of Laodicea (Rev. 2:17) said she was rich, and lacked nothing; whereas indeed she was poor and blind and naked. This inward pride poisons God's grace in the heart, it is a main sin, and the common cause of rash judgment.

6. The sixth sin is that particular sin or sins wherewith everyone is assaulted; for howsoever the corruption of nature doth infect all men alike, yet everyone that is of years shall find himself more troubled with some sins than with others, by reason that corruption is in part either removed or restrained in him. Wherefore everyone must enter into his own heart, and there search and see what be those particular sins which most of all prevail against him, troubling his heart, and causing him to dishonour God. These be his beams which keep God's grace out of his heart, which we must labour to find out in ourselves.

(2.) After we have some sight of these our main sins, we must in the next place labour to see them in ourselves as beams, and to feel the weight thereof; for commonly we either see them not at all in ourselves, or if we do a little perceive them, yet we see them not in their quantity as beams, but rather like motes or straws. Now we shall come to see these sins in ourselves as beams in their just quantity:

1. First, if we compare them with other men's sins, as with Adam's first sin; for doubtless we have many particular sins in our hearts that be as great or greater than Adam's sin was, considered in the fact; and yet by that sin Adam brought not only on himself, but on all his posterity mortality and destruction, the first and the second death.

2. Again, we shall come to see the grievousness on our sins, if we consider them in the punishment thereof; that is, subjection to all woe and misery, yea, and to death itself in this life, and also to death eternal after this life, with the devil and his angels. This is the reward of every sin in itself.

3. Thirdly, consider these thy sins, as they were laid upon the holy person of our Saviour Christ, for which He endured not only outward bodily torments on the cross, but inwardly in soul apprehended the whole

wrath of God due unto us for the same, which caused Him to sweat water and blood, and to cry, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*? This being well weighed, will let us see that our sins are no motes, but huge and great beams, such as are able to crush us in pieces, under the heavy wrath of God.

4. Lastly, have recourse to the last commandment, which forbids the very first thoughts and motions in the heart, that be against our neighbour, and against God, though we never give consent of will thereto; nay, though we abhor the fact itself; as when we see our neighbour's ox or his ass, to wish in our hearts, "O that this were mine," though we detest the stealing thereof. Now if this first motion be a sin deserving damnation, how heinous be the sins of our nature, and the transgressions of our life, wherein we have given full consent to rebel against God?

(3.) The third thing required to this casting out the beam out of our own eye, is that which is here intended by our Saviour Christ; namely, to cease to judge others, and to begin to judge ourselves for our own sins; for *if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged* (1 Cor. 11:31). Now we do then judge ourselves, when in our own hearts we give sentence against ourselves, and condemn ourselves in regard or our own sins. Thus David judged himself (Psa. 51:1), *Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to the multitude of thy mercies*; as if he should say, Lord, one mercy will not serve the turn, so far have I plunged myself into hell by my grievous sins; but in the multitude of thy mercies do them all away. And in the words following (v.2), *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquities*, he confesseth himself to be so deeply stained with the filth of sin, that a little washing will not serve. So when the Lord had spoken unto Job, and made him see and know himself, he cries out (Job 40:4), *Behold I am vile*, and again (Job 42:6), *Now I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes*, for those things that I have said and done. In such sort also did the prodigal son judge himself, crying out (Luke 15:21), that he had sinned against heaven, and against his father, and was not worthy to be called his son. The apostle Paul likewise confesseth against himself that he was the head of all sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). And thus much we condemn ourselves, and say with Daniel, in his prayer for the people (Dan. 9:7), *Open shame and confusion of face belong unto us*.

(4.) After we have thus judged ourselves, we must labour to break off and to amend our former evil ways, endeavouring by all means that sin may be abolished and weakened in us more and more. And this is indeed the removing of the beam out of our own eyes; that so we may be fitter to censure and reform others. Of this last duty the apostle speaketh (Rom. 14:13), *Let us not judge one another any more, but use your judgment rather in this, that no man put a stumbling block before his brother*; that is, he live without offence.

These four duties ought everyone to practise; and to move us hereunto,

1. First, let us consider that it is God's commandment in this place, that we should first reform our own selves.

2. Secondly, that our state and case is fearful and miserable without this reformation; if a man have but a thorn in his finger, he cannot be well until it be plucked out; what case then is he in that hath a huge beam in his eye, the most tender part of the whole body; that is, hath his heart and conscience pricked with the sting of sin? And therefore it nearly concerns everyone to remove it.

3. Thirdly, we shall never be able to judge aright of ourselves, of others, or of the life to come, till we practise this duty; and therefore in the fear of God, let us seriously set ourselves unto it.

Thus much of the remedy itself; now follow two circumstances therein further to be considered: (1.) The party to whom the remedy is given; that is, *an hypocrite*; (2.) When this remedy is to be practised: *First, pluck out* etc.

(1.) For the party, by *hypocrite*, we must understand him that in heart and speech is prone to conceive, and give rash judgment of other men's sayings and actions. And good cause there is why he is so called, for this man hath the sin of hypocrisy reigning in him, he desires to seem more holy than others, and therefore gives himself to censure others, that by debating of others, he may advance himself. See this in the hypocritical Pharisee (Luke 18:11,12), *I thank God that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week* etc. But they

must know, that this censuring of others is a fruit of hypocrisy arising out of an hollow heart.

(2.) The second circumstance is the time when this duty is to be practised; namely, in the first place; *First cast out* etc. Here then we have a notable direction for the manner and order of giving brotherly correction: *It must begin with a man's own self, and end in a man's neighbour*. And by proportion, look by how much everyone is nearer unto us, so much the sooner must he be corrected and judged. If thou be a private man that art to give censure, first begin with thyself; then judge thy kindred; thirdly, thine acquaintance; and last of all, strangers. So a master of a family must first judge himself, then his own family, and after he may judge his friends and neighbours, and last of all, strangers. And the like must every superior practise in his place. Now by this order to be observed in brotherly censure, we may easily see that the world is far wide in the practice of this duty, for everyone thinks well of himself, and also of his friends and acquaintances, and therefore spares them, and will not censure them; but for strangers, them he will not stick to reproach and to condemn. But this is a preposterous course, swerving far from this direction of our Saviour Christ.

2. *And then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye*.

Ths is the fruit of the former remedy; by curing himself first, a man comes to see clearly what his neighbour's fault is, and how it is to be cured and amended.

(1.) Where we may note, that out of the amendment of ourselves follows a spiritual gift of judgment and wisdom, whereby we see aright how to reform our brother's fault. Hence I gather this general doctrine: that *Right wisdom and understanding follows the reformation of our own hearts and lives. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord* (Psa. 111:10); that is, true wisdom and good understanding comes from a reverent awe of God, in regard of His Word and commandment. So (Psa.119:100), *I was made wiser than the ancients, by keeping thy commandment*. First, David reformed himself, and then he became exceeding wise. As it is said of Mannaseh (2 Chr. 33:13) that when he repented and humbled himself, *he knew that the Lord was God*. And after Nebuchadnezzar was humbled (Dan. 4:34), *his*

*understanding was restored to him*, for *God teacheth the humble His ways* (Psa. 25:9). The proud man is he that builds up his sins with posts and beams, and such an one the Lord will not teach; but him that plucks down these posts by amendment of his life, will the Lord instruct in the way that he should walk. Christ saith to His disciples (John 15:14,15), *Ye are my friends, if ye keep my commandments*; and to His friends will He make known all things needful that He hath heard of His Father; by all which it is plain that right judgment follows true reformation of life.

Uses.

1. Hereby we see how to come to understand the Holy Scriptures read or heard; namely, by the amendment of our own lives. First reform thine own heart and life and then shalt thou have true judgment given unto thee, to be able, in reading or hearing, to understand God's Word, at least so much thereof as shall be needful for thee; and doubtless, the cause why most men profit so little in the Scriptures, though they hear and read them much, is for that they look not to the reformation of their own lives and consciences, according to the Word (Prov. 1:23), *Turn you at my correction* (saith Wisdom) *and I will pour out my mind unto you, and make you understand my words*. The student therefore that must fit himself to get true understanding in God's Word for the edification of God's church, must remember this direction, and labour first to pluck out the beam out of his own eye, and then shall he see clearly to read with judgment the Word of God, and to discern the true way of everlasting life, for the good of God's people. But if thou come in thy sins, thou readest without profit.

2. Again, wouldest thou know thyself to be a child of God? Remember then to purge thy heart and life from all sin, for thence floweth true understanding, and thereupon God will certify thy conscience of thine election and reconciliation. But if thou suffer thyself to live in sin, thou mayest long wait for thy certificate, and never have it.

3. Many then there be that will be of no religion, because there are so many and divers opinions about matters of religion in the world; and therefore till some general Council hath determined of the truth of religion, they will live as they do. But these men must know that they

take a wrong course. If they would come to know the truth of religion, they must first reform their lives; but while they live in sin, they can never see what is good, what is bad; what is truth, what is falsehood in religion (John 7:17), *If any man will do my Father's will* (saith Christ) *he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself*; where He plainly gives us to understand that true judgment of religion comes from obedience unto God. This is the right way to reform an atheist: first, to bring him to obedience. And in a word, whosoever thou art, that wouldest in thy calling, whatsoever it be, please God, and do good to others; first, purge thine own heart and life from sin, and then shalt thou see clearly wherein thou failest, and how thou art to amend thy fault, and afterward do good unto others.

(2.) A second general point. Further, in this remedy, our Saviour Christ opposeth brotherly correction unto rash judgment; and withal, prescribes brotherly correction as a duty to be practised among God's people. Touching this point, four things are to be considered: (i) Who is to correct; (ii) Who is to be corrected; (iii) What is to be corrected; (iv) In what manner.

1. For the first, the party that must correct is a brother, that is, any member of God's church. So it is said, *Then shalt thou see clearly to put out the mote out of thy brother's eye*. And (Lev. 19:17), *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart, but shall plainly rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer him to sin*. And (Matt. 18:15), *If thy brother sin against thee*, that is, do thee any wrong; or else sin against God, and thou be privy to it (for that sin may be said to be against man, whereto he is privy, though the wrong be not against him, because there is an offence given unto him); *Then tell him his fault between him and thee alone*; that is, privately. Again, every man is bound in conscience to save his brother's soul, which ofttimes may be done by brotherly correction; and for want thereof, many times the soul may perish. And therefore it is every man's duty to correct his brother; yet with this clause and caution, that just occasion be offered, and time and place observed; for there be certain particular exceptions in which a man is freed from this duty, and all because there is no just occasion of correction offered; as: First, if he be not certain of the fault committed,

for all lawful correction is of faults certainly and truly known. Secondly, if the party offending do repent, for the end of correction is to bring the offender to amendment. Thirdly, if there be no hope of his amendment (Prov. 9:8), *Reprove not a scorner*; that is, such an one as mocks thee for thy labour. Fourthly, if it may in better manner, and to better purpose, be performed by others, which for place and ability may and will more fitly perform it. But yet out of these cases, if just occasion be offered, everyone is to perform brotherly correction unto his brother.

Here I note one particular instruction; that not only the minister of God's Word is our pastor, but even every brother after a sort is a pastor in regard that he must watch over the lives of his brethren for their good and amendment. It is the sin of our time that everyone thinks he hath no charge laid on him in regard of his brother's life and estate. This was Cain's sin towards his brother Abel, he denied himself to be his brother's keeper. If any man sin, the common speech is, *What is it to me? Let them look to it whom it concerns*. But this ought not to be, one man ought to observe another, and use also brotherly correction for the reformation of faults certainly known. This is a duty of love and mercy, tending to the good of our brother, and to the salvation of his soul. In conscience we are bound to relieve the bodies of our poor brethren that be in peril and want, much more then are we bound to look unto their souls, that they perish not for want of admonition. We must turn back our enemy's ox or ass that wandereth, much more our brother from going to perdition.

2. Who is to be corrected? Out of whose eye is the mote to be taken? To wit, a brother: *out of thy brother's eye*. By *a brother* here Christ meaneth not every neighbour, for that is every man; but everyone that is a member of that church whereof we are members, and professeth the same religion which we do, being admitted into the church by the same sacrament of baptism, whereby we are admitted. This is plain in the exhortation of Christ (Matt. 18:15), *If thy brother sin against thee, tell him his fault between him and thee*; and so proceed (if he hear thee not) till he come to the censure of the church; which were in vain if the party were a member of the church. *If anyone that is called a brother* (saith Paul (1 Cor. 5:11)), be a fornicator, covetous, etc., *with such an*

*one eat not*, and he addeth, *What have I to do to judge them that are without? Do ye not judge them that are within*? Now hear the former order must be observed; that, first, a man must correct himself, secondly, his family and kindred, next a brother of the same congregation with him. And if good order be observed, he may admonish a brother that is a member of another particular church; but beyond this we may not go, though we must carry ourselves so to them that are without, that by our good conversation we may win them to God. And further this is to be known, that in the church of God, authority and dignity frees no person from brotherly correction; whereupon Paul bids the people of Colossae, to say unto Archippus their pastor, *Take heed to thy ministry, which thou hast received of the Lord, that thou fulfil it* (Col. 4:17). And hence we may learn this duty: when we offend in word or deed, we must submit ourselves willingly to brotherly correction; we must not say, as sometimes one of the Israelites that strove with his brother, said unto Moses for reproving him, *Who made thee a judge and a ruler over us*? But being faulty, we must submit ourselves to the correction of our brother, though we be above them in place. It is better to hear the reproof of a wise man (saith Solomon) than the song of a fool (Eccl. 7:5). It may be the song of a fool will more delight us, but sure it is, the wise man's reproof is far more profitable. This David testified, by desiring *that the righteous might smite him*; accounting it *as a precious balm upon his head*, which he would never want (Psa. 141:5). Yea, nature itself doth teach us this: that it is better to be reproved even of an enemy, than to be praised of a friend; according to that of Solomon (Prov. 27:5), *Open rebuke is better than secret love*.

3. For what is a brother to be admonished or corrected? Not only for great offences, but for lesser sins. We must pull out not only beams, but straws and motes out of his eye. For here lesser sins are as straws and motes to greater sins, which be as beams and posts. The reason why we must correct our brother for small offences, is because every great sin hath his beginning of some little and small sin; and therefore it is a duty of brotherly correction to cut off sin in the head, before it grow out to the full. Thus the Lord dealt with Cain (Gen. 4:7), He reproved him for his wrath and malice against his brother, testified by

his sad countenance, before he slew his brother; but Cain not yielding to the Lord's reproof, came at the last to the grievous sin of murder.

In this third point, we may take a view of that heavenly order which Christ hath left in His church, for the reformation, not only of greater sins, but of lesser sins; for there be many sins committed which cannot be corrected by the sword of the magistrate, neither yet by the public censure of the church; as lying, foolish jesting, and other offences in behaviour and attire; yet these will not Christ permit to be in His church, and therefore hath provided brotherly correction to cut them off.

4. How is brotherly correction to be performed? Although the manner of brotherly correction be not here expressly set down, yet it is implied, where it is said, *Then shalt thou see clearly* etc. I will stand a little to shew how this duty is to be performed. In brotherly correction, these things are to be required:

1. Christian wisdom to see clearly into the fault, and also how it is to be amended. The author to the Hebrews makes it the duty of every Christian to *observe his brother*; not for this end to upbraid him with his faults; but that he might rightly discern thereof, and also know how to correct him. And here comes a common fault to be reproved, many are forward and hasty to correct their brethren, but yet it shall be upon bare rumours and uncertain grounds; they will not stay till they know the fault thoroughly and certainly; whereupon it comes to pass many times, that the reprover bears the blame; for the party reproved saith there is no such matter, the thing is otherwise, and so the other becomes a rash censurer.

2. In Christian correction, there must be observation of fit circumstances; as time and place; else the good admonition may be less effectual. We shall see the practice of this in the Word of God. Abigail (1 Sam. 25:36,37) observed a fit time to reprove her husband for his churlish answer to David's servants, and therefore told him not of it till his feast of sheep shearing was ended, and the wine gone out of his head.

3. The manner of our brother's offence must be considered, whether it proceed of human frailty or otherwise. If his fault proceed from human

frailty, then Paul's lesson may be practised (Gal. 6:1), *Ye that are spiritual restore such an one with the spirit of meekness*. The phrase there is borrowed from surgeons, who beginning to deal with a broken joint, will handle the same very tenderly; and so must they be dealt with in reproof, that sin of human frailty. Example of this mildness in reproof we find in Nathan (2 Sam. 12), who reproved David in a parable, and so brought him to condemn himself. And the apostle Paul reproving the Corinthians in the beginning of the first epistle, doth include himself and Apollos in the same reproof, as though they had been guilty of the same crime (1 Cor. 4:6). And giving direction to Timothy how to carry himself in the church of God, though he allow him to use rebuke and reproof (2 Tim. 4:2), yet he bids him, *exhort an elder*; therein giving good direction for admonition. If the party be an elder, though reproof be not unlawful, yet it is not so fit as exhortation; and the like mildness must be used toward all those that sin of human frailty. But if the offence proceed from wilfulness and obstinacy, then the judgments of God must be denounced against them, to drive them to repentance.

4. Everyone that is to correct another, must consider himself and his own estate, knowing that of himself he may fall into the like offence. So Paul bids them that are to seek the restoring of such as are fallen, to consider themselves (Gal. 6:1).

5. Brotherly correction must be delivered with doctrine and instruction. (2 Tim. 4:1,2), *I charge thee before God, to reprove, exhort, and rebuke with all longsuffering and doctrine*. He that will admonish, must first himself be resolved that the thing done is a sin; then he must propound it to the party, as a sin out of God's Word; so as hereby the party may know himself to have offended, and also say that he is reproved of God Himself rather than of man. This ought all superiors to practise in correcting and admonishing their inferiors; they must not go thereto in rage, but in longsuffering; nor rudely, but with doctrine, that the party offending may see his fault. And thus much for this duty of brotherly correction.

# 7:6

"*Give not that which is holy unto* dogs: neither cast ye your pearls before swine: lest they tread them under their feet, and turning again all to rent you.*" Matthew 7:6.

Hitherto the evangelist hath set down the several heads of Christ's sermon more at large; but from this verse to the end of the chapter, He handleth briefly the points which follow. This verse dependeth not upon the former, but herein our Saviour Christ lays down a new point of instruction, directing His disciples, and in them all ministers, unto that Christian discretion which ought to be observed in the dispensation of the Word of God. And His direction is here propounded in a prohibition of *giving holy things to dogs, or casting pearls before swine*; which is enforced by a double reason: *lest they tread them* etc.

I.

Now for the better understanding hereof, first I will speak of the words, because they are hard and difficult; and then come to the doctrines.

In the words, four things are to be sought out: 1. What is meant by *holy things*. 2. What is meant by *pearls*. 3. What is meant by *dogs*. 4. What is meant by *swine*.

1. For the first, by *that which is holy*, we must understand, first and properly, *the Word of God*, written in the books of the Old and New Testaments, in his right and holy use; that is, read, dispensed and preached; and consequently, by *holy things* are meant the sacraments and Christian admonition. God's Word is called an holy thing for sundry causes, but principally for these two: first, because it is holy in itself; and secondly, in effect and operation.

1. It is holy in itself, because it is set apart by God, to be in the church instead of His own lively voice unto His people for the revealing and

determining of all things to be believed and done in His church. In the Old Testament, God Himself spake by a lively voice unto the patriarchs, and after the giving of the law, He gave answer to the High Priest at the mercy seat; and yet we are not inferior to them, though we want that lively voice; for we have the written Word instead thereof, which is answerable every way thereunto; for look what the written Word saith, is as much as if the Lord from heaven should speak by a lively voice; and so consequently, it is to us instead of the ark of God, a pledge of His presence. And thus it is holy in itself.

2. Secondly, God's Word is holy in regard of operation; for it is the instrument of the Spirit, set apart by God Himself, to be the means whereby He sanctifies and reforms the hearts and lives of His children. And consequently, the sacraments are holy things, for they are the Word made visible; so likewise is Christian admonition grounded upon God's Word.

From this doctrine, sundry duties are to be learned:

1. First, we are oft commanded in God's Word, to draw near to God, to seek Him, to fear Him, and to walk before Him in His presence. How shall we do these things, seeing God is invisible and in glory and majesty is in heaven? Surely we must consider the Word of God, to be instead of His own lively voice; and therefore we need not seek for Him that is invisible, but we must have recourse unto the Word, and labour to have it present with us in our hearts, in out lives and consciences. Enoch walked before God, not only in regard of His infinite majesty, which though it be invisible, is everywhere present; but principally in respect of His Word, setting that before him wheresoever he was. When we are commanded to fear God, we must know that that is done, not only when we stand in awe of His glorious majesty, but principally when we fear to offend God, commanding us in His Word. The apostle saith that the Holy Ghost dwells in our hearts; which must not be thought to be meant of that infinite substance of the Holy Spirit, but of the dwelling of the Word, which is made effectual by the Holy Spirit; for faith ever hath relation to the Word, and being believed, it dwells in the heart, and makes the spirit,

which works by the same Word present also. In which regard Paul saith, *Now I live not, but Christ lives in me* (Gal. 2:20); which he expoundeth after, saying, I live now by faith in the Son of God; because the Word of Christ was present with him, and the grace of faith that lives by that Word.

2. Secondly, seeing the Word of God is of that holiness, we must learn to use the same publickly or privately with all reverence, carefully sanctifying ourselves thereunto. When the people came to receive the law in Mount Sinai, they were sanctified three days before; and the same preparation for substance ought we to make before we hear the Word of God. First, we must wash our hands in innocence, and then compass the altar of the Lord (Psa. 26:6). The Word and sacraments are holy in themselves, but not so to us, out of their holy use; and therefore if we would reap profit to ourselves by them, we must prepare our hearts thereunto.

3. Thirdly, whereas the Word is unto us the voice of God, and the means of sanctification; we may learn that in the congregation of God's people ordinarily, the pure Word of God alone ought to be heard, without the mixture of the words of men, be they never so holy. For it is not said of the words of any man, that they are *that holy thing*. The Lord Himself alone had the appointment of the making of the holy oil, which was to anoint the kings and priests under the law. Neither man might add anything thereto, though it were never so pure and good, nor make any oil like unto it. So likewise the trumpets that served for the tabernacle to assemble the people, the Lord Himself alone had the appointment of them; and none might use any other, though it were made of most pure gold. Had the Lord this care over His sanctuary under the law, to take the appointment of these things to Himself alone? And shall we think that the trumpet of His holy Word, which now by His appointment soundeth in the congregation of the saints, may admit a mixture with the words of men, human or divine, be they never so holy? The ancient church was far from this mixture; and therefore forbade the public reading of the apocrypha, which yet are more excellent books than the writings of men, published since the apostles. But it is said that they only find fault with this kind of

> preaching, which cannot attain unto it. I answer, It is no point of the greatest learning to use the sayings of fathers and poets in preaching; and they which use it not, refrain therefrom, not because they cannot do it, but because they dare not mingle the sayings of men with the Word of God, which is that holy thing, serving instead of God's own glorious voice, in all matters that concern our faith and obedience, and being the only sufficient instrument of our sanctification. And therefore it were to be wished that in the congregations of the saints, the pure Word of God might sound alone unto God's people; that as they are begotten alone of this immortal seed, so they might be fed alone with this sincere milk.

2. What is meant by *pearls*? *Answer*: The wholesome doctrines and instructions of God's Word, contained partly in commandments, and partly in sweet and heavenly promises. So (Matt. 13:46), the gospel preached is compared to a precious pearl. And further we are to note that these wholesome instructions are called *your pearls* (Christ speaking to His disciples and other hearers). Now they are so called in two respects: First in regard of the apostles and other ministers their successors; because they are the Lord's stewards, to dispense the Word and the doctrine thereof to God's people. Secondly, in regard of all true believers and servants of God, that have care to know and to obey the Word of God; for every believer hath a special right unto God's Word above other men; to which purpose the Lord saith (Isa. 8:16), *Bind up the testimony, seal up the law among my disciples*; that is, commend and commit my Word unto my disciples; there giving a special right and interest unto them in the Word of salvation; for they have the true judgment and meaning thereof; they keep it in their hearts, and express the power of it in their lives; they have the use and benefit thereof in every estate in this world, and unto their eternal salvation in heaven.

From this, that the doctrines of God's Word are our pearls:

1. First, we are taught to place all our riches in the Word of God, for that is our jewel, and our principal treasure. Of this, Solomon saith, *Her merchandise are better than merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof better than gold* (Prov. 3:14). In the valuing of this pearl, David's practice is notable, who made the testimony of God his heritage, and

the very joy of his heart (Psa. 119:111), and esteemed them above gold, yea above most fine gold (v. 127).

2. Secondly, we must hereby learn to content ourselves in all casualties and calamities of this life, with this pearl of the Word of God; for though we lose friends, health, goods, or good name, yet this pearl of good doctrines and sweet promises is not lost; if that were taken away with the loss of outward commodities, then there were some cause of discomfort; but seeing this jewel remains with us in all estates, therefore herewith we must stay and comfort ourselves, as David did, counting God's promises his *comfort in trouble* (Psa. 119:50), and his *songs in his pilgrimage* (v.54).

3. Thirdly, this must teach us to use the doctrines and promises of God's Word, as pearls. We must lock them up in our hearts, and have them in faithful keeping in our memories. A man that hath an earthly jewel that is of any worth, will be very careful to lock it up in the safest chest he hath. How much more care ought we to have of these true pearls of heavenly instructions? As the Holy Ghost speaks of deacons, they must be such as keep the mystery of faith in good conscience (1 Tim. 3:9). So must every one of us be careful keepers of this heavenly pearl. This was Mary's practice (Luke 2:51), she pondered the sayings of Christ in her heart. And David had *the Word of God in his heart, that he might not sin against the Lord* (Psa. 119:11).

4. The doctrines and promises in God's Word are the pearls of the apostles and ministers; therefore they above others in all ages and times, ought to have a special care by all good means to preserve the purity of doctrine in the church of God. This is Paul's charge to Timothy (1 Tim. 6:20), *Keep that which is committed unto thee*; that is, *that wholesome doctrine which thou hast learned of me*. And this merely concerneth ministers at this day, that as by the good means of others, they have received true doctrine, purified from the dregs of popery, so they should preserve and keep the same from all taint of corruption to their posterity.

3, 4. The third and fourth things to be considered are touching *dogs* and *swine*; where these three points are to be handled: (1) What are here

properly meant by dogs and swine; (2) Who must give judgment of men to be dogs and swine; and (3) Where they are to be found.

1. For the first, by dogs and swine, we must understand *the enemies of God's Word*; yet not all enemies, for so every sinner should be a dog and a swine; but only such as are malicious obstinate enemies, manifestly convicted of their enmity to God's Word and doctrine, of whose amendment there is no hope. And that these are here to be understood, appears by these reasons:

1. From the text itself, which describeth them by this, that *treading the word of instruction underfoot, they do turn again, and all to rend the teachers thereof*; that is, they do persecute them both by word and deed, in all reproachful speeches and cruel actions.

2. In the Word of God we shall find that Christ and His apostles preached to dogs (for such are all men by nature); the Scribes and Pharisees, a generation of vipers, came to John's baptism unrepelled, though not unreproved (Matt. 3:6,7); and Christ Himself telleth the woman of Canaan that it was not lawful to give the children's bread to dogs, that is, to the Gentiles; and yet He sent His disciples to preach to all nations; and the woman herself, by reason of her faith, was received to mercy, and made partaker of the crumbs that fell from the children's table. Again, our Saviour Christ preached to the Scribes and Pharisees, even then when He wept over Jerusalem for their impenitency; yea, this is a truth, that because men are naturally dogs and swine, therefore they must have the Word of God preached unto them to purify and sanctify them, unless they be obstinate and unrepentant enemies to the Word, of whom is no hope of recovery.

3. These obstinate enemies here are called dogs and swine, by allusion to unclean beasts under the Law; of which sort were dogs and swine, which were prohibited the Jews to be eaten or offered in sacrifice to God. Christ therefore here by allusion to that ceremony means such persons as are excluded from the holy things of the Lord, and have no right or interest into the Lord's Word or sacraments; such as both in heart and life be unclean hogs and dogs, and will not be purified.

4. Paul chargeth Titus (Tit. 3:10) that *after once or twice admonition, he should reject an heretic, knowing that such an one is perverted and sinneth, being damned of his own self*; that is, sinneth willfully and obstinately, and in so sinning condemneth himself in his own heart and conscience; and such are meant by dogs and swine in this place.

Now the difference of these two may be this: By dogs are meant obstinate enemies that maliciously revile the ministry of the Word, the doctrine of God, and the messengers thereof. Such a dog was Alexander the coppersmith (2 Tim. 4:14), and such were many of the Jews become soon after Christ's ascension, who reviled the apostle Paul and Barnabas, and blasphemed the doctrine which they taught (Acts 13:45). And of this sort are all convicted obstinate heretics. By swine are meant obstinate enemies that do condemn the Word of God, either because they will not admit reformation of life by it, such as Ahab and Herod were, or because they scorn and mock at the Word of God, as they do, of whom Peter speaks that mock at the promise of Christ's second coming (2 Pet. 3:4).

2. The second point concerning these persons is, *who give judgment of any man or any people to be dogs and swine*. We must know that it is not in the power and liberty of any private man to give judgment of another that he is a dog or swine; but it is a public duty belonging to the ministers and governors of the church to give judgment in this case (Matt. 18:17). Before a man must be reputed as a publican and as an heathen, the censure of the church must pass upon his behaviour; and from the judgment of the church must private men hold others as publican and heathen. Indeed our Saviour Christ and His apostles gave this judgment of men particularly and peremptorily; as Paul of Alexander the coppersmith; but we must understand what authority and what Spirit Christ and His apostles had; which because we have not, we cannot give such judgment upon men. Further, here we are to know that judgement upon others is twofold: judgment of certainty, or judgment of human wisdom. The judgment of certainty, touching any man's state, belongs only to God, and to them to whom God revealeth the same. The judgment of human wisdom is when the church of God, in the fear of God, give judgment as truly and as nearly as they can, who is a dog and who is a swine. And this only is the judgment of the

church, which also is conditional; and namely, till they repent; because they know not the times that God hath appointed for the conversion of sinners. And by this we are taught to compromise our judgment of any man, in regard of his final estate, though he be an unrepentant sinner, refusing instruction; for most heinous sinners have been converted.

3. The third point, *where these dogs and swine are to be found*. It is not in the power of any ordinary minister, or other man, to determine of anyone that he is a dog or a swine; for in such do final impenitence and wilful obstinacy concur; which we are not able to say certainly are come upon any man or woman while they live among us; and yet this may be said with good conscience, that there is in many a fearful declination to the properties of dogs and swine, even in this age of ours; for many will hear the Word, receive the sacraments, and profess that they hope to be saved by Christ; and yet they will rail on His ministers, and speak against their ministry. Yea, the times are now, wherein many in open speech will not stick to revile and condemn those that have been the most excellent instruments of God's mercy in His church. Among many, I will name one, Mr John Calvin, that worthy instrument of the gospel, is in the mouths of many students condemned as an erroneous person, teaching false and dangerous doctrine. Yea, many there be that come to the Lord's table, and yet will not brook reformation of life; they will not be drawn from their drunkenness, ignorance, adultery and covetousness. A third sort there are, that take occasion from God's Word, to live in their sins, and to maintain their wicked lives; as from the doctrine of God's eternal predestination, because the Scripture teacheth that God's decree therein is unchangeable; therefore some say they will live as they list. Others, because the Word saith we are to be saved by faith alone, therefore they refuse to walk in good works. And others look to be saved by God's mercy alone, and therefore will not labour either for knowledge, or faith, as they ought to do. And some, hearing the doctrine of the denial of ourselves, do say, the Word of God is too strait a doctrine, barring men from laughter, and mirth, and other recreations; and therefore they will none of God's Word. Now though we cannot call these men dogs, because we know not what they may

be hereafter, yet we may truly say these be practices of dogs and swine.

And thus we see what is meant by holy things, by pearls, by dogs and swine; from whence the meaning of Christ may be plainly thus set down: *Give not that which is holy*, etc., that is, *have regard how, and to whom ye dispense the Word and sacraments, and if any person be openly convicted of obstinate enmity to your doctrine, to such publish not my Word, be they dogs in railing, or swine in senseless contemning and scorning of the same*.

The Uses.

1. Hence we may see what course is to be used of God's ministers in the preaching and dispensing of His holy Word: They must first preach and publish the Word of God to all men without exception, grace must be offered to all, good and bad. Then must they observe what fruit and effect the Word hath with them, whether it work reformation of life in them, or not; and though as yet they see not that fruit thereof in them, yet they must not condemn them as dogs, but rather wait and pray for their conversion, to see if at any time God will give them repentance, according as St Paul chargeth Timothy (2 Tim. 2:25). Thirdly, having waited for their conversion, he must labour to convince their very conscience of the truth which they in heart and life deny; so as he may say with Paul, *If our gospel be hid to them that perish* (2 Cor. 4:3). But if after all this, they give evident signs of malicious and obstinate enmity against the Word, scorning and railing on the doctrine of God, and on the ministers thereof, then are they to be cast out by the church, and to be accounted as dogs, and to be barred from the Word of life till they repent. This was Christ's own practice towards the Jews. At the first He preached unto them the gospel of the kingdom by John Baptist, in His own person, and by His disciples; but when He saw some of them maliciously obstinate, then He propounded His doctrine unto them in parables, that they might be hardened in sin; and after, expounded the same privily to His disciples. The disciples likewise after the ascension of Christ, preached still unto the Jews, even when they were persecuted by them. But at length whenas they saw that of obstinate malice they oppugned the truth, *putting it from them, and judging themselves unworthy of eternal life, then they turned to the Gentiles* (Acts 13:46).

Now in this that hath been said, we may note two things:

1. First, the longsuffering and great patience of God, that He will not have a sinner living in the church condemned, till He have brought him through all the means of his conversion, and till he be past hope. Thus He dealt with the old world, expecting their repentance, an hundred and twenty years, whereunto He then called them by the preaching of Noah (Gen. 6).

2. Secondly, herein we must learn to moderate our judgments concerning wicked men. A man must not be condemned for a dog, or for a swine, till he give evident signs of obstinate malice and wilful contempt of the Word, and until he do even convict himself to be such an one, by a wilful contempt of the means of his salvation. This serves to shew their rashness and indiscretion, that condemn our church for no church, and our people for no people of God; judging them for dogs and swine, whenas they have not yet convicted them of obstinate malice in sin or error. It will be said, they have admonished them by writing. I answer, that their own books have more errors in them than they do hold whom they admonish, and so their writings can be no sufficient conviction.

2. Secondly, here observe that men become dogs and swine by their wilful repelling that holy doctrine of God, which should purge them and make them clean. It is the natural property of a dog to return to his vomit, and of a swine to his wallowing in the mire, as the proverb is; and hereof they can by no means be bereaved. And all men by nature return to the vomit and filth of their sins like dogs and swine; and they which will by no means suffer themselves to be drawn from their old sins, they have these properties of dogs and swine. And look as those beasts were excluded from the Lord's tabernacle and congregation under the law; so are these men debarred from the Word and sacraments, and all holy things under the gospel. They are abomination unto the Lord (See Psa. 56:6, and Psal. 50:16). In this regard, we are to be admonished to suffer ourselves to be cleansed and reformed by the Word of God. *Ye are clean* (saith Christ) *by the Word which I have spoken unto you* (John 15:3), where He maketh the Word of God the instrument of our purification; to which effect He saith in His prayer to His Father, *Sanctify them with thy truth, thy Word is truth* (John 17:17). And St

Peter saith, *our souls are purified in obeying the truth by the Spirit* (1 Pet. 1:22). Now we are by nature dogs and swine, inclined to the filth of our own sins, returning thereto with greediness, neither can we ourselves be broken of this property, but when occasion is offered we do naturally run to our old sins, as the swine and dogs do to their filth and vomit. In consideration whereof, we ought to subject ourselves to the Word of God, labouring to see and feel our own uncleanness, and to cry with David, *Wash me thoroughly from my sins* (Psa. 51:2), and with Peter, *Not my feet only, but my whole body* (John 13:9); that so it may be said of us, *We are clean throughout by Christ's Word*. If we see any uncleanness in our hearts or lives, we must purge it out by this Word, and return no more to the filth of our former sins. It is the property of Christ's sheep to hear His voice, and to obey the same; let us hereby testify ourselves to be His sheep, that so we may be distinguished from dogs and swine.

Here, it may be demanded, whether we should make confession of our faith before dogs and swine. *Answer*: Yes, if we be called thereunto, we are bound to do it. *Be always ready*, saith the apostle, *to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you* (1 Pet. 3:15). And in this place, our Saviour Christ speaketh of the preaching and dispensing of the Word, not of confession. Now in preaching, men acknowledge the Word to belong unto their hearers, but in confession, they declare the Word to belong to themselves alone.

3. Further, here we are to consider divers points concerning excommunication:

1. First, the foundation thereof. *It is an ordinance of God*; for all dogs and swine by Christ's commandment, must be kept from holy things. Many that live in the church are open blasphemers of the name of Christ; some others are heretics, and these likewise are to be barred from the Word and sacraments. Yea, a man living in the church, may be worse in practice than an open enemy. Of such like the apostle speaketh (Tit. 1:16), *They profess that they know God, but by their works they deny Him*. And such an one was Ishmael, who for mocking Isaac, the son of the promise, was cast out of Abraham's family, that is,

out of the church of God (Gen. 21:10,11), for Abraham's family at that time was God's visible church.

2. Secondly, here observe the end of excommunication, namely, to preserve the holy things of God from pollution, contempt and profanation; even the Word, prayer and sacraments, which wilful enemies would trample upon, as swine will upon pearls. And herein we may see the abuse of this ordinance, when it is used for politic and civil respects; especially in the church of Rome, whereof it is made an instrument of the unjust deposing of Christian princes, and of exempting their subjects from due obedience and allegiance.

3. Thirdly, here, our Saviour noteth out the principal persons that are to execute this censure of the church upon wilful and obstinate enemies, that be as dogs and swine; namely, they to whom the disposing and keeping of the holy things of God is committed, that is, the lawful ministers of the Word and sacraments; for they must keep those holy things pure which God hath committed unto them; but that they cannot do without the exercise of this censure which God hath given unto His church.

4. Fourthly, here also we may see how far this censure of the church extendeth against obstinate and wilful enemies; namely, to the debarring of them from the use of the church's ministry in the Word, prayer and sacraments. Indeed, if the party be excommunicate for some particular crime, and there be hope of his repentance, because he doth not shew himself a dog or a swine by wilful obstinacy in his sin and contempt of the church; then, although he be excluded from communion with them in the sacraments and prayer, yet he may be admitted to hearing of the Word, because that is a means to humble him for his sin, and to bring him to repentance, which is the end of all ecclesiastical censures.

And thus much of the prohibition. Now follow the reasons to enforce the same:

II.

*Lest they tread them under their feet, and turning again all to rent you.*

Here, Christ renders a double reason to enforce His prohibition, both drawn from the dangerous events which would ensue by communicating holy things unto dogs and swine; for, first, *they would tread them under their feet*; secondly, *turning again all to rent you*.

1. For the first, by *treading under feet*, He means *profaning and abusing*. Now because the holy things of God must not be profaned and abused, therefore they must not be communicated unto wilful enemies of the grace of God.

In this reason, see the singular care of our Saviour Christ, to keep the Scriptures and other holy things of God from profanation. This care He likewise shewed with great zeal, when He whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, because they had made His Father's house, that holy place, a house of merchandise and a den of thieves (Matt. 21:12,13). And herein He must be a pattern and example to us all, to teach us care and zeal in keeping the holy things of God from profanation. Far must it be from us to do or speak anything which may cause the world to speak evil of our holy profession. This is Paul's charge to servants, that they so carry themselves towards their masters that *the name of God, and His doctrine be not evil spoken of* (1 Tim. 6:1). For want of care herein, was God's hand heavy upon David, for because by his foul acts of adultery and murder, he *had caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, therefore the child born unto him must surely die* (2 Sam. 12:14). We must therefore pray (as the apostle bids us (2 Thess. 3:1)), *that the Word of God may be glorified*. This is Christ's direction in His prayer, before all things to desire and seek that God's name may be hallowed and glorified (Matt. 6:9). Now God's Word is His name, for thereby is He known to us, yea, His name is magnified above all things by His Word (Psa. 138:2). Excellent was David's prayer to this effect (Psa. 119:39), *Take away my reproach which I fear, for thy judgments are good*; that is, keep me from doing that which may bring rebuke or reproach upon thy Word, or upon thy works, for they are good. Good king Hezekiah is also commended for his care of God's glory, in that he forbad his servants to answer to the railing blasphemies of Rabshakeh (2 Kin. 18:36), lest thereby he should be provoked to blasphemy the more; as also

in that he greatly humbled himself before the Lord upon the hearing of it; for he rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth, and spread the railing letter before the Lord; thereby referring the revenge to God Himself (2 Kin. 19:1-14).

2. *And turning again all to rent you*. These words contain Christ's second reason against communicating holy things to malicious and obstinate enemies, drawn from the peril that may ensue thereupon to His disciples and ministers; for these dogs and swine are not only prone to abuse the holy things themselves, but also to annoy and hurt by reviling and persecution those that be the messengers of the Word unto them.

In this reason, Christ sheweth that it is not only lawful, but necessary, that God's ministers should seek to avoid and shun the malice and rage of obstinate enemies, by all lawful means which may stand with God's glory and the keeping of a good conscience. Hence He bade His disciples, with the innocence of doves join the wisdom of serpents (Matt. 10:16). Now the serpent is most wily and wary to save herself from harm.

*Objection*: But it is the property of an hireling to flee from his flock when he seeth the wolf coming (John 10:13); therefore it seems God's ministers may not flee in time of persecution. *Answer*: To flee in persecution is not always a forsaking of the flock, but sometimes tends to their greater good; as when persecution is intended directly against the minister, then he may with good conscience flee for his safety, in hope of return for their future good; else Christ would not have said to His disciples, *If they persecute you in one city, flee into another* (Matt. 10:23). Yea, not only the minister must thus look to his own safety, but his people also must do what lies in them for his preservation. So did the believers in the primitive church, for St Paul, when his life was sought in Damascus, the disciples let him down at a window in a basket through the wall, and he escaped (Acts 9:25). And at Ephesus, when the great tumult was about Diana, Paul would have thrust himself in among the people, but the disciples seeing it would be dangerous unto him, kept him back, and would not suffer him (Acts 19:30).

# 7:7-8

"*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you: For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*" Matthew 7:7,8.

"*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you*" (v.7)

In this verse, and those which follow unto the twelfth, is laid down the third part of this chapter, concerning prayer; and it consisteth of two branches: a commandment to pray, and effectual reasons to persuade us thereunto.

I.

The commandment is propounded in three several terms: *ask, seek* and *knock*; each whereof has his promise annexed thereto: *ye shall have, ye shall find*, and *it shall be opened unto you*. Now for our better understanding of Christ's meaning herein, two rules must be observed:

1. That Christ here speaks not of every kind of asking in prayer, but of that only which Himself commandeth and alloweth; for we may ask and not receive, because we ask amiss, as St James saith (Jam. 4:3); but he that asketh according to Christ's direction in this place, shall receive.

Now in all acceptable prayer to God, four conditions must be observed:

1. We must ask while the time of grace and mercy remaineth; for if the day of grace be once past, we may ask, seek, and knock, but all in vain. This is plain by the five foolish virgins, who asked and sought for oil, but found none, yea, they called and knocked, but it was not opened unto them (Matt. 25:8,9,12). Now the time of this life, while God offers mercy unto us in His Word, is the acceptable time and the day of grace (2 Cor. 6:2), and therefore herein we must ask, seek, and knock.

2. We must not ask as seemeth good unto ourselves, but according to God's will, and as His Word alloweth. The sons of Zebedee were denied their request, because they asked they knew not what (Matt. 20:22). But *this is our assurance that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us* (1 John 5:14).

3. We must ask in faith, that is, believe that God will grant us those things which we ask according to His will (Jam. 1:5,6), *If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God,É.but let him ask in faith, and waver not; for the wavering minded man shall receive nothing of God*; therefore saith Christ, *Whatsoever ye desire in prayer, believe that ye shall have it, and it shall be done unto you* (Mark 11:24).

4. We must reserve the time and manner of God's accomplishing our requests to His good pleasure. It was the sin of the Israelites that they limited the holy one of Israel, by prescribing Him what they would have for their provision, and when they would have it (Psa. 78:41). We therefore must wait on God, as David did (Psa. 40:1), *I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined His ear unto me, and heard me*. God defers the granting of our requests, because He would try the affections of His children (Song 3:1). The church seeketh Christ, but cannot find Him, that is, where and when she will. And indeed herein do we shew forth faith, when we refer the time and manner of receiving our requests to the good pleasure of God; for *he that believeth will not make haste* (Isa. 28:16).

2. The second rule to be here remembered concerning prayer is that these promises are not made directly to the work of prayer, but to the person that prayeth; and yet not to him simply, as he doth this good action of prayer, but as he is in Christ, for whose merit's sake the promise is accomplished. And therefore Christ here speaks to them whom He takes for granted to be the true members of His mystical body, which is His church. This rule must be remembered for the right understanding of the promises of God concerning prayer; for hereby it is plain that our prayer is not the cause of the blessings we receive from God, but only a way and instrument in and by which God conveyeth His blessings unto His children; for a true prayer is a fruit of our

faith in Christ, in whom alone all the promises of God are yea and amen (2 Cor. 1:20), that is, sure and certain unto us.

Now having found Christ's meaning, let us come to such instructions as are to be gathered hence:

1. First, observe that Christ doth not barely propound this commandment to pray, but repeats the same by a kind of gradation in three distinct words; ask, seek, and knock; whereof the latter imports more vehemence than the former. And this He doth to check the slackness and coldness of our prayers, and to shut us up to fervent zeal and diligence in this duty, both in public and private. And to move us to godly zeal and diligence in this duty, consider the reasons following:

1. *Christ's alone example*, which in moral duties is a perfect rule. Now though he had little need to pray in respect of Himself, for He did never sin, yet how often, and how long, and with what fervency did He give Himself to this duty? He spent whole nights in prayer (Luke 6:12) , and in prayer in the garden He sweat water and blood (Luke 22:44). We have also Moses' example, who spent forty days and forty nights in prayer and fasting for the people, when they had sinned (Deut. 9:18,19). If he were thus fervent in prayer for their sins, how earnest would he be for his own? And Daniel humbled himself many days, and prayed fervently for his people (Dan. 9:3,4 etc.). David prayed seven times a day, and rose up at midnight to give thanks unto God (Psa. 119:164,62). And Paul willeth the Romans that they would strive or wrestle with him by prayer unto God (Rom. 15:30). All these are worthy examples unto us; and if we compare ourselves with them, we shall see we have much more cause so to do; for our sins abound above theirs, and therefore we had need to pray for supply thereof against the time of need; for our days of peace will not always last, we have enjoyed it long, and therefore must look for days of trial, for the state of God's church is interchangeable.

2. All of us must come to deal with God, both in the day of death, and at the day of judgment; at both which times all worldly helps and comforts will forsake us, and by no means can we shun that account; therefore it will be good for us while we live, often to set ourselves

before the Lord, that so we may make ourselves familiar and acquainted with Him against that day. But if now we estrange ourselves from God in regard of this exercise of prayer, then at our end we shall find the Lord to be strange unto us, and to profess that He knows us not, which will be woe unto us.

3. Every good thing we have or stand in need of comes from the mercy and bounty of God in Christ; and prayer is an ordinary means for the procuring of God's blessings. We therefore must give ourselves to the faithful practice of this duty. Indeed if grace and other blessings were our own, or from ourselves, we might well spare this labour. But *what hast thou* (saith Paul to every Christian) *that thou hast not received*? (1 Cor. 4:7). Be not therefore secure and idle, for God's blessings come not when we snort upon our elbows, but in the use of means; and happy are we that may use those means; for in using we receive, in seeking we find, and in knocking it is opened unto us.

2. Secondly, our Saviour Christ by trebling this commandment to pray, would give us to consider that there is some weighty cause we should be instant in this duty; and that is, in regard of the great miseries and manifold dangers whereunto we are subject in this life; for as Peter saith (1 Pet. 4:18), *the righteous shall hardly be saved*, and no marvel, for we have *without us* the devil and all his angels plotting our destruction, and the world a dangerous enemy, whereby the devil works; *within us*, we have our own corrupt hearts, daily drawing us to the practice of sin, the bane and poison of our souls. Now what is to be done in this case? Surely our only refuge is constant and fervent prayer unto God, as Christ here implies by this threefold command; for *in all things we must let our requests be made known to God* (Phil. 4:6). This hath always been the practice of all the faithful, as we may see in God's book. But if we had no example, this commandment were sufficient to persuade us unto this duty. Also, dost thou want any grace of God, as faith, repentance, knowledge, zeal, patience, strength against temptation, or assurance of God's favour? Why, *ask, and thou shalt have; seek, and thou shalt find*. And this must be our course in outward wants, and for temporal blessings, as health, peace, liberty, plenty, etc. Indeed the wicked worldlings seek to wise men, and wise women in

their miseries, but this is to forsake God, and to go to the devil. God's people must go to their God (Isa. 8:19).

3. Thirdly, the trebling of this commandment in diverse terms must teach us to be instant and urgent with God in prayer. This is an holy and acceptable importunity, when the Christian heart gives God no rest. The Lord promiseth to His people (Jer. 29:12,13), that *they shall cry unto Him, and go and pray unto Him, and He will hear them; they shall seek Him, and find Him, because they shall seek Him with their whole heart*. (Isa. 62:7), The Lord's remembrancers are commanded not to keep silence, nor to give the Lord any rest. (Matt. 15:22), the woman of Canaan is commended, because she will take no answer nor repulse from our Saviour Christ, till her daughter was cured. And (Luke 18:5) the poor widow by her importunity prevailed with the unrighteous judge; which parable Christ propounds to teach us to be constant and earnest in prayer. We therefore must shake off our natural coldness and negligence in prayer, which is the common sin of the world in regard of this duty. And we must labour for knowledge both of our own sins and miseries, and of God's mercies, that so we may pray with understanding, and in zeal and fervency as Christ here requireth. Alas many pray not at all, and others know not what they ask, though they say the Lord's prayer, or some other set form of prayer. And most men that have knowledge suffer their minds to wander from God by vain imaginations. Now all comes for lack of that feeling in prayer which Christ here requireth.

Thus much of the commandment in general. Now out of the words more particularly we may observe two points:

1. First, where Christ bids us ask, seek, knock, He speaks not particularly to some, but generally to all His servants, so that all must pray; which plainly implies that His best and dearest servants are during this life in want of some grace or blessing. And indeed when God gives most excellent gifts and blessings to His children, yet then He leaves them in some notable want or trial for their humiliation and provocation to prayer. Paul was taken up into paradise, and there heard words that cannot possibly be uttered by man in this life (2 Cor. 12:4). This was a great grace and prerogative; but yet to humble him, lest he should be exalted out of measure, there was given him a prick in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him (v.7). Hereby he

was brought to pray most earnestly for deliverance, but yet he must rest contented with God's grace; for God will make perfect His power through the weakness of His servants (vv.8,9). This point must be observed, to discover to many secure persons their miserable state, who feel no want of grace in themselves, and therefore think all is well. But what meanest thou to profess Christ when thou have no need of Him nor of His graces? Oh know it, when thou sayest in thine own heart, thou art *rich, and lackest nothing*; then thou art *poor, and blind, and miserable and wretched* (Rev. 3:17). And indeed if thou knewest the corruption of thine own heart, thou wouldest cry out with the apostle, in respect of thy wants, *O miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death*? (Rom. 7:24).

2. Secondly, Christ saying not only *ask*, but *seek* and *knock*; doth hereby imply what is God's dealing many times with His own servants; namely, that He forsakes them for a time, and in part, and in some sort hides Himself, and as it were locks Himself from them. Now thus he dealeth for two causes: First, hereby to chastise and correct them for their sins, for iniquity separates between God and His people, and their sins hide His face from them (Isa. 59:2). Secondly, to make trial of His graces in His children, to see whether they delight in His love, to shew them their own weakness, and to move them to cleave unto Him more inseparably. By all which we see, it stands us in hand to pray earnestly and continually, for God may forsake us for our sins; and He may justly take occasion to try what we have profited by His gospel, which we have long enjoyed with abundance of peace.

II.

Thus much of the commandment to earnest prayer. Now Christ enforceth it by two reasons; first by a promise, enfolded in this verse with the commandment, and confirmed in the next. Secondly, by a comparison (v.9).

1. For the first, the reason from the promise in this verse may be framed: *If they which ask shall receive; if they that seek shall find; and they that knock shall be let in; then do you ask, seek and knock. But they that ask shall receive, they that seek shall find etc. Therefore do you ask, seek and knock*.

1. In this reason, our Saviour Christ teacheth us that when we pray to God, we must bring a special faith whereby we are assured that the particular things we ask according to God's will shall be given us. So saith Christ (Mark 11:24), *Whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believe that ye shall have it, and it shall be done unto you*. And James saith (Jam. 1:6), *Let him ask in faith*; for he that doubts of God's promise, defraudeth himself of the thing he asketh. Now if we must bring this special faith, then of necessity must we have a special knowledge of the will and promise of God for the things we ask; for as without faith we cannot pray aright, so without knowledge, no faith. And therefore we must be careful to acquaint ourselves with the will and promise of God, that by God's commandment we may know what to ask, and by faith may also ask in assurance; for if we pray without this knowledge and faith, our prayers are but lip-labour and unprofitable.

2. Secondly, hence we learn that the papists err grossly, which teach that this special faith is not necessary in prayer. This is a doctrine of devils; for we ought to bring in prayer a particular faith to apply to ourselves the promise of God concerning that thing which we ask in prayer. But this we can never bring, unless we first have a special saving faith, whereby we believe our reconciliation with God in Christ; for therefore do we believe that God will grant our particular requests, because by faith we know ourselves to be in Christ, in whom He loveth us; and therefore will make good His promise unto us, as the apostle saith (1 John 5:14), *This is the assurance that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us*.

3. Thirdly, hence we learn how to carry ourselves in all dangers, troubles, and afflictions; namely, we must settle our hearts by faith upon the promise of God, who hath said He will not forsake us, but be with us in trouble, and deliver us (Psa. 91:15). This is necessary, for without faith in great afflictions, our own natural passions will confound us. Hence Habakkuk speaking of grievous times of affliction saith, *The just shall live by faith* (Hab. 2:4). And this David testified (Psa. 62:1), *Yet my soul keepeth silence unto God: of Him cometh my salvation*. (Psa. 23:4), *Though I should walk through the valley of the shadow of*

*death, I will fear none evil: for thou* (Lord) *art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me*.

4. Fourthly, this must stir us up to great diligence in prayer. We being God's creatures, and our God requiring this service at our hands, ought to pray upon His commandment, though He had made no promise unto us. But now sith He had made a gracious promise to hear and grant our requests, this must stir us up to all diligence and alacrity in prayer. See the practice hereof in David. Upon God's promise he encourageth himself to pray (2 Sam. 7:27-29), *Thou O Lord of hosts, hast revealed unto thy servant that thou must build Him an house. Therefore now, O Lord God (for thou art God, and thy words are true, and thou hast told this goodness unto thy servant) Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever; for thou O Lord hast spoken it*. So Daniel, perceiving by the prophecy of Jeremiah, the promise of God for the return of the people from the captivity, doth set himself to most earnest prayer to God for the accomplishment of that promise (Dan. 9:2,3). And so must we do in all our wants: first search out God's promise for the supply thereof, and then go boldly and diligently to God by prayer in the name of Christ.

"*For whosoever asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened*." (v.8)

Here Christ confirmeth the former reason that was included in the former verse with the commandment to pray. In effect and substance they are all one; only here the reason is propounded more generally, without limitation to Christ's hearers, thus: Whosoever asketh, receiveth; whosoever seeketh, findeth; etc.; that is, observing the due conditions of prayer, which God's Word requireth.

*1st Objection*: Here some may say that God oft hears those that pray without faith, as the cry of the poor when they curse their oppressors (Exod. 22:23). And so the Lord heard the Israelites when they asked quails in their lust (Psa. 78:18,27). *Answer*: True it is, God sometimes grants the requests of those that pray without faith, but His hearing is not in mercy, but in anger and wrath, and is a means to execute His judgment upon them. Thus He gave the Israelites a king in His wrath (Hos. 13:11), and so He gave

them quails, for while the meat was in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them (Psa. 78:30,31). Thus the devils had their request granted, to enter into the herd of swine (Matt. 8:31,32), and so God permitted Satan to afflict Job (Job 1:12), but all was to his own shame, to manifest his absolute subjection unto God, that beyond His will he cannot go, no not to hurt the basest of God's creatures.

*2nd Objection*: Ahab prayed and humbled himself and was heard, though he did it only hypocritically for fear of punishment (1 Kin. 21:29). *Answer*: This was a grant of a temporal benefit only, which God oft gives to hypocrites; but for spiritual blessings which pertain to salvation in Christ, whereof this text is principally to be understood, they are not granted to the wicked.

*3rd Objection*: Abraham prayed directly against the will of God, for the saving of Sodom, which God was purposed to destroy. *Answer*: Abraham no doubt had in him a special motion to make that prayer, and withal he asked leave of God to pray for them; neither did he pray absolutely, but with submission to God's will, and so he sinned not, though he obtained not his desire; otherwise, without these cautions he had done amiss; and we must not make the extraordinary practices of the faithful, ordinary rules for our imitation. So that God's promise here is firm, whosoever asketh those blessings of God which He had promised to give, in that manner which God approveth, shall be soon to receive.

The Use.

In this reason we learn that God is most ready and willing to hear His children when they pray (Isa. 65:1), *I was found of them that sought me not, I said behold me, behold me, to a nation that called not upon my name*; and (v.24), *Before they call, I will answer, and while they speak I will hear*.

1. This then is first a plain proof that the Lord whom we worship is the true God; because He is so able to help, and so ready and willing to hear, being near to all that call upon Him in truth. Thus Moses reasoneth with his people to prove that they only had the true God for their God (Deut. 4:7), *What nation is so great unto whom the gods*

*come so near unto them; as the Lord our God is near unto us in all that we call unto Him for*.

2. Secondly, this must persuade us to love God unfeignedly and heartily, who is so ready and willing to grant our requests in prayer, specially considering we are by nature His enemies. A rare thing it is to see any resemblance of it I the world; and indeed among men this dealing is able to draw love from an enemy, when we shew ourselves willing to do him any good we can. This heaps coals of fire upon his head, to consume his malice, and kindle in him love to us. Oh then, how should God's gracious bounty and readiness to hear us, draw our hearts to God in all love and thankfulness?

3. Thirdly, this serves to be a notable stay and comfort to all those that are cast down in soul with the sight and burden of their sins; for behold, if they ask mercy at God's hands, they shall have it; if they can call, he will hear; and if they will but knock at the door of His mercy, He is ready to open unto them. Here they use to plead, that they have long called, and cried, and knocked, but they find no comfort. *Answer*: O consider the usual dealing of God with His own children. For a time He will hide His face, and seem to lock up His mercy and compassion from them, as we may see by David's complaint (Psa. 77:7-9), *Will the Lord absent Himself forever? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be merciful*? etc. But His intent herein is to humble them deeper, to make them knock more earnestly, that they may be more thankful for God's mercy when they find it; and more careful to keep themselves from sin, whereby they may lose again that assurance. Indeed it is a most heavy cross, and the deepest grief that can befall a man, to have the conscience apprehend the wrath of God without any feeling of His favour. Yet in this case, here is comfort; let this poor soul out of the depth of his horror cry unto God with David, and out of the belly of the whale of desperation with Jonah, endeavouring against all feeling to lay hold upon the promise of mercy in Christ, and he shall find the Lord in due time ready to hear and to send comfort, yea, the sweetness of His love shall distil most joyously into his poor soul.

# 7:9-11

"*For what man is there among you, which if his son ask him bread, would give him a stone? Or if he ask him fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, which are evil, can give to your children good gifts, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?*" Matthew 7:9-11.

2. These words contain a second reason of the former commandment to pray, as also a confirmation of the promise annexed thereunto for assurance to be heard; and it may be scanned thus:

*If earthly parents though they be evil, can give good gifts to their children, when they want them and ask them at their hands; then much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those that ask Him.*

*But earthly parents, though they be evil, will give good gifts to their children.*

*Therefore much more will your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask Him.*

This reason standeth in a comparison of unequals, drawn from the less to the greater; from the care which is ordinarily seen in natural parents over their children, to prove undoubtedly the most tender care of our heavenly Father over us. And this kind of reasoning is usual with God in Scripture. (Isa. 49:15), *Can a woman forget her child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Though they should forget, yet will I not forget thee*. (Psa. 103:13), *A father hath compassion on his children; so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear Him*. (Mal. 3:17), *É.and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him*.

In the framing of this reason, behold a special favour of God vouchsafed to godly parents: They may take a taste of God's love and care over themselves, by the consideration of that natural care and tender affection

they bear towards their own children. And indeed they may more easily than others, apprehend and apply to themselves the loving favour and tender care of God over them, by the like affections in themselves towards their own children. Now this favour and privilege God vouchsafeth for special ends: First, to entice and stir up those parents which yet have not tasted of God's love, to embrace His Word and promises whereby God reveals His love to men, that so they may taste of God's love towards them, whereof they have so notable a pattern in their affection towards their own children. Secondly, to provoke them to labour to have their hearts rooted and grounded in the love of God. And, thirdly, that they having experience of God's love in themselves, may bring their children and posterity to the fruition of the same love and mercy.

Now to come to this comparison; the first part whereof is this: that it is a natural property to all parents to give good things unto their children. This is a principal, binding conscience, that parents should be careful of their children. *He that provideth not for his own* (saith the apostle (1 Tim. 5:8)), *especially for them of his family, is worse than an infidel*; for infidels do not put out this light of nature, but provide for their children.

Here then those parents are to be blamed, who spend their substance in gaming and riot, and so leave their children and family destitute and in want. These spend upon their own lusts, those good things which they should bestow upon their children, and so shew themselves unnatural; but the magistrate, who is the public father, ought to look unto them, and to restrain them from such disorder.

Secondly, here those likewise are to be blamed, which for food and raiment will provide and give sufficient to their children, but in the meanwhile they give them no godly education in the instruction and information of the Lord, which is a good thing indeed unto the soul; for which the godly in Scripture are commended; as Abraham towards his family (Gen. 18:19), and Lois and Eunice towards Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5), who brought him up in faith unfeigned.

Thirdly, by this we may see the state of those that kill their own children (for so we may read that some parents have eaten their own children), namely, they are such as become unnatural, being in God's just judgment

left unto themselves to be ruled by the devil, who filleth their hearts with this unnatural and savage cruelty. Now Christ speaks here of the light of nature not extinguished, and so it is true even among the heathen.

"*If ye then, which are evil, can give to your children good gifts, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?*" (v.11).

Here is the application of the comparison, the ground whereof was laid down in the two former verses. And by *evil*, He means not every sinner, but such as are stained with malice, envy and self-love, being bent to seek their own good only; for so saith the master to the envious labourers (Matt. 20:15), *Is thine eye evil because I am good*? That is, art thou envious because I am bountiful?

In these words, Christ gives us to understand that it is the note of an evil man to be given wholly to seek his own good, though otherwise he live civilly; for this is a fruit of evil covetousness and self- love. Experience sheweth the grievousness of this sin; for thence come the manifold practices of injustice, cruelty and oppression that be in the world, hence it is that times of dearth are made more heavy upon the poor, than otherwise God's hand hath sent them; because the rich seek their own good and commodity only at such times; hence come engrossing, deceiving and enclosing to the spoil of the poor. We must therefore be aware of this sinful practice; and on the other side, give ourselves to practise goodness towards others, setting ourselves to the practice of love, which seeketh not her own things, but is bountiful, that so we may shew forth our love to God by well-doing to our brethren; as the apostle bids us (Gal. 5:13), *Do service to one another by love*; and (Phil. 2:4), *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of other men*. This was good king Josiah's practice, for which cause, among many particular virtues, all his goodnesses are said to be recorded (2 Chr. 35:26). And St Paul likewise became all things to all men, that he might win some; and though he were free from all men, yet he made himself servant unto all men, that he might win the more (1 Cor. 9:19-22).

*You that are evil can give good gifts*; that is, bread, fish and such like, as (Luke 11:11,12). Here it is plain that an evil man may have some kind of

virtues in him, whereby he may do some good works.

*Question*: How can this be, for an evil man wants faith, and so whatsoever he doeth is sin? *Answer*: We must know that the gifts of the Spirit are of two sorts: some are common, whereby the corruptions of man's nature is only restrained and limited, for the maintaining of civil societies, that man with man may live in some order and quietness. And hence it was that among the heathen, some were just, some mild, some liberal, etc. All these came from the Spirit, yet not renewing the parties, but only restraining their natural wickedness. And of this sort of gifts is the love and care of parents towards their children, and the love of children towards their parents. And these and such like evil men may have, for they are not sanctifying virtues, but rather shadows thereof. The second kind of the gifts of the Spirit are more special gifts and graces, whereby the corruption of man's nature is mortified and in some part abolished, and the graces of God's image are renewed in man, whereby they become loving, meek, just, temperate etc., which in the regenerate are true Christian virtues, and the exercise hereof is the doing of good works indeed.

*How much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask Him*? These words contain the second part of the comparison, wherein Christ doth amplify and set out the bountifulness of God in His gifts to His children. And St Luke specifieth these good things, to be the gift of the Holy Ghost, in regard of grace and operation (Luke 11:13).

Here then, three points are to be handled:

1. Who gives these good things?

2. What is given?

3. To whom?

1. For the first, the author of those good things is the Father; for of Him, and from Him, cometh every good gift and every perfect giving.

*Question*: But this gift is the Holy Ghost. Now the Holy Ghost is God; how then can He be given? This seems to imply inequality in the Trinity, for the

person giving must have power and authority over the person given. *Answer*: We must know, first, that this action of the Father in giving the Holy Ghost, is not by virtue of superior power and authority, but by consent. The Holy Ghost is freely willing to be given of the Father; for all three persons being one and the same God, must needs have one and the same will, as in all things, so is this gift. Secondly, this giving is not in essence or person, but in regard of operation and grace; as love, joy, peace, etc., in the hearts of God's children.

2. What are these good things given? *Answer*: The Holy Ghost.

*Question*: Why should the Father give the Holy Ghost, and not the Holy Ghost as well give the Father, seeing they are equal? *Answer*: The reason is because of that order which the divine wisdom manifesteth in the Trinity; for though all three Persons be equal in all properties of the Godhead, which is one and the same in them all; yet they are distinct in order, the Father being the first Person, the Son, not the first, but the second; and the Holy Ghost not the first Person, nor the second, but the third. And hence it is that the Father gives the Son, both the Father and the Son give the Holy Ghost; yet not in Person, but in regard of gifts and operation, and that by free and equal consent, not from superiority, or by constraint.

3. To whom doth the Father give the gift of the Holy Ghost? *Answer*: To them that ask Him. Hence some would gather that man hath free will by nature in his conversion, because he must first ask, and then comes the gift of the Holy Ghost. *Answer*: We must know that by the Holy Ghost here is meant, not the beginning of grace, but the increase thereof, and a greater measure of gifts, with a more sensible feeling of them; for this promise is made to God's children that ask, which none can be, but by the Holy Ghost. See this in the disciples (John 20:22), Christ said to His disciples, who had true grace before, *Receive the Holy Ghost*; and yet also after that, the Holy Ghost came down upon them in the form of cloven tongues of fire (Acts 2:3). Now these latter givings, were in regard of greater measure, as it is said, they were filled with the Holy Ghost (v.4). Again, by *them that ask*, is not meant everyone that uttereth words of request to God; but those that ask in faith, and pray aright by grace; as (Rom. 10:14), *How can they call on Him in whom they have not believed*? And (Rom. 8:26,27), *We know not*

*what to pray as we ought, but the Spirit helpeth our infirmitiesÉ.. and maketh request for the saints according to the will of God*.

The Uses.

1. Hence we learn that grace is given not to the idle, but to them that use the good means ordained of God for the obtaining of grace; as the holy exercises of the Word, in hearing, reading, meditation, and humble and earnest prayer; and therefore, if we would have grace, we must diligently exercise ourselves in these means, for *faith cometh by hearing* (Rom. 10:17). And God's children in all ages have used the means to get grace; (Lam. 5:21), *Turn thou us, O Lord, unto thee, and we shall be turned*. And David is plentiful in the means, whereby he abounded in grace; (Psa. 119:33), Teach me, Lord, the way of thy statutes, (v.99), *I have had more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation*. So Christ's disciples did not only hear Him preach, but desired to be instructed in those things which they knew not; (Matt. 13:36), *Declare to us the meaning of the parable*. Also, they prayed Him to increase their faith (Luke 17:5). Here then we may see the cause of that ignorance and want of grace which abounds in the world; namely, contempt or negligence in the means which God hath ordained for the obtaining of grace; for the heart of the negligent is like the field of the sluggard (Prov. 24:30,31), that hath no corn in it, but is overgrown with briars and thorns.

2. Secondly, this serves for the comfort of those that have as yet but the beginnings of grace, in small and weak measure; they must not be discouraged, for God hath plenty of grace in store; if they can but find and feel their want of grace, and lament it unto God, using the means of the Word and prayer to get supply; here is a promise of the Holy Ghost, who is the storehouse and fountain of all grace.

3. Thirdly, this serves for a good ground to confute sundry errors; as first, the opinion of universal grace, whereby some hold that every man may be saved if he will; for the promise of the Holy Ghost (without which none can be saved) is not universal, but here made with restraint to those that ask according to God's will, which none can do without the Spirit; which must teach us to pray in faith, without which we receive nothing from God (Jam. 1:6,7). Secondly, this overthroweth the fond conceit of Anabaptists and

Familists, who look for the Spirit by revelation, and not in the exercise of the Word and prayer. But we must look to the means, in which God gives the Spirit; and out of that means, we are more subject to the delusions of Satan, than to the operations of the Holy Ghost. Thirdly, this also confuteth the error of the church of Rome, who teach that a man by the good use of the gifts of nature, may come to obtain the gifts of the Holy Ghost. But there is no larger promise than this in all the Scripture, where the gifts of the Holy Ghost are promised to the exercise of the gift of prayer in faith; which we cannot do by nature but by grace. And besides, when we ask in faith by grace, this is no cause of the gifts of the Spirit which we receive, but only a discharge of our duty in the exercise of the means which God hath appointed; whereupon followeth the increase of grace, yet no way of our merit, but from God's free mercy and His bounty.

# 7:12

"*Therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, even so do ye to them: for this is the law and the prophets*" Matthew 7:12.

This verse contains the fourth part of this chapter, concerning equity and justice. And it consists of two branches: a commandment, *Whatsoever ye would* etc., and a reason, *for this is the law and the prophets*.

I.

For the first,

The Meaning.

The commandment is propounded in a form of speech that hath reference to something going before; *Therefore whatsoever* etc., and yet it seemeth very hard that it should depend either upon the doctrine of prayer or of dispensing the Word, or of rash judgment. Why then is it said, *Therefore*? Some think it is to be referred to the doctrine of justice, which was delivered in the fifth chapter, but that is scarce probable, because so many different points of doctrine are handled between. Others think that it doth not depend on anything that went before, but that the word *therefore* doth abound; and this is more probable, for such particles do sometimes abound; (John 1:20), *He denied and said*, because *I am not the Christ*; where the word *because* doth abound. Now though the word *therefore* do abound, yet it is not without its use, for it imports that the doctrine here delivered is a special doctrine, and a main conclusion inferred upon divers particular duties of justice before delivered in the whole sermon.

*Whatsoever*.

It may seem that this ought not to be so, for many desire and wish evil unto themselves; as children, that they may have their wish to take their pleasure, and not be held in subjection unto their parents, or held to good education;

and so idle persons wish evil unto themselves, for they would not be set-a-work. We are therefore to know that this must not be understood of evil witness, but of a will and desire well-ordered, either by grace, and according to the written Word; or at least, by the light of natural knowledge and conscience. So that Christ's meaning is this: as if He had said, *Whatsoever thing, either by the light of nature and conscience, or by direction from God's Word, you would wish that men should do to you, that do ye unto them*.

The commandment thus explained, containeth two things: 1. The thing to be ruled and ordered; namely, our actions to other men; 2. The rule itself that must order all our sayings and doings towards others; to wit, that desire of justice and equity which every man by nature would have others shew to him in all things.

1. In this commandment, our Saviour would let us see a notable property of our corrupt nature; namely, that we are forward and diligent to exact justice and equity at other men's hands towards us, but slack and backward to yield the same to others again. In other men's doings towards ourselves, we are masters able to teach them what they ought to do; but in our own dealings toward others, we are scarce scholars that will learn their duty. We ourselves would be reverenced and commended, but we hardly do the like to others.

2. Secondly, here we are taught to avoid all practices whereby we might hurt our neighbour, either in body, goods or good name; as lying, slandering, usury, oppression, and such like. This natural reason might teach us, for wouldest not thou have others to defame, hurt and oppress thee? Then do not this to them; for the rule is not, do as men do to thee, but *do to others as thou wouldest have them do to thee*; and it is the corruption of nature that moves men to seek their own advantage and preferment by the loss and debasing of others.

3. Thirdly, here we learn that in common injuries wherein we are wronged by others, we must not requite like for like; but do good for evil. We must not look at that which they do to us, but at that which we would they should do.

4. Fourthly, here we learn that in matters of commodity whereabout we deal in the world, we must not only look unto ourselves, but also seek the good of our neighbours. It is the manner of men to seek themselves only in their affairs, and each man will sell as dear as he can, according to the proverb, *Every man for himself, and God for us all*. But neither the saying nor the practice is from God. He would have us according to the law of nature to seek the common good, and to do as we would be done unto.

5. Fifthly, this tale of equity cuts the throat of all those pretences whereby bad dealing is smoothed over in the world. For ill-minded persons use to colour their doings with these and such like sayings: The gripple seller saith, *The thing is mine, may I not make of mine own what I can*? The deceiver saith, *he thrusts his ware on no man*; The usurer saith, *he bids no man hire his money, but others intreat it of him, and give him thanks*; but these pretences are nought, these men follow a crooked line, they ought to see in their own hearts whether they would have other men deal so with them. The usurer may pretend he pleasures the poor, but his help is no better than his is that gives a draught of cold water to him that is in a burning fever, which seems pleasure at the first, but after turns to his great annoyance.

6. Sixthly, would we have all men to shew forth their love unto us? We then must be as careful to shew forth our love to others, by the practice of all good duties. This is against our nature, but yet being the commandment of Christ, we must endeavour ourselves to obey the same.

7. Lastly, here we have direction how to keep a good conscience, in all our dealings with men in the world; for such things as are expressed in the Word we must follow the direction thereof; but where we want a particular commandment, there we must order our actions by this general rule: enter into thy conscience, and there search how thou wouldest have other men deal with thee, and follow that in thy dealings with them; and so shalt thou keep a good conscience. For want of this come to many disorders as are in the world; and therefore happy were our times if men would do as they would be done to.

Thus much for the commandment, now followeth the reason.

II.

*For this is the law and the prophets*.

The meaning.

By *the law* we must understand the five books of Moses, which were the first Scripture that ever was written; so (Luke 16:29), *They have Moses and the prophets*. By *the prophets* we must understand all the rest of the books of the Old Testament, besides the five books of Moses, *the prophets* being put for the books of the prophets; as (Matt. 2:23), *It is written in the prophets that He shall be called a Nazarite*; which testimony is taken out of the book of Judges, and it sheweth that the book of Judges is to be numbered among the books of the prophets; and they are called the prophets because they were written by some prophet. And here this commandment touching justice is called *the Law and the prophets*, because it is the sum of the Law and prophets. Yet some may ask how this can be true, seeing this commandment only concerns things to be practised; and the Law and prophets besides moral duties, contains matters of faith to be believed? *I answer*, This commandment must be understood to be the sum of the Law and the prophets, not for all things, but for that which they prescribe touching this point of justice and equity, and the practice hereof. *To do as they would be done to*, is the fulfilling of that which is set down in the Law and in the prophets, touching equity in all human actions.

Now the meaning being thus opened, the reason standeth thus, being drawn from divine testimony:

*That which is the sum of the Law and of the prophets touching equity, must be done:*

*But to do as we would be done to, is the sum of the Law and the prophets:*

*Therefore we must so do.*

1. From this reason, we may gather a rule whereby to judge concerning the Old Testament, what is Scripture, and what is not: All Scripture of the Old Testament is either the Law or the prophets; that is, was either penned by

Moses, or some of the prophets, who were extraordinarily moved and enabled thereunto. And therefore all the books from Genesis to Malachi are canonical Scripture, because they are written by some of the prophets. To this purpose St Peter saith (2 Pet. 1:19), *We have a most sure word of the prophets* etc. But for the books of Apocrypha, they are not canonical Scripture, because they were not penned by Moses or any of the prophets; which is plain by this: that all of them were first written either in Latin or in Greek, and none in Hebrew originally; whereas all the old prophets sent from God, wrote their books in the Hebrew, in the language of that people to whom they were sent; save only that some part of Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah were in Chaldee, which language the people learned in the captivity. Secondly, the prophets could not err, either in judgment, memory or understanding, by reason of the immediate assistance of the Holy Ghost; as (Acts 15:28), *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us*; and Peter calls their word *most sure*. But the authors of the books of Apocrypha erred, as may be shewed in them all. (Tobit 6) Raphael's counsel for driving away the devil by the smell of the liver of a fish, is a mere fabulous device; for the devil is by nature a spirit, and cannot be affected with such things. The story of Judith is fabulous, which saith, Nebuchadnezzar was king of Assyria when the people returned from the captivity, and Jehoachim was high priest. In the addition to Esther, chapter 16, Haman is said to be a man of Macedonia; but the true Scripture saith he was an Agagite, coming of Agag. The author of Ecclesiasticus, confesseth his inability in writing those things (Eccles. 1:6) but the true prophets were all- sufficient to this work, and free from error by the immediate assistance of the Holy Ghost. And (chap. 46:13) that author writeth that Samuel prophesied after his death, and shewed unto Saul his death; but the true story canonical saith, *God had forsaken Saul, and would answer him, neither by dream, nor Urim, nor prophets* (1 Sam. 28:6). The book of Maccabees commendeth one for killing himself, which is the most evil and dangerous murder that can be; and the author also executeth his insufficiency in penning of it, which beseemeth not him that is guided by God's Spirit. In the Song of the Three Children, it is said (v.24), the flame ascended nine and forty cubits above the furnace; which seems incredible, especially that still they should then call in fuel or approach so near as to put any man into it. Likewise in the story of Susanna, it is said (v.45) that Daniel was a young child when he executed judgment upon the two false witnesses, which was in the end of

Astiages reign, immediately before the reign of Cyrus; and (v.64) Daniel by this means is said to grow famous; which cannot possibly accord with the true story of Daniel, neither for his age, nor for his fame and reputation. And the like may be said of the rest; whereby it is plain, these books cannot be canonical Scripture. And yet not to be rejected, but reverently esteemed of, as the books of worthy men.

Here some may say, If Moses and the prophets comprehend all Scripture that hath divine testimony, then the books of the New Testament shall not be Scripture, because they were not written by the prophets. *Answer*: They were either penned by the apostles, or by other apostolic men, and allowed by the apostles; as St Luke's gospel, and the Acts, were written by Luke a physician; and St Mark that wrote that gospel, was not an apostle; yet those books were approved by apostolic authority, which is all one as if they had been written by the apostles; and the apostles in speaking and writing were of equal authority with the prophets, having the infallible assistance of the Holy Ghost, as well as the prophets; for (Acts 15:28) they say, *It seemeth good to the Holy Ghost, and to us*; and (Eph. 2:20), the church is said to be *built on the foundations of the prophets and apostles*; where the apostles are made equal with the prophets.

2. This reason also doth give us to understand what was the first Scripture that ever was penned; namely, the books of Moses, before which there was no Word of God written, which was for the space of 2,400 years. It may be asked, what was then the Book of the Wars of the Lord mentioned (Num. 21:14), and the Book of the Righteous, spoken of by Joshua (Josh. 10:13)? *Answer*: These were the writings of men, human stories, like to our books of Chronicles. Yet it is said (Jude 14) *Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied*. *Answer*: That prophesy was not penned, but was from hand to hand by word of mouth; and if it were penned, yet it was not done by Enoch himself, but by some Jew in his name long after Moses; for it cannot be proved that Enoch ever penned any part of Scripture. Some will ask me how the people of God did for that space of two thousand and four hundred years, before the law was written, what guide had they for to know the will of God? *Answer*: They had the Word of God immediately taught them by word of mouth, from God Himself; as we may see in the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and they to whom it was delivered, did also

convey the same from man to man by tradition. And because it may seem strange how religion could for so long time be preserved pure without writing, we are to know that before the law was written, the church of God from the beginning was for the most part in one family only, as in Adam's, Enoch's, Noah's, Abraham's etc. whereby it was a more easier thing to preserve God's Word among them. Again, those men that first received the Word of God without writing, were of long continuance, living near to a thousand years space, whereby they might better see the Word preserved and continued, without writing, by tradition. Besides, when religion was corrupted, God Himself restored the purity thereof, revealing His will again, and renewing His covenant unto His servants, as He did to Abraham and the rest of the Patriarchs.

Here, then, behold how the heads of families preserved God's Word and true religion in the beginning of the world; namely, by teaching it to their posterity; and from them we may learn what is the duty, and ought to be the practice of every governor of a family at this day. They must not think themselves discharged for that the Word is written in the church, and every man may read and hear the same; but they must see the same be taught unto their children, and to the rest of their family, that so it may be preserved among them. So God commandeth His people, to teach their children the service of Passover (Exod. 12:26,27), and to whet the words of the Law upon their children (Deut. 6:7).

3. In this reason our Saviour takes for granted that the writings of Moses and of the prophets are of *infallible certainty*; for it is all one as if He had said, this must needs be every man's duty, *to do as he would be done to*; for *this is the Law and the prophets*; and so answerable to them, all other books of Scripture contain doctrine of infallible truth and certainty. Here some may ask, how should we be persuaded hereof in our consciences? *Answer*: By these arguments, which are all drawn from Scripture itself (for as every science and art hath his grounds and principles, so hath the Holy Scripture, which is not the church but Scripture itself),

(1). From the causes;

(2). From the effects;

(3). From the properties;

(4). From signs;

(5). From the contraries;

(6). From the testimony that is given hereof.

1. Among the causes:

1. The first and principal is the author thereof, which is God Himself. To Him do Scriptures refer themselves, and also shew how God is their anchor. In Scripture we read that God spake to Adam, to Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and the rest; and of Christ, the New Testament gives most lively testimony making Him the author and subject thereof. Now nothing is falsely ascribed to God, but God in time will bring the same to naught; and therefore if Scripture had not been God's Word, it would long ago have vanished.

2. Again, the cause conservant must be considered. The devil by wicked men and heretics hath laboured to take away God's Word from men's hearts and hands; but yet it is still preserved in the church, which argues that it is kept by a greater power than is in all men and all angels; that is by the power of God.

3. Thirdly, the pen-men, the instrumental causes, they were holy men of God, prophets and apostles, who for virtue and piety far exceed other writers; and if they had been mere politicians, their writings would have shewed it; for the pen-men of holy Scripture have therein faithfully registered their own faults, which no politic person would have done.

4. Again, consider the matter of holy Scripture, which stands in doctrine and style.

1. The doctrine of Scripture is the Law and the gospel. Now the Law is set forth in most excellent purity, nothing therein is against right reason or common equity. In the laws of men are many things found

against reason and equity; they command such things as common reason would condemn, and omit many things which reason and equity would command. And for the gospel, in it is set down doctrine altogether above man's reason; touching Christ's incarnation, and man's redemption by His death; and although these things be above nature, yet we find them true, wholesome and good, in experience of conscience; which also proves that they are the Word of God. Men may devise things above nature, but they can never be wholesome to the conscience.

2. Further, for the style of Scripture, the phrase is plain and familiar, and yet in any one speech there is more majesty than in all the writings of men.

3. Lastly, the end of Scripture proves the same to be God's Word; for the Scripture sets up God's worship and man's salvation, and yet gives nothing to men or angels, but all to the glory of God. But for the writings of men, they do either directly, or by insinuation, ascribe something to the writers thereof.

2. From the effects, one work of Scripture is this: It is against our corrupt nature, crossing and condemning the same; and yet it winneth men to the love thereof, and to obedience thereto; which could not be unless it were the truth of God; for we abhor and detest the words of men, that be against our nature. A second effect is this: God's Word serves notably to comfort a man in all distresses whatsoever, even in the very pangs of death, whenas no word of any man can do him the least good, but only His Word, that is the Lord of our souls, and the God of our life.

3. From the properties of Scripture:

1. The first whereof is antiquity. The Scriptures of all writings are most ancient, and evermore truth is most ancient. Among human writings, we have none of certainty in the things they record, before the times of Nehemiah and Ezra; but the Scripture sets down things done from the beginning.

2. A second property is mutual consent; for although the books of Scripture were written by diverse men, in sundry ages and times, yet all agree within themselves, no contradiction is in Scripture. But the writings of men have not this mutual consent, no not in the same author.

4. From the signs and miracles thereof. The doctrine of Scripture teacheth and recordeth true miracles; as the parting of the sea, and the staying of the sun and moon, the taking away of barrenness, and the incarnation of the Son of God, a miracle of all miracles; all which being wrought by the power of God, shew that the Scripture which recordeth them is the infallible truth of God.

5. From the contraries. Contrary unto the Word of God, is the will of the devil, and man's own corrupt nature; the devil hateth Scripture, and man's sinful nature repineth thereat, when it is checked and controlled thereby. Now that which is contrary unto these two, must needs be most holy and true; and that is the Word of God.

6. From testimony. There be two kinds of testimonies touching Scripture:

1. One of the holy martyrs, who in all ages have sealed the truth thereof with their blood, preferring the Word of God before their own lives.

It will be said that heretics have died for falsehood. *Answer*: There is a great difference in their ends; the martyrs have unspeakable joy in the Spirit in their torments; but heretics have no such joy, but a natural ceaseless blockishness, whereby they undergo their tortures.

2. A second testimony is most principal, and that is the testimony of God's Spirit; for when men do begin to learn and obey the Word of God, then the Spirit of God settles their consciences in the persuasion of the truth of Scripture; whereupon it is called *the sealing of the Spirit of truth*, because it assures a man in conscience of his reconciliation with God; which assurance none can have, till he be resolved of the certainty of Scripture, which is the ground thereof.

*Question*: How may a man find this seal in himself? *Answer*: When he finds the Scripture imprinted in his heart, as the sign of the seal is in the wax; and his heart is transformed into Scripture, as the wax is into the similitude of the seal; then doth the Spirit out of the holy Scripture, seal up the assurance of the truth thereof unto his soul. None other writing of any man hath the like work in the heart of man; and from these grounds, especially from this last, may we resolve ourselves that the Bible is of most infallible certainty.

And yet for further resolution, let us see what objections are made against it.

*Objection 1*: This is not true, for the Law is perfect reason, and the gospel is above reason, not contrary to reason. *Answer*: Nay, holding this principle of nature, that God is Almighty, even the gospel itself may stand within reason; as that the Son of God should be incarnate, and that by His death we should receive life, which is the sum of the gospel.

*Objection 2*: There be falsehoods in Scripture; for the passage through the Red Sea was no miracle, but might be done in the ebbing of the sea, as in other countries there is oft-times passage through the washes. *Answer*: The Scripture saith the waters stood as walls on each side of the passage, which could not be by an ebb. Again, reason sheweth that it could not be by the natural course, for their passage over was at the full of the moon, when all seas are most full, and do not ebb and flow, as they use to do at other times.

*Objection 3*: The greatest part of the whole world reject the Bible, as Turks and pagans; and the Jews care not for the New Testament. *Answer*: We must reverence God's work, in this withholding His mercy in Christ from some, to whom He denies the means, which is His holy Word; for henceit comes that some reject the Bible, because God in His secret, yet most just judgment, withholds this blessing from them. And therefore though atheists bark, yet the truth is, Scripture is the Word of God.

The Uses.

Use 1. Seeing the Word written is the certain truth of God, we must take heed of being seduced by popish teachers, who say there be two kinds of Scripture: inward and outward. Inward Scripture is a consent of doctrine

written by the Holy Ghost in the hearts of all Catholics, and this (they say) is the right Scripture. The outward Scripture is written in paper and parchment, which hath no certain sense, but as the present church determines thereof. But this is a devillish doctrine, abolishing written Scripture, the true Word of God, and setting up the opinions of their own hearts, making Scripture what themselves will. We must therefore hold the written Word to be right Scripture, and the ground of that which is in the heart; for the Word written carries a most certain sense, being both text and gloss; whereas their inward Scripture varieth as men do, unless it be grounded on the written Word.

Use 2. The certainty of Scripture must teach us to believe God's Word, and not to fear to rest ourselves upon it. The author of Scripture by His providence preserves His own Word, so as all the men in earth, for substance cannot corrupt the same; and therefore whatsoever it saith, we need not doubt but it is the will of God.

4. From this reason we may also gather the *authority of canonical Scripture*; for we must do as we would be done to, because the law and the prophets say so. And hence it follows that the Law and prophets have an high, sovereign and absolute authority. This authority of Scripture stands in two things: (1) in power to give judgment; (2) in the all-sufficiency thereof, in and of itself; and both these are noted here by our Saviour Christ in this reason.

1. For the first, the *power of giving judgment* is that whereby Scripture doth fully and absolutely determine of all things needful to salvation concerning faith and manners; and for this cause the laws of God are oft in Scripture called *judgments*. There be diverse judgments ascribed to sundry sorts of persons in Scripture:

1. First, it gives a judgment to every private man. *The spiritual man discerneth all things* (1 Cor. 2:15), and St John bids the believers in the church *prove the spirits* (1 John 4:1), that is, try by judgment the doctrines delivered.

2. Secondly, the Scripture gives judgment to public persons, as to pastors, ministers, and to the governors of the church. *Let two or three*

*prophesy, and the rest judge* (1 Cor. 14:29), and the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets (v.32).

3. Thirdly, judgment is ascribed to the prophets and apostles in Scripture (Acts 15:28), *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us*; and this is an high judgment, which befalls not any private man or ordinary minister, or general council ordinarily, but is peculiar to extraordinary prophets, that were pen-men of holy Scripture.

And these three kinds of judgments must be distinguished. The two first kinds are inferior and ministerial kinds of judgment, depending on an higher and more sovereign judgment; for private men and ordinary ministers and councils give judgment, yet not of themselves, but by their rule, which is the Word of God; and this judgment is nothing else but a ministry, pronouncing and declaring the meaning of the will of God revealed in His Word. But besides this, there is a sovereign kind of judgment, vouchsafed to the prophets and apostles, determining absolutely in matters of faith and conscience, what is to be done and what is not; and this is the judgment of God Himself, whereupon the apostles might say, *It seemeth good to the Holy Ghost and to us* (Acts 15:28). And that this their judgment is absolute, appears by Scripture, *He that heareth you, heareth me* (saith Christ to His apostles), *and he that refuseth you, refuseth me* (Luke 10:16). And Paul delivering the gospel of Christ to the Galatians, bids them hold them accursed that teach them otherwise (Gal. 1:8); and the promise of sending the Spirit of truth (John 16:13), was directly intended to the apostles, and only in them fully accomplished. For our better conceiving hereof, we have a resemblance of this sovereign judgment in the commonwealth. The high court of parliament gives judgments of matters in law, and so do lawyers and judges in common courts; yet there is great difference between these two: the court of parliament makes the law, and determines absolutely in civil matters, without controlment, what must be done and what not; but the lawyers make not the law, but pronounce the meaning of the law unto me. Now the Scriptures, the prophets and apostles, they are like to the court of parliament in giving judgment. Private men and ordinary ministers give judgment like unto the lawyers, which is not absolute, but ministerial, depending on a higher judgment.

The Uses.

Use 1. If the prophets and apostles have sovereign power to give absolute judgment in matters of faith and manners; then we must here learn to make choice of a right judge; for unto one must we appeal in matters of faith and conscience. And this right judge is God's Word, which we must stick unto, and to none other. The commandment is plain for matters of difficulty that concern the conscience, (Isa. 8:20), *To the law, and to the testimony*; and our Saviour Christ refers us to Scripture for all matters that concern salvation, (John 5:39) *Search the Scripture*. If we would know what is true religion and what is erroneous; what is equity in any matter of conscience, we must have recourse to Scripture. It will be said, Scripture is an unfit judge, it cannot speak. I answer, it speaks sufficiently to determine of all matters of faith and conscience. We see in common experience, a man may resolve his friend in matters of doubt, as well by letter, as by word of mouth; why then may not the Word of God sent from heaven unto His church, resolve men's consciences in all matters of doubt for faith and manners? And indeed, let any man come in humility, and seriously search the Scripture, and he shall find resolution therein for any matter of conscience whatsoever.

Use 2. By this authority of Scripture in giving sovereign judgment, we are taught to take heed of an incompetent judge, which men for many hundreds years have set up in their hearts, to rely unto in matters of faith and conscience: and that is to put the church in room of the Word, for sovereign judgment. The church of Rome teacheth that the church must judge of the Scripture; yea, without Scripture give sovereign determination in matters of conscience, as having more authority than Scripture, because it gives authority thereunto. But this is the ground of atheism and heresy, and the pathway to popery. The true church of God must have the honour of Christ's spouse; but yet the authority of sovereign judgment must not be given to her, but only to the Word of God itself.

2. The second part of the authority of Scripture is that every part of canonical Scripture is *authentical*; that is, of sufficient authority of itself, though it be not confirmed by any other testimony; for Scripture is the Word of God, and the testimony of Scripture is the testimony of

God Himself, than which none can be greater; as St John saith, *If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater* (1 John 5:9). For the better conceiving of this point, confer all the books that are or ever were together, and thereby it will appear that the Scripture is of itself authentical. There be three sorts of books, divine, ecclesiastical and human.

1. Divine books are the books of God, penned by the prophets and apostles; and they are all the Word of God; for whether we regard the matter of them, or the manner of revealing them, they are all from God; the prophets and apostles were only God's hands and instruments in penning them, the Holy Ghost gave the matter, the order, and the very words. From whence it must needs follow that they are of all-sufficient authority of themselves.

2. Ecclesiastical books are books of divine matters, penned by learned men in the church; and they are either general books or particular. *General books Ecclesiastical* I call those which were either made or confirmed by the whole church; as the creeds of the apostles, the Nicene, and of Athanasius; and the first four general councils; and these have catholic allowance, yet not absolute authority, but depending of Scripture. *Particular books Ecclesiastical* I call the catechisms and confessions of particular churches, made by them, or particular members thereof; which have not authority of themselves, but from the Scripture or from general consent. Now both these kinds of books may be called God's Word, so far forth as they agree with Scripture; and yet they are also the word of men, because they were penned by men, and have both order and style from men. And in this regard, that they were partly men's works, they are not authentical of themselves, but depend upon the authority of Scripture.

3. Human books are books penned by men, either of the church or out of the church, concerning human things, as books of natural philosophy, of polity, and other arts; and these are not the books of God, but of men alone, having both matter and style from men. Many of them contain excellent truths in their kind, yet gathered only from experience and common reason; but they have not in them that truth

> which is truth according to godliness, serving to build up and to bind the conscience, unless it be in one case, to stop the mouths of atheists and Epicurians, and to convince their consciences.

And thus by conference of all books, we see that Scripture alone is authentical in itself, and no books besides.

The Uses.

Use 1. This teacheth us that ministers in the dispensing of God's Word should content themselves with the testimony of Scripture alone; for the end of the ministry is to work and confirm faith, and to settle and build up the conscience in the truth of religion, and matters concerning salvation; which no other word can do, save only the Word of God in Scripture, that hath sufficient authority in itself, from which conscience cannot appeal; and for which cause our Saviour Christ the true prophet of the church, contents Himself with the testimony of the Law and prophets alone; and after Him His apostles did the like. See this notably confirmed by Paul, who in his preaching to the Jews, professed himself to have said *none other thing than that which the prophets and Moses said should come* (Acts 26:22). Other writings have their good use in their time and place, but not in the public ministry; for authority and testimony from Scripture is authentical. *This the Scripture saith, therefore it is so; but authority from councils and fathers is sophistry*; as: Austin saith so, therefore it is so – this is no good reason, for it implies that all Austin said is true; which indeed is false, he being as all men are, subject to error.

Use 2. This also sheweth that we cannot believe unwritten traditions, though they be called apostolic. The church of Rome intend to deceive us when they would bear us in hand that half of those things which are to be believed, are not written in Scripture, but received by tradition. But these traditions we cannot believe by a divine faith, howsoever by a common human faith we may; for they are contained in the books of councils and fathers, which were worthy men, yet subject to error.

Use 3. This also sheweth that we must submit ourselves with fear and trembling to the Word of God; for it hath absolute authority to judge us, and

to convince our conscience in all matters of faith and manners that pertain to salvation.

5. Whereas Christ allegeth Moses and the prophets to confirm His ministry, it may be demanded whether there be any difference for authority between Christ and the prophets; for he that allegeth another man's authority seems to be inferior thereto. *I answer*, If we compare Christ and the prophets, we must distinguish between their doctrine and their persons. The doctrine of Moses and of the prophets, is equal to the doctrine of Christ two ways: First, in certainty of truth; for it is as undoubtedly true as if Christ had taught the same. Secondly, in efficacy and authority for the power of binding conscience; for the doctrine of the prophets binds conscience as fully and truly as if Christ Himself had spoken it. And yet the person of Christ is above the person of Moses, and of all the prophets; for He is the Son of God, both God and man; they were men. He is the author of truth, they only the instruments and pen-men thereof. And from hence it comes that Christ's doctrine doth more bind us to obedience than the doctrine of the prophets; because the person delivering it is of more authority and excellency. And for this cause Christ allegeth Moses and the prophets, not for that His word is inferior to theirs, but that in regard of our obedience He might increase the authority of Moses and the prophets, because a greater measure of obedience is required to Christ's Word, in regard of the dignity of His Person. And this shews that we now are more bound to obedience under the gospel, than the people were under the Law; for we have Christ's doctrine, which in regard of His Person is of more authority than Moses and the prophets. See this point plainly laid down by the author to the Hebrews: In the first chapter he saith (Heb. 1:1). *God in times past spake to His church by the prophets, but in these last days He hath spoken to us by His Son*. And in the second chapter (Heb. 2:1) he lays down the use of this that now we have Christ for our teacher; namely that *therefore we ought more abundantly to give heed to the things thay we have heard, lest at any time we let them slip* etc., shewing that our disobedience now shall be more severely punished.

6. Ignorant people abuse this text, to persuade themselves that preaching is needless, because no man can say more than this: *Do as ye would be done to, for this is the sum of the Law and the prophets*. But we must know that

this is not the sum of all that the prophets say, but only touching the matter of justice and equity. And indeed that we may attain to salvation, more is needful; for we must not only know God's Word in general, but in particular, seeing that we may fail in the particulars of that which we know in general. Again, preaching serves not only for the removing of ignorance, and the increase of knowledge, but to erect and build up good conscience and honest lives, by the increase of faith, repentance, love of God and man, and of obedience; and this use the most learned and godly man that ever was, may make of the public ministry, though dispensed by one that is far inferior to him in knowledge and piety.

7. Lastly, it may be demanded how this can be the sum of the Law and the prophets: *to do as we would be done to with men*; seeing we are further bound by the Law to perform duties of love and obedience to God. *Answer*: This rule is the sum of all; for our love to God must be shewed in the practice of the duties of love, justice and mercy towards men; for God is invisible, and it pleaseth Him to make Himself seen in our visible neighbour, requiring that our love to Himself should be shewed in the works of mercy, justice and goodness towards men. Men may flatter themselves, and say they love God, but if it be not shewed in the love of their neighbours, they deceive themselves, there is no love of God in them. And therefore they are deceived that think all is well with them when they come to church, and receive the sacraments; for religion stands not in the outward service of God, unless it be shewed forth in the duties of justice, love and mercy, commanded in the second table. (Jam. 1:27), Pure religion and undefiled before God, is to visit the fatherless and widows in their adversity, and to keep himself unspotted of the world.

# 7:13-14

"*Enter in at the strait gate: for it is the wide gate, and broad way that leadeth to destruction: and many there be which go in thereat. Because the gate is strait, and the way narrow that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*" Matthew 7:13-14

These two verses, being the fifth part of this chapter, contain the tenth point of doctrine in this sermon of our Saviour Christ; wherein He exhorteth His hearers and us all effectually, to an earnest care in seeking everlasting life; and withal admonish us in the matter of salvation, not to follow the multitude, because most men go the broad way to destruction.

The words contain two parts: A commandment, *Enter in at the strait gate*; and a reason in the words following: *For it is the wide gate* etc. Yet for our further edification and instruction, I will consider and handle five points, which are here set down by our Saviour Christ:

I. That there be two contrary cities or kingdoms, in one of which every man and woman must abide for ever after this life; and further, that these afford unto men a contrary estate, the one life, the other death and destruction.

II. That there are two distinct ways to these two cities or kingdoms: one leading to destruction, the other leading unto life.

III. The condition and property of these two ways: The way of life is strait and narrow; the way of destruction is broad and wide, and that from the beginning to the end.

IV. What men do in these ways; namely, that many walk in the broad way, and few can find the strait and narrow way.

V. What men ought to do touching these ways; namely, pass by the broad way, and enter into and walk in the strait way; which is the scope of Christ's exhortation and instruction in this place.

Of these in order:

I.

For the first: These two cities are two distinct places ordained of God for the final and eternal abode of all mankind after this life, according to that which every man hath done in his body. These are termed diversely in Scripture, one, *the kingdom of heaven*; the other, *outer darkness*, in the chapter following (vv.11,12). The one, *Abraham's bosom*, the other *hell fire* (Luke 16:23). In the 21st and 22nd chapters of the Revelation, they are notably described, the one is called *the city of God*; the other *the burning lake*; and usually the one is called *heaven*, and the other *hell*. And as these are distinct places, so they afford unto men two distinct estates: the one *life*, the other *destruction*; as it is said, *the narrow way leads to life; the broad way to destruction*.

By *life* is here meant a blessed state of man in which he lives in fellowship with God, and hath his heart filled with the unspeakable love and goodness of God, and with endless joy from God's immediate presence. And this indeed is the only true life; our natural life is but a shadow thereof.

By *perdition*, or *destruction*, we are to understand a cursed state of man, in which he is without all fellowship with God in respect of His favour, mercy and love; and yet in body, soul and conscience doth apprehend the bitterness of God's wrath and fury for evermore; having no fellowship save only with the devil and his angels, and damned souls. This is no life, but eternal death, though soul and body live together eternally.

The Uses.

Use 1. In that Christ doth here mention but two cities or places, to the one whereof every man must resort after death; we may gather that there is no middle place or condition between life and destruction. A third place or state the Scripture knoweth not, and therefore there is no place of purging the souls of men after this life, which the papists call purgatory. If there had, the Word of God would have revealed it. But the papists say, it is the upper part of hell, near to the hell of the damned. I answer, If that were so, then there is no salvation for them that are in purgatory; for there is no returning

out of hell to heaven, by reason of the great gulf between them (Luke 16:26), and they that are in any part of hell are but damned persons.

Use 2. If there be but two places, and in them two estates only according to that which men have done here on earth, either good or evil; then we must be admonished with all care and conscience to use all good means, whereby we may escape the one and attain to the other; to be freed from destruction, and to gain salvation. In the massacre and sacking of a city, in which some are slain and some escape alive, everyone hath care to shift for himself, to save his temporal life. Much more then ought we to provide for eternal life, seeing at the last day wherein the whole world shall be ransacked, everyone must undergo either salvation or destruction. If we had our deserving, we should be confounded every moment; but God in mercy grants unto us length of days for this very end, that we should seek God's kingdom and life everlasting. And therefore this must be our principal care and study, that we may be always ready, whensoever we shall be called hence; and the rather, because we know not when Christ will call us hence. (Luke 12:40), *Be ye also prepared therefore, for the Son of man will come at an hour when ye think not*.

II.

As there be two diverse estates in two distinct places; so there be two several ways that lead thereunto; the one the way of life (v.14), the other the way of destruction (v.13).

1. First, I will speak of the way of life, and thereby shall we see what the way of destruction is; in which regard it stands us all in hand to know what is the way of life. Now none hath better noted it out unto us, than the prophet Habakkuk (Hab. 2:4), in these words: *But the just shall live by faith*; in which place he foretells the afflictions of the Jews by the Chaldeans; whereupon the Jews might say, whereby then shall we stay ourselves? He answers, *By faith*. *The just man lives*, that is, leadeth his life, *by faith*. Some give this meaning to the prophet: *The just by faith shall have life everlasting*; but the apostle expoundeth it otherwise (Gal. 3:11). So then to walk in the way of life is to lead our lives by faith in Christ (Heb. 10:39).

Here two points must be considered:

1. What faith is by which men must live in this world; namely, *true justifying faith*, the very faith by which they are to be saved in the day of the Lord. *I live by faith* (saith Paul) *in the Son of God, who hath loved me and given Himself for me* (Gal.2:20); where he doth notably expound this text shewing that faith in Christ our Redeemer, is that faith whereby we must lead our lives in this world; for they which will be saved by their faith, must first live by their faith. He that believes well, lives well; and that faith will never save the soul that cannot guide and order the life. Many men think it is sufficient to salvation to believe the promise of life; but faith hath a further work in them that it saveth; for it also causeth them to live thereby. Now a man lives by faith, when he rests himself on God, and suffers himself wholly to be led and guided by God's written Word. Example hereof we have in Abraham (Heb. 11:8), who *by faith forsook his own country, and at God's commandment went he knew not whither*.

2. More particularly, a Christian man's life is twofold: spiritual and temporal; both which he must live in this world, for heavenly life begins before we die; and both these kinds of life must be preserved by faith.

1. The spiritual life of a Christian is that whereby he hath true fellowship with God. This begins in this life; and it stands in reconciliation with God, wherein a man is accepted to the right of eternal life. This reconciliation is life, and it is held by faith; and faith only in God's Word and promise in Christ alone, is it that makes us lay hold of, receive and keep this our reconciliation. We must give God this honour, to believe His promise of remission of sins, and life everlasting in Christ; and upon our faith, God vouchsafeth unto us remission of sins and life everlasting. Here some may ask, whether everything that we believe be made ours, as riches, honour and such like. *Answer*: No; but only that which God promiseth in the evangelical covenant of life everlasting, upon our faith. Here also some will say, If this be all, I am well, for I believe God's promise. But herein many deceive themselves, believing the promise falsely. True faith is this: men must seek the pardon of their sins, and in seeking, believe it; but they that believe without using that means, deceive

themselves, seeing God hath joined His promise to the means. We offend God daily, and therefore must daily renew our repentance, and by faith believe the pardon of our daily sins.

Further, this spiritual life hath its fruits. It is no dead life, for he that hath remission of sins, lives in Christ, and this life shews itself in the fruits of good works; as mercy, love, goodness. And in every good work we must live by faith, for to the doing of any good work, there is a double faith required: first, a general faith, whereby we are persuaded that the work is allowed and required of God; secondly, a spiritual faith, whereby we are persuaded that the particular work done is accepted of God. In the acceptation of the work, God first accepteth the person in Christ, and then the works in and for the person. Yea, we are moved to every good work by faith; for it brings to mind God's love, mercy and goodness to us; and so motivates to perform the like duties of love and mercy towards our brethren.

Thirdly, spiritual life shews itself in resisting and enduring temptations, for every child of God hath many and grievous assaults, so as the righteous shall scarce be saved; and in all and every one of these, we must live by faith, and thereby rely on Christ, not on ourselves. Example hereof we have in Christ upon the cross, who even then when He felt the wrath of God upon Him, did yet cry unto Him as to His God: *My God, my God* (Matt. 27:46). And Job in grievous temptation and affliction, said unto the Lord: *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him* (Job 13:15). And so must we even then lay hold on God's mercy, when we feel no comfort in ourselves. So did David, when he felt no comfort, yet he did cleave to God in his meditation (Psa. 77:7-11). In disputations in schools, it is a fault to stick always to the conclusion; yet in this combat with Satan it is no fault, but a good practice of true faith.

2. Temporal life stands in the practice of some particular calling; and some men be of one calling, some of another; and everyone hath, or ought to have, some one lawful calling or other wherein to lead his temporal life. Now the works of a man's particular calling, they must be practised by faith, even the duties of the basest callings that is, as of the shepherd. And that a man may do the duties of his calling in faith,

> he must first have a grounded conscience that his work is allowed of God, and accordingly he must do his work. Again, every man in his calling must have a care of his own self, and of those that belong unto him, to provide for them things necessary, as meat, drink and clothing; and this care must be ruled by faith, that is, a man must use the lawful means to get these things, and yet so as he leave the issue and event unto God's blessing. We may provide for necessaries, but we must go no further, but use the lawful ordinary means, and sanctify them by prayer, leaving the blessing unto God. *Cast thy works on God*, saith Solomon (Prov. 16:3); and St Peter bids us, *Cast all our care on God* (1 Pet. 5:7). Lastly, every calling hath its crosses. No life is so quiet that it wanteth all vexations. Now when crosses come upon any man in his calling, then must he bear the same by faith. He must rest on God's Word, and quiet his mind with the good will and pleasure of God. *He that believes* (saith the prophet) *shall not make haste* (Isa. 28:16), that is, he shall not be carried headlong with a desire to satisfy his own pleasure and appetite, either in seeking to be freed from evil, or to enjoy some blessing, but shall content himself with the good pleasure of God.

And thus we see what it is to live by faith, which is the right way to life eternal.

The Uses.

Use 1. This sheweth that a great number are far wide, which think that if they live uprightly among men, then all is well. This honest life is very commendable among men, but it is not sufficient to salvation. It is but a work of nature, for a man by natural reason may lead a civil, upright life, as many have done among the heathen; but the life that must bring a man to heaven, must be led by faith; and therefore they that would walk the way to life, must walk by faith, not by reason only.

Use 2. This also sheweth that they are deceived which live by sense, measuring God's love and hatred by outward blessings and crosses; and therefore when God takes away the means, they will no longer trust on Him. But we count it a point of dishonesty, not to trust our honest friend without a pawn. Much more then is it a dishonour to God, when we will not

rely upon Him, without outward pledges of His favour. And therefore we must rely on God when all means fail, for *no man knoweth love or hatred by all that is before him* (Eccl. 9:1).

Use 3. Many that profess religion are deceived that measure their grace and goodness in religion by feeling their own hearts. But we must rely thereon, for true faith may be in the heart without inward sense. Again, the devil may put false comforts many times into a man's heart. The bad man receives the Word with joy (Luke 8:13). Look to thy faith by Christ's Word, and thereby judge thyself, and rest not in thine inward feeling.

Use 4. This teacheth us to acquaint ourselves with all the commandments of God that be in the Bible; and with all the promises that concern the pardon of sins and life everlasting; for without this knowledge there can be no faith; and therefore we must abandon all ignorance of these things, and instruct ourselves, and those that belong unto us, in the Word of God, that they and we may live by faith.

Use 5. These are happy days of peace and of many temporal blessings wherein we now live; but we must not live always in this peace. God hath begun to set His judgments among us, and if we do not repent, we must look for further and more grievous judgments, as the less of His Word, and a sword upon ourselves, our friends and children. What if these days come? How must we then live? Namely, by faith in the Word and promise of God. Lay hold on this, and though thou lose friends, goods and thine own temporal life, yet hold fast thy spiritual life; by faith cleave unto Christ, and then in the midst of swords and weapons of death, thou shalt walk the way to eternal life.

And thus much of the way of life.

2. The second way is the way to destruction; which is called the way of sinners and of the ungodly (Psa. 1:1,6). This way hath many paths, which tend all to one end, and meet in the same period; and they may all be reduced to these three heads:

1. The way of nature.

2. The way of false faith.

3. The way of faith and nature joined together.

4. The way of nature is when men only live by the light of nature. Of this St Paul speaks (Acts 14:16), *God suffered all the Gentiles to walk in their own ways*; wherein they were void of God in Christ, and so not under mercy.

5. The way of false faith is something more than the way of nature; but yet it leadeth to destruction, because their faith is false and profession vain; and this is the way of false religion, whereof there be these three main and principal at this day, to which all other may be referred: The religion of the Turk, of the Jews, and of the papists. The Turks in their religion acknowledge Christ for a great prophet, but not to be God, neither do they look for any salvation by Him. The Jews in their religion acknowledge but one God, yet out of Christ. They acknowledge not His incarnation past, but expect it yet to come. They wait for an earthly kingdom. They hold the Old Testament only and deny the New. Now both these refusing Christ, have not the Father, and so can have no salvation in their religion. The papists acknowledge much truth formally, but then again they overturn it; for they hold that general faith, which the devils may have; but for that special justifying faith whereby a man is to believe his own salvation, the remission of his sins, and his own reconciliation with God in Christ; that they renounce. Again, the Christ of the papist is no true Christ; for they make Him but half a Saviour, or not so much; even only an instrument to make men saviours of themselves; for by His grace, they do works properly meritorious, and fully worthy of eternal life. They rob Him also of His manhood, saying, it is everywhere in his quantity, where mass is said; for they have the self same body that was crucified. Also, they deny His offices: (i) His kingly office; for they part stakes with Him, and give it to the pope, in saying he hath power to make laws which bind the conscience, as God's laws do. (ii) His priesthood, because every mass-priest offers Christ anew; and they make saints intercessors, especially the virgin Mary.

3. His prophetic office, saying the Scriptures are imperfect without tradition; uncertain without the sense and meaning of the church; the original copies are corrupted; and the church is above them in authority.

3. The third way is the way of faith and nature together. This is the common way wherein most Protestants walk; for we hold the right faith in word; our profession and judgment is right; but yet our lives are led according to nature.

And these three paths are all in the broad way to destruction And therefore as we hold true doctrine, and right faith in word, so let us lead our lives accordingly, and testify the same by our works, especially in the times of dearth when God lays His hand on the poor, and thereby tries the hearts of the rich.

III.

The property of these ways. The way to life is narrow and strait; the way to destruction is broad and wide.

1. For the first: *The way to life is narrow and strait*, from the first entrance to the last passage. Why so?

1. First, because the way of life is only one single path; but the way of death is manifold, containing sundry paths.

2. Secondly, they that walk in the way of life, contain themselves within the bonds and lists of God's Word; for the words of the wise are as nails and pales to keep us in (Eccl. 12:11).

3. Thirdly, in the way to life, there are many afflictions and offences, (Acts 14:22), *Through manifold afflictions we must enter into the kingdom of heaven*; and (Hos. 2:6), *I will stop thy way with thorns*; meaning that by sharp afflictions He would hedge them in the way of obedience. But some may say, why then doth Christ say His *yoke is light* (Matt. 11:30)? And St John (1 John 5:3), *His commandments are not grievous*? And David (Psa. 119:45), *I will walk at large* or *liberty*?

*Answer*: The way is strait and narrow in respect of our nature; but yet broad and easy by His assisting grace and help. Here then we see what course we must take if we mean to come unto Christ; namely, we must tread in this narrow way, and become like unto Him in suffering afflictions; for this way He went here on earth, and so entered into His glory.

2. The property of the way of death is *breadth*. Now the way of death is broad:

1. First, because the way of sinning is manifold; even as truth is only one, and error manifold.

2. Secondly, they that walk in this way break out of the bounds of God's Word, and do not contain themselves therein.

3. Thirdly, herein they meet with few crosses and impediments; as David saith (Psa. 73:5,12), *They are not in trouble as other menÉ. they prosper always and increase in riches*. And the reason is because they seek by all means to satisfy their heart's desire, whether by right or wrong; saying with the fool in the gospel (Luke 12:19), *Soul, soul take thy rest, live at ease*.

IV.

What men do in these ways; namely, the greatest part of men walk in the broad way, but few in the narrow way.

Hence we learn sundry instructions:

1. We must not be offended or discouraged when we see most men live either in a false religion, or in gross impiety; for the greatest part walk in the broad way.

2. We must not follow the multitude in matters of religion, but these that follow Christ, the patriarchs, prophets and apostles; for the most go wide, and the fewest hold the right way of life.

3. That universality is no mark of a true church; for the true church is in the strait way, but therein the smallest number walk.

4. Universal grace is a device of man; for few find the way of life, and therefore it is hid and unknown. If it be said that all might find it if they would; *I answer*: they cannot; for the word *finding* doth presuppose a seeking; as if Christ had said, *Though many give themselves to seek the way of life, yet few there be that find it*. The like phrase we have (Matt. 24:38), *In the days of Noah they ate and drank*; that is, they gave themselves to eating and drinking. Again, St Luke hath it thus (Luke 13:24), *And shall not be able to find it*. Why then do not the most find the way to life? Is it because they seek it not? No, verily; St Luke denies that. Why then is the way hid to the most, and revealed to few? This Christ teacheth us (Matt. 11:25,26): *Because it so pleaseth God*.

V.

*What must we do in regard of these two ways*? We must enter, yea, as St Luke hath it (Luke 13:24), *Strive to enter in at the strait way*; and to pass by the broad way. This is the commandment of our Saviour Christ; wherein three things are enjoined us: First, that we must come in to this strait way, and eschew the broad way; secondly, we must not be discouraged for the straitness of the way; and thirdly, we must strive to enter in.

1. The first is a necessary duty in these times; for we are like unto mariners which pass by many pleasant countries and stately buildings, and do only behold them afar off, but not enter in to them, nor land upon them. We must therefore cease only to talk of the way of life, and begin to walk in it. If any shall ask how we may come to walk in this way, *I answer*: Read (Jer. 6:16), see there a notable lesson:

1. First, we must *enquire which is the old way*, for the old way is the right way. But where shall we learn out the old way? *Answer*: In the Holy Bible. There shall we see the way that the patriarchs, prophets and apostles went.

2. Secondly, having found the right way, we must labour to know all the turnings of it. We must see what things we are to believe and do,

*having the mystery of faith in a good conscience* (1 Tim. 1:19).

3. Thirdly, we must walk in this way (Jer. 6:16), for it is not sufficient to know the will of God, and to make profession of religion, but we must put in practice the things which we know.

4. And lastly, we must be circumspect to keep ourselves in the right way. (Hag. 1:5), *Set your hearts on your ways*. (Psa. 119:59), *I considered my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies*.

2. The second charge in this commandment is that when we walk in the way to life, *the straitness of the way must not discourage us from going forward therein*. This is the principal point intended by our Saviour Christ in this commandment, even to arm us with courage and perseverance against afflictions, crosses and temptations, which might dismay and daunt us in this way. And in this charge we are taught sundry weighty duties to be practised in the profession of Christ's true religion.

1. That we are not to give ourselves the liberty of heart which nature desireth in all of us; but we must restrain ourselves thereof, and bring our minds, our thoughts, affections, our wills, speeches and actions into the straits of the Word of God. This restraint of our natural desire is twofold: by the law and by the gospel.

1. In the law, every commandment ministereth its particular restraint, as we shall see in their order.

1. The first commandment concerns *the having of the true God for our God*. By nature we take liberty to ourselves to conceive of God at our own pleasure; for commonly men conceive of God out of the Trinity, and worship the persons one without another. The Jew, the Turk and all the heathen will not be restrained of this liberty; but the people of God who submit themselves to His Word, then by this law are restrained of this natural desire, and are taught to choose and have to themselves the true God for their God; and to conceive aright of this God; namely, that He is one in essence and three in Person, and that the Persons must be worshipped in the unity of the Godhead; for as they are one in nature, so we must unite them in one and the same worship.

Again, by nature, we take liberty to ourselves to forget the true God, and in our own hearts do set up a false god unto ourselves. Some make riches their god, some honours, some pleasures; for look whereon a man bestows his heart and his affections, as his love, his fear, and confidence; that he makes his god. And hence it comes that some in judgment hold the true God, and yet have a false god unto themselves in their hearts. But the first commandment restrains us of this liberty also; and it enjoins us to bestow our whole heart, and all our affections, on the true God; loving, fearing and trusting in Him above all.

Thirdly, our nature is to exalt ourselves and to ascribe something unto ourselves, esteeming the good things that be in us, as of ourselves, and as though they were our own. Whereby we take to ourselves something that is proper to God, becoming like to the prodigal child which would have his portion to himself severed from his father. With this natural pride was David puffed up when he numbered the people. But the first commandment restrains us of this also, prescribing unto us the duty of inward adoration; which we perform, first, when we give unto Him all the honour that we can, esteeming ourselves but dust and ashes, and ascribing unto Him all the good that is in us, as from Him. Secondly, when we subject ourselves unto Him wholly as our Creator, and do submit our hearts, will and conscience to His holy Word.

And these be the strait ways which this commandment prescribes us.

2. The second commandment concerns *God's outward worship*; and it puts unto us many restraints. Our nature desires to conceive of God in some form, and to represent Him in some image; but the Lord is a Spirit, and this commandment enjoins us to worship Him in spirit and truth, and to conceive of Him in His works and properties, restraining our natural desires of conceiving and representing God.

Secondly, it is our nature to perform outward worship unto God only, but for any further thing we would take liberty to ourselves; we would give Him only the outward bodily worship, as come to church, hear the Word, pray outwardly and receive the sacraments. But the Lord in this commandment gives us charge that with as great care and conscience, we would give unto Him the inward worship of the heart; for God must be

served with the whole man, our love, and fear, and trust in God, must be conformable to our outward worship.

Further, every man almost can be content to profess religion, and to perform so much as the laws of his country require for the service of God; but yet they would take liberty in their callings to live as they list. But God's commandment restrains this desire also. We must hold religion not only in the church, but also shew the same in our lives and conversations; and therefore is the second table joined with the first, to teach us that we must perform duty to God in the service of man.

3. The third commandment concerns *the holy use of the holy things of God*, especially of His Word and sacraments. Now for the outward work of hearing the Word and receiving the sacraments, we are content to perform them; but we would have God think Himself satisfied with the work done. But this commandment restrains us of this desire, enjoining us not only to use His holy things, but also in an holy manner; that is, with repenting and believing hearts; for they are not holy to us, unless we use them in and by faith and repentance.

Again, we take liberty to use God's Name in oaths, and specially in vows, as in baptism, which we renew when we come to the Lord's table; but herein we ordinarily abuse this His holy Name, not having like care to make good our vows unto God, as we have to make them.

4. The fourth commandment concerns *the time of God's worship*. We ourselves would have all times in our own disposing, and we think it hard to be restrained of any time; but this commandment restrains us of this desire, binding us in conscience to give one day in seven to the honour of God, in His public and solemn worship.

5. The fifth commandment concerns *the giving of honour and reverence to superiors*; and it restrains us of our natural desire, which is to seek for, and to take honour unto ourselves alone; for this enjoineth us to give honour one to another, especially to them to whom it belongs, as to all superiors in authority, in gifts, or age. Let this be your honour, saith Paul (Rom. 13:7), to give honour to whom it belongs.

6. The sixth commandment concerneth *murder*; and it restraineth our natural desire, which is upon small occasion, to conceive malice and to bear grudging against our brother, forbidding all thoughts, words, deeds, and gestures, which tend to the impairing or destroying of our neighbour's life and person.

7. The seventh commandment concerneth *chastity*; and it restrains man's nature, which desires to take liberty in uncleanness and fornication both of heart and life; and it binds us to abstain from all speech, action or gesture which tends to the hindrance of our own, or of our neighbour's chastity; for God is holy and pure, and so ought our bodies and minds to be, which are temples of His blessed Spirit.

8. The eighth commandment concerneth *our neighbour's goods*; and it restrains our corrupt nature, which desires to have liberty by all means good and bad to enrich ourselves. And it enjoineth us both in will and word, and in traffic also, to seek the common good; and the good of those with whom we live. Again, this also restrains our natural desire of abundance, enjoining us to seek only for necessaries, as food and raiment; for we may not seek to be rich, yet if God gives us more than things necessary in the labours of our calling, then we are to bless God for them, and to use them to His glory. This is a strait way to the worldly man, but it must stand, and we must walk in it, if we would enter into life.

9. The ninth commandment concerns *our neighbour's good name*; and it restrains us of our natural desire, which is to conceive and speak unto others, as also to receive from others, evil report of our neighbour; and on the contrary, it enjoins us, by all good means to seek to preserve our neighbour's good name and credit.

10. The tenth commandment is touching *lust*. Whenas we hurt no man in word or deed, then we take it for granted that we may think what we will, no laws restrain thought; that we hold to be free. But this commandment restrains the very first motions of our hearts, which tend to hurt our brother's life, chastity, goods, or good name, though they never come into practice, yea, though we never give consent of will thereto.

And these are the restraints of the law, whereto we must conform ourselves, if we would enter into life.

2. Now follow the restraints of the gospel, which is a part of God's Word touching remission of sins and salvation. By nature we desire to stand upright and righteous before God by some good thing in ourselves; as the rich man in the gospel, he demands of Christ, *What good thing shall I do to be saved*? (Matt. 19:16). Again, it is our nature not to look to be saved by anything out of ourselves; if we have nothing else, our good meaning and good hope must save us. But the gospel restrains us of these desires, and enjoineth us to renounce ourselves in the matter of salvation, and all that is in us; and to depend upon a righteousness out of ourselves in the Person of Christ, which is His obedience and suffering. Again, we naturally desire to enjoy God's mercy by sense and feeling; but the gospel restrains us of this kind of assurance, which comes by sense and feeling, and enjoins us to hold and keep God's mercy by believing only, both in life and death, though we have no sense thereof at all.

Further, the gospel renews the law for the manner of loving; for the moral law required that we should love another as we do ourselves, but the gospel requires us to love one another as Christ loved us; which is a greater measure of love than the law required. For Christ loved us more than Himself; for He gave Himself for us; and so ought we to love even our enemies. And thus we see how the gospel also restrains us from following our own natural desires, and enjoineth us to walk in the narrow way to life; whereto, as also to the restraints of the law, we must apply ourselves, our thoughts, words and deeds. So doing, we walk in the strait way that leadeth unto life. But if we any way exempt ourselves according to our natural desire from any of these restraints, we then walk in the broad way that leadeth to destruction.

2. Seeing we must be content with the straitness of the way, we learn that when God lays any crosses or afflictions upon us, we must not repine or grudge, but bear the same with patience, and suffer God to break us of our own wills, resting contented in ourselves with the will of God

alone; for this is grace, and a sure testimony that we walk in the strait way to life.

3. In the case of confession and profession of true religion, when we be called thereto, we must be content to forsake goods, friends, yea, and life itself, rather than by enjoying them suffer ourselves to be driven out of this strait way to life. *My life* (saith Paul) *is not dear unto me, so that I may fulfil my course with joy* (Acts 20:24).

4. Lastly, whosoever is puffed up with the pride of his own heart, is too stately to stoop under the strait door that leadeth to the way of life. He therefore that would walk in this strait way, must cast away all pride of heart, and humble himself for his own sins, making himself nothing in himself. *Except you be converted and become as little children* (who are not proud and haughty), *ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. But he that humbleth himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. 18:3,4).

3. The third charge given us by our Saviour Christ concerning the strait way of life, is noted by St Luke: that we must *strive to enter into it* (Luke 13:24). From whence we are taught that our principal care must be above all things to come into the way of life everlasting; so much the word *striving* imports. It is said that when John first preached, *the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and the violent took it by force* (Matt. 11:12); that is, there was such forwardness and zeal in them that heard John preach, to procure to themselves the kingdom of heaven, that they strove most earnestly to get in. (Psa. 132: 1-5), David *sware unto the Lord and vowed a vow unto the mighty God of Jacob, that he would not enter into the tabernacle of his house, nor come upon his bed, nor suffer his eyes to sleep, till he had found a place for God's ark*; where he with the rest of his people might come and pray unto the Lord, and receive answer from Him again. Now look what zeal was in them that heard John, and what care was in David for the outward place of God's worship, the like must be in every one of us for the obtaining of reconciliation and life everlasting.

Uses.

Use 1. Hereby many that live in the church of God may justly be reproved; for a number there be that though they may partake of the Word and sacraments, yet are most negligent of their salvation, using no means to obtain reconciliation with God, and to come by life everlasting. And this they do profess: that they will leave all to God, relying wholly on His mercy without using any means on their part to attain thereto. But these men sin most grievously, and are their own deadly enemies; for they ought to consider this commandment, which condemneth their security, and straitly enjoins everyone to strive to come into the strait way, and to walk therein.

And because this duty is so necessary, I will use some reasons to persuade them hereto.

1. Consider this: When the Philistines were assembled, and had Samson in the midst among them to make sport, if they had known what he was about to do when he leaned to the pillars of the house where they sat, they would have pressed to the doors and windows, and there have striven to have got out, because of the imminent danger that was unto their bodily lives. Well, all those persons that are cold in their profession, and careless of religion, they have the wrath of God hanging over their heads; and while they walk thus dissolutely in the broad way, their condemnation sleepeth not, but makes post-haste upon them; and if they continue and go forward in this careless course, they shall as certainly perish in God's wrath, as the Philistines did by the hand of Samson. And therefore as they desire to escape damnation, so let them be careful to cast off this damnable security.

2. If an angel from heaven should come and assure us from God that life everlasting did belong to us; Oh, we would count it a blessed message. Well, look when we turn from the broad way, and walk in the strait way of life, we have as good security of our salvation, as if an angel from heaven should certify us thereof; for true repentance is an infallible note of a child of God, to whom belongs the kingdom of heaven. The consideration whereof ought to stir up all careless persons to return from their evil ways, and to strive to come into this strait way, and to walk therein unto the end.

And yet to induce them further to this duty, I will seek to take from them those excuses which they make to themselves:

1. First, they say, *God is merciful*; and therefore they will rely thereon, and take no further care for their souls. *Answer*: God indeed is merciful, but His mercy is only found of them that strive to enter in at the strait gate. As for those that walk in the broad way, it belongs not to them (Deut. 29:19,20). (1 Pet. 4:18), *And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly appear*?

2. Secondly, they say, at least in heart, that it is the easiest matter in the world to come by life everlasting. If they can call on God when they are dying, all is well. And therefore they will not lend their outward ears to hear, nor apply their minds to conceive and learn that which they may do by nature. And if they do come to the congregation, yet it is for custom or for fear of punishment, not for conscience. But these men deceive themselves. They consider not what Peter saith, that *the righteous shall scarcely be saved*; and what St Luke addeth to this exhortation of Christ (Luke 13:24), that *many shall seek to enter into the door of life, and shall not be able*; because they neglected the time of grace, and used not good means in due season.

3. Thirdly, they make this common objection, that either they are elect or reprobate. If they be elect, then let them live as they list, they shall be saved; but if God have eternally rejected them, though they live never so religiously, yet they shall be condemned. And many deceive themselves with this reason. But they must know that they judge amiss of God's decree, and the wickedness of this reason may appear by the like: God hath decreed the certain term of every man's life in this world, as well as his future estate after this life. Now if any man hereupon should reason thus: If God have decreed that I shall live longer, then I shall surely live; if He have decreed that I shall live no longer, then I shall surely die, for God's decree must stand; and therefore I will neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, nor use means to preserve my life. If any should thus do upon this ground, would not all men judge him to be a murderer of himself? And surely, he is no less a murderer of his soul, that upon God's predestination, will take

occasion of liberty to live as he list; for God's decree of the end includes the ordinary means that bring thereto. Again, they are to know that there is a double will of God: His revealed will made known in His Word, and His secret or unrevealed will, whereby He hath determined with Himself what shall be the eternal estate of every person, which is not known unto us ordinarily, but by the event. The revealed will of God must be the rule of our obedience, and according to it must we frame and square our lives; but His secret will we must honour and reverence, not making any rules from it, whereby to frame our lives. Now these persons they have the written Word, and betake themselves to His unrevealed will, and out of it will make rules how they will live; but herein they sin greatly, in framing to themselves new rules, leaving His Word, whereby they should order and guide their lives. Thirdly, I answer that this reason hath in it a plain falsehood; for they that are predestinated to life, are chosen to live a godly life in faith, repentance, and obedience, *that they might be like to the image of His Son* (Rom. 8:29). And indeed, it is impossible that he which lives in wickedness all his life long, and so dies, should be saved; as also that he which lives a godly life unto the end should be condemned; for God hath decreed the means as well as the end.

Use 2. This charge of Christ, for *striving to enter in at the strait door*, correcteth also a second sort of men, which are of the better sort; for commonly the best men are too careless in regard of this duty of striving. And it may be said of us, as Christ said of the church of Laodicea (Rev. 3:15), We are *neither hot nor cold*; we strive not to go one before another in holy duties; worldly cares and pleasures do dull us and make us faint in this duty of striving. But we must take heed of security, and revive our obedience to this commandment, making this our principal care, to come to life eternal. And all worldly care must come under this; for consider the fearful judgment that hangs over such as are slack in this duty; it is destruction as well as to those that are profane. *Because thou art neither hot nor cold; I will spue thee out of my mouth* (v.16); for seeing that God continues His gospel unto us, we ought answerably to increase in knowledge, in faith, and in all obedience. David professeth that his *heart brake in sunder for the desire that he had to God's judgments always* (Psa. 119:20). We commonly spend our wit and strength about worldly affairs, in

matter of commodity and delight; but David's practice ought to be a pattern unto us; for our chiefest strife must be to attain eternal life.

# 7:15

"*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves*" Matthew 7:15.

From this verse to the twentieth is contained the sixth part of this chapter, and the eleventh part of Christ's sermon, concerning the discerning and avoiding of false prophets. And it hath an excellent dependence on the former point of exhortation; for having given commandment to walk in the strait way, now like a careful guide He forewarns us of the principal impediments in this way, which be false prophets and seducers, who are like thieves and pirates to hinder us in this way. Touching them, three things are here set down by Christ: First, a commandment to beware of them; secondly, the danger that comes by them: they come in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves; and thirdly, the means whereby to judge and discern of them, from the 16th verse to the 20th.

I.

For the commandment:

*Beware of false prophets*; that is, of false teachers. In a false teacher, two things are required: First, he must maintain some error that overturns true faith and religion; for every erroneous opinion which a man holds, will not make him a false prophet, but only a fundamental error. Secondly, besides the holding of some damnable error in his own heart, a false prophet must also be a seducer, such an one as labours to make a faction, withdrawing men from true religion, and from true faith, and persuading them both in private and publicly, to receive his error. And that both these are required to make a false prophet, the Scripture is plain. *There shall be false teachers among you* (saith St Peter), *which privily shall bring in damnable heresies* (2 Pet. 2:1). There is the first property; and for the second, that they must be seducers, Christ Himself teacheth us (Matt. 24:24), *There shall come false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, so as, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect*. And of both these

properties jointly, St Paul speaketh (Rom. 16:17,18), *I beseech you brethren, mark them diligently which cause division and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have received, and avoid them; for they that are such, serve not the Lord, but their own bellies, and with fair speech and flattering deceive the hearts of the simple*. So then Christ's meaning in this commandment is this: You shall be troubled with many false prophets, which shall bring in damnable doctrines amongst you, and withal labour to seduce you from the truth, and therefore take heed of them.

And these two notes must we make in a false teacher, to distinguish him from a schismatic and from an hypocrite; for every false teacher is a schismatic, but every schismatic is not a false teacher. If we would have examples of false teachers, behold the Jesuits and Romish priests, for they come among us and bring false doctrine, with intent to deceive and seduce our people. Such likewise are the Family of Love, and such were the Arians in time past, that denied the Godhead of Christ. As for others that hold private errors, not raising the foundation, nor seeking to seduce others, they may be hypocrites, schismatics and bad Christians, but they are not false prophets. Thus much for the meaning of the commandment.

The Uses.

1. By this caveat, Christ would teach us that the devil shews his exceeding great malice against God's church and people in these last times of the world; he suborns false teachers to bring in damnable doctrine, and moves them to seduce men from true religion. This thing Christ did plainly foretell (Matt. 24:24); and St Paul chargeth the elders of Ephesus to take heed unto themselves, and to their flocks; *for I know* (saith he) *that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Moreover, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw disciples after them* (Acts 20:28-30). And St Peter foretells of the like, as we heard before (2 Pet. 2:1). The truth hereof is verified by experience; for in the first four hundred years after Christ, which were the prime and chiefest times of the church, there arose fourscore and eight several kinds of false prophets, which seduced men from the faith and true religion, and prevailed greatly. And no doubt in the end of the world, Satan will now shew his malice as great against the church as he did then; and therefore

Christ bids, *Take heed of them*. And for this cause, when we see men that profess religion fall away to heresy and be corrupted, seeking also to seduce others, we must not much marvel at it, or be thereby discouraged; but rather watch more carefully, for the devil will stir up false prophets daily to deceive the church of God.

2. From this commandment we may also see that we are feeble, full of weakness in the faith, so as a little thing will easily make us forsake our faith and true religion. If this were not so, what should we need this exhortation? Who was more courageous and forward in profession than Peter? And yet the voice of a silly damsel made him deny his master, and to forswear his faith and religion. The Galatians received the gospel so gladly from Paul at the first, that he professeth, *They would have plucked out their own eyes to have done him good* (Gal. 4:15); and yet when he wrote unto them, he wonders they were so soon fallen to another gospel (Gal. 1:6), receiving the doctrine of justification by works. Yea, this sheweth that we have itching ears, whereby we will readily and willingly receive wholesome doctrine for a time, but soon after desire new doctrine again; like unto the Jews, who for a while delighted in the light of John's ministry (John 5:35); and to the old Israelites, who liked manna at the first, but after a while were weary of it, and complained that their soul dried away, whereupon they lusted after the fleshpots of Egypt again (Exod. 16:3). So we at the first did willingly receive the gospel of Christ; but now many wax weary with it, and begin to like of popish doctrine, preferring their corrupt writers before those that have been the restorers of true religion unto us.

3. We must labour to maintain faith and good conscience, and not suffer ourselves to be drawn therefrom. By God's mercy, we have had the gospel of truth among us a long time, and do still enjoy it; for which we have great cause to praise the name of God, and in this regard we must labour to be constant in holding it, yea, to live and die with it. This is the principal point which Christ here aims at, and therefore we must carefully learn it. And for this purpose, let us remember these particular directions which follow:

1. First, that God having restored unto us true religion, doth require we should love it as the chiefest treasure that ever this kingdom enjoyed. Wicked Ahab could not abide Elias (1 Kin. 21:20) and Michaiah (1

Kin. 22:8) God's prophets, but hated them; for which cause God left him to himself, and suffered him to be seduced by four hundred false prophets of Baal, and thereby brought him to destruction. And the apostle speaking of the kingdom of Antichrist, saith (2 Thess. 2:10,11), God herein gives men up to strong delusions, that they should believe lies, because they have not loved the truth. Now this love we must shew by our obedience in duties of piety to God, and in the exercise of justice and mercy towards our brethren, else God will translate His gospel from us, and give it to a nation that will bring forth the fruits thereof.

2. A second rule to be observed for the maintaining of true religion is this: that ministers especially, and those intending that calling, should highly esteem, and reverently account of those men and their writings, which by God's mercy have been the means to restore unto us pure religion; for though they were men subject to error, and in some things might slip, yet they were the worthy instruments of God's mercy, for the planting of His gospel among us, which since their time hath been sealed with the blood of many martyrs, in England, Germany, and elsewhere; in which regard, though we must only depend on the pure Word of God for certainty of truth, yet we are to give much unto them, and to be followers of them for the substance of religion, wherein they do most soundly consent in one truth. This I note, because they begin to be in disgrace with many, and corrupt popish writers are far better accounted of.

3. Thirdly, if any among us doubt of any point in religion, let him do these two things for his resolution, which are the ordinary means to know the truth: First, let him search the holy Scriptures diligently, not by private study only, but by conference with the godly. Secondly, let him in true humility of heart pray unto God for the illumination of His Spirit, whereby he may in mind rightly conceive of the truth, embrace it by faith in his heart, and honour it by obedience in his life. Thus doing constantly, and in sincerity, he shall be sure to be preserved from error, both final and fundamental, and in due time shall know the truth; for the promise is, *Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find* (Matt. 6:7). And St James saith (Jam. 1:5), *If any man lack wisdom*

necessary for his salvation, *let him ask of God*, using with all other lawful means to come thereby, and it shall be given unto him. Hereto may be added this good help for satisfaction in this case of doubting: namely, to have recourse to the general confessions of Reformed churches, which may be had in the notable book, *The Harmony of Confessions*, for although private men may err, as also particular churches, not only severally, but jointly in some things in this world; yet the general consent of Reformed churches may be a good direction to the knowledge of the truth, and a good persuasion to constancy therein.

4. Fourthly, we must keep a good conscience, if we would preserve the truth and purity of religion; for faith and good conscience go always together. Whereupon St Paul persuading Timothy to this duty, bids him *have faith and a good conscience, which some have put away, and as concerning faith have made shipwreck* (1 Tim. 1:19), where a good conscience is resembled to a ship, which saileth over the sea of this world, being laden with faith; that is, with true religion, and other spiritual graces needful to salvation. Now, if the ship of our conscience be crazy and unsound, then is our faith and salvation in great danger; and therefore we must endeavour in all things to have a clear concience, both towards God and towards men.

4. This commandment of our Saviour Christ, to *beware of false prophets*, doth bar the church of God, and every member thereof, from conversing with false prophets, after they be convicted to be such. It was Eve's fault to admit conference with the devil in the serpent, and all of us feel the smart thereof at this day. It was Paul's counsel to the Romans, to mark them diligently which caused division and offences among them, contrary to the doctrine which they had learned, and to avoid them (Rom. 16:17). And St John plainly forbids this society with them (2 John 10), *Receive not him into thine house, neither bid him God speed*, that comes to teach you, and brings not this doctrine. Yea, *though we* (saith Paul) *or an angel form heaven teach you otherwise than that which we have preached unto you, hold him accursed* (Gal. 1:8). In the histories of the church it is recorded that St John would not wash himself in the same bath wherein Cerinthus an heretic was washing himself, nor abide under the same roof, but leaped out,

and persuaded others so to do. And indeed by Eve's example we may see the danger of conference with false prophets; for the same evil spirit speaks in them.

Now this shews:

1. First, that the practice of many students is dangerous, and against this commandment, who take delight in popish commentaries and postils, ascribing to them more learning and judgment than can be found in those writers that were the restorers of true religion unto us. And hence it is that they labour more in them than in the Scripture itself, or in other sound writers thereupon. But if there be any false prophet at this day, it is the papist, and their writings are dangerous to be read of those that are not well grounded in the truth; for by reading we have a kind of familiarity with them, and indeed many suck out of them at unawares, much venom in weighty points of doctrine and religion. We ought rather to do with them as the believers of Ephesus did with their books of curious arts; namely, to *bring them out and burn them* (Acts 19:19), than take such delight in them. Albeit, this must be granted, it is both lawful and necessary for the defence of the truth, that men of sound judgment and piety do labour in them.

2. Secondly, hence also it may appear that it cannot be but a great hindrance to true religion that heretical books may be publicly sold to anyone that will buy them, without due consideration whether the party have gifts to discern of truth from falsehood. In the popish church they are more careful, they permit not a man to read an heretic's book (as they call us Protestants) without leave, and that under a great penalty, which is severely inflicted upon offenders that way.

5. This commandment also sheweth that it is not lawful to grant to any man, or to any people, the liberty of their own conscience in the matters of religion, permitting them to profess what religion they will; for how should false prophets be avoided, when every man may freely profess what he will in religion? All governors therefore must follow the practice of good king Josiah, who assembled all Judah, and caused all his people to hear the Word

of the Lord, and to stand to that religion which the book of God made known unto them (2 Chr. 34:32).

6. We have from this commandment, an answer to the false charge of the church of Rome, who accuse us of schism and apostasy because we separate from their church. But we must know that the schism and apostasy is there where the cause of departing is; which indeed is not in us, who do no more herein but obey the commandment of Christ. The cause is in them who are become false prophets, whom we must avoid.

Here yet, two questions may be demanded:

1. Whether a false prophet may be put to death, seeing Christ bids only to beware of them? *Answer*: Christ here speaks to His apostles, and to other of His auditors that were private men, whose duty wrought no further; but yet the truth is that a false prophet being judicially convicted, is to be put to death. The Word of God is plain (Lev. 24:14), there is both a commandment and a practice: Every blasphemer must die. This, wicked Jezabel knew well, who under pretence of blasphemy, caused Naboth to be put to death (1 Kin. 21:10,13). And hereupon the Jews sought to put Christ to death. Yea, Nebuchadnezzar, an heathen king, having but a taste of this, that the God of Israel was the true God (Dan. 3:29), made this law, that whosoever blasphemed the God of Israel should die. And it stands with equity; for he that reviles his lawful prince must die, and that justly. How much more then ought he to die that blasphemes the living God, who is King of Kings? Now, every false prophet is a blasphemer; for his opinions are blasphemies against the truth of God; and therefore he ought to die. The express will of God herein is manifest (Deut. 13:1ff.), A prophet comes and works miracles, and shews signs that come to pass, yet if he thereupon entice the people to idolatry, he must be slain. And this is one way whereby the civil magistrate must help the people to avoid a false prophet.

2. Why doth God then suffer such to live in His church as do seduce men? *Answer*: For two causes: First, that such as hold the truth in sincerity may be known (1 Cor. 11:19). Secondly, for the punishment of the wicked and ungodly, who receive not the love of the truth; to

seduce them by strong illusions, and to cause them to believe lies (2 Thess. 2:11,12).

II.

The second point: *The danger of false prophets: they come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves*. In these words, Christ alludeth to the practice of false prophets in former times, who counterfeited the true prophets in their attire; for the ancient prophets were usually clothed in rough and course attire. Elias in regard of his garments, is called *an hairy man* (2 Kin. 1:8), and John Baptist had a *garment of camel's hair* (Matt. 3:4). And the false prophets did counterfeit the true prophets in their attire for this end: that they might the more easily deceive the people, as is most plain (Zech 13:4), where the Lord saith of false prophets, that *they wear a rough garment to deceive*; for when they wore such course attire, made either of sheep skins or sheep's wool, wherewith the true prophets were usually clothed, they sought hereby to persuade the people that they had the hearts of the true prophets; whenas indeed they were full fraught with damnable errors.

Now Christ's meaning in this allusion, is to shew that false prophets have plausible pretences for their damnable doctrine, and therefore are the more dangerous. Yet that we may the better perceive the danger of false prophets, I will a little stand to describe their clothing; that is, their pretences of deceit. They may be reduced to seven heads:

1. The first is an *allegation of Scripture*, which they will use as often as the true prophets; and hereby they blind the eyes of many. But the truth is that in alleging Scripture, they deprave and change the sense, and either add to, or detract from the words, following rightly their master Satan (Matt. 4:6), who alleged Scripture to Christ, but left out the principal point whereto the promise was made; namely, walking *in thy ways* (cf. Psa. 91:11). And thus deal the papists at this day, sometimes they mangle the text and alter the sense, sometimes they leave the Scripture and go to traditions, to Councils and Fathers. This also is the practice of the Family of Love, and of the Anabaptists, who turn the natural sense of Scripture into mythical allegories.

2. The second cloak of pretence is *the depth of their learning*. (Rev. 2:24), The heresy of the Nicolaitans was by themselves called *the deepness of Satan*. So play the papists at this day, for sundry points of their religion; for they hold that because the church in the apostles' time was weak in knowledge and feeble in faith, therefore the apostles omitted sundry deep points, especially concerning the mass, which yet the church, receiving by tradition, doth now teach plainly and fully. But though they match these doctrines of the church with the Holy Scripture, yet we need not to trouble ourselves therewith; for in the writings of the prophets and apostles all things necessary to salvation are made known, and we must not receive any doctrine that cannot be confirmed thence; and therefore in the parable (Luke 16:31), Abraham prefers Moses and the prophets, before visions and revelations from the dead.

3. The third cloak of pretence is *to assume to themselves the persons and titles of most worthy men*. (2 Cor. 11:13,14), Paul speaks of such deceivers that took to them the name of the apostles of Christ, therein following their master Satan, who can transform himself into an angel of light. See this in the papists, especially in the pope, who will be Christ's vicar, Peter's successor, and the servant of servants. The doctors call themselves seraphical and angelical doctors, and the church of Rome must be the true church. But all this is counterfeit deceit, for succession in place only, from Peter, and from Christ Himself, is no certain note of truth. The Scribes and Pharisees had their succession from Aaron, appointed by God, and yet Christ bids His disciples take heed of the leaven of their doctrine (Matt. 16:12); and calls them, the blind leaders of the blind (Matt. 15:14). Succession then in true doctrine is the only and sure note of true religion.

4. The fourth cloak or pretence is *forged and counterfeit humility*. This Paul notes in false apostles among the Colossians (Col. 2:18,23): First, they would not worship God directly, but in and by the angels; secondly, they used much bodily exercise, afflicting their own bodies; and thirdly, their worship was will-worship, devised by themselves. If we would have a lively example hereof, behold the Romish priests; they come to God in the mediation of saints; their whole religion stands in bodily exercises, so as many of their orders are famous for their whippings, and such like trumperie; and their worship of God is will- worship, devised by men.

5. The fifth pretence is *working miracles*. Hereby they labour to confirm their doctrine (2 Thess. 2:9). The coming of Antichrist that man of sin is with signs and lying wonders, through Satan's working, and of such God forewarns His people (Deut. 13) that they should not be drawn to idolatry for a miracle; for either they be false miracles and lying wonders, or if they be true miracles (as God may suffer such to be wrought by false prophets, for the plague and punishment of the unthankful world), yet their end is to deceive, and to draw men into error from the truth. We have ordinary experience of this pretence among the Romish priests, who by sorcery cast out devils, and cure strange diseases, and so delude the simple. But this must not draw us from the truth. A miraculous work truly done, is not a sufficient warrant of a doctrine in religion; for true and sound doctrine may want this confirmation (John 10:41), and false doctrine may have it (Deut. 13:1ff.).

6. The sixth pretence is *fair speech and blessings*, pretending the good and salvation of those to whom they come. See this (Rom. 16:18), *With fair speech and flattering* (saith Paul of false apostles) *they deceive the hearts of the simple*. So dealt Satan with Eve, he made shew that he had some good things to tell her, whereby their state might be bettered, but it turned to theirs and our destruction. So did the four hundred false prophets of Baal, contrary to the true prophet Michaiah, prophecy good success to Ahab (2 Chr. 18) in his war against the Aramites; but his hearkening to them cost him his life. And so dealt Hananiah with the Jews when they were besieged by the king of Babel's army, contrary to Jeremiah's counsel (Jer. 28). He prophesied peace and safety, but it turned both to his own, and to their destruction.

7. The seventh pretence is *boldness and constancy in suffering for their opinions*; for a man in obstinacy may live and die for error, as well as the child of God may do for the truth. Constancy in opinion is no sure note whereby to judge a true prophet; for many heretics have suffered death confidently, for the maintenance of their damnable heresies.

Thus we see the pretences of false prophets. Now hereto we must add this second point, to wit, that for all this they be but wolves, because by their damnable doctrine they seek to poison and corrupt the souls of simple men.

If it be said, they have no such intent, they themselves think it to be the truth; I answer, that may be true in some, but this cleareth them not from being wolves; for the devil that hath deluded them, who is their lord and master, doth by them dangerously delude and deceive the simple.

The Uses.

1. Considering this danger of false prophets, we must practice Christ's lesson (Matt. 10:16): *Be simple as doves*, that is, be innocent and harmless, thinking evil of none, neither intending evil or offence to any, in thought, word or deed, and yet we must be *wise as serpents*, who have great subtilty in saving and defending their head from harm. So must every one that looks to be saved, labour for so much wisdom whereby he may preserve himself from the hurt of false prophets. Now the beginning of this wisdom is to fear God in His Word, believing His promises, and obeying His commandments. The true fear of God is not without knowledge; and therefore every one must labour to be instructed in the principles of religion; for without knowledge we cannot fear God, and so shall want true wisdom to eschew false prophets.

2. In that the false teacher by so many fair shews, seeks to bring in false doctrine, it is every man's duty in his place to labour to preserve wholesome doctrine, and the purity of true religion. This duty is necessary; for we must be as forward for the truth, as the enemy is for falsehood, and do as much for God, as they do for the devil. Again, no poison is more deadly to the body than false doctrine is to the soul; therefore seeing God hath long blessed us with His truth, let us esteem it above all outward blessings, and by seeking to preserve the purity thereof, shew ourselves thankful to God for the same.

# 7:16-20

“*Ye shall know them by their fruits; do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? So every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits shall ye know them.**“ Matthew 7:16-20.

“*Ye shall know them by their fruits; do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*” Matthew 7:16.

This verse, and those which follow to the 21st, contain the third point which Christ layeth down concerning false prophets; namely, the means whereby we may discern and judge of them. And herein He observeth this order: First, He gives us a notable rule to direct us in judging of false prophets, *Ye shall know them by their fruits*. Secondly, He explains the same rule by a similitude drawn from trees: *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles*?

I.

For the rule, that we may understand it the better, we are to search what is meant by the fruits of false prophets. A false prophet must be considered two ways: First, as he is a man taking upon him the name and profession of Christ, for so false prophets use to do; and secondly, as he is a false prophet. In both these respects he hath his fruits.

1. As he is a man taking upon him the profession of Christ’s religion, he may bring forth many outward duties of external obedience unto the moral law; but these fruits are not here meant; for a false prophet may dissemble much and go far in the outward duties of religion, so as he cannot be discerned by his general profession or by the works of his civil conversation.

2. There be other fruits which come from him as he is a false prophet, and by them must he be discerned. These therefore are to be considered. Now we shall know them the better by searching out the fruits of a true prophet, as he is a man of God appointed to teach the people.

The fruits of a true prophet be principally three:

1. He teacheth and preacheth in the name of God, by virtue of calling from God, and otherwise dares not presume to teach. (Rom. 10:15), *How shall he teach unless he be sent*. And the author to the Hebrews saith, Christ took not the honour of being the High Priest and prophet of the church to Himself, but was called thereto by His Father (Heb. 5:4,5). And this stands with reason, for every true prophet and teacher stands in God's room, and is God's ambassador to deliver His will to His people; which thing none can do, but he whom God calleth and sendeth for that purpose. Yet the calling of prophets and teachers by God is diverse. Some are called by voice from God immediately, as were Abraham, Moses and Samuel; and all the apostles in the New Testament by the immediate voice of Christ; for Paul was called by the voice of Christ from heaven (Acts 9:4-6). Again, others have their calling from God by the special message of some angel, or some men. Thus was Aaron called by Moses; Elisha by Elijah; and Philip by an angel to preach to the eunuch (Acts 8:26). Thirdly, others be called by the instinct and motion of God's Spirit; so (Acts 8) Philip was by ordinary calling a deacon, but by extraordinary instinct he became an evangelist and a preacher of the gospel, for the building of God's church. These three kinds of calling men into the ministry were extraordinary, and are now ceased, and not to be looked for; neither are they now to be regarded which say they are thus called at this day. A fourth way whereby God now calleth prophets and teachers into His church, is by His church; for God hath given to particular churches, a particular ministerial power and service, whereby they may design a place unto the teacher, and also make manifest that God hath called him. Now this authority is but ministerial, to design and manifest whom God hath called, for the principal calling is from God; for (Acts 20:28) the elders of the church at Ephesus are said to be *made overseers by the Holy Ghost*; whenas they were designed thereto by

men. And by one of these four ways are all true prophets and teachers called.

Here some may demand, what kind of calling had they, who were the first restorers of true religion unto us in this our age, for they were by profession either popish priests or school-doctors. *I answer*: their calling was partly ordinary, and partly extraordinary; for in the ministry of a prophet there be two things: his office, and the using or exercise of his office. Our first ministers that restored the truth unto us, had but an ordinary office, being either readers in schools, or public preachers; also they had their outward calling thereto from the church of Rome; so as if there be any part of good calling in that church, then was their calling good; which may serve to stop the mouths of all papists that carp at our church, as though our ministers had no calling. But for the using of their office, they were extraordinarily raised and stirred up to do that which they did, in regard of the manifold abuses wherewith the ministry of the church was generally corrupted in their time; for God gave unto them grace and knowledge to discern, to teach, and to maintain the right and true use of the ministry. And that they were thus extraordinarily stirred up by God, may appear by the extraordinary gifts and graces wherewith they were endued; for God that hath always a care over His church, when he saw the same so fearfully corrupted by Antichrist, did stir up these men to reform the same; and besides these singular gifts of knowledge and wisdom, He gave them extraordinary graces of true piety, whereby they were enabled to seal and confirm with their own blood, the truth of that doctrine which they did profess and teach, which was an evident argument they were called of God.

Now opposite to this, we must make the first note of a false prophet; namely, to come on his own head, and to preach not being sent. And by this mark are false prophets noted (Jer. 14:14), *I have not sent them, neither did I command them*É. yet they prophesy in my name. And no less do these words of Christ import, when He saith here, *they come unto you*, that is, of themselves, without a calling from God, though they pretend a calling, which is one of their cloaks. And therefore (Jude 4) they are said to *creep into the church*; as also (Acts 20:29), *grievous wolves shall enter in among you*, without calling from God, or from the church.

2. Here, some may ask, how shall we judge of such, and know that they have no calling? *Answer*: For this purpose, I add a second note of a true prophet, which is the most principal, and it standeth in the right and wholesome handling of the Scriptures of God. This is the proper fruit of a true prophet (1 Cor. 14:3), *He that prophesies, speaketh unto men's edification, exhortation and comfort*; and (2 Tim. 2:15), *Shew thyself a good workman, by dividing the Word of God aright*; and (2 Tim. 3:16,17), The Scripture used in *teaching, convincing, correcting, and instructing unto righteousness, serves to make a man fit to every good works* of a prophet. Now this wholesome handling of the Word stands in two things: in a right interpretation and opening of the true sense of Scripture, and in a due and sound collection of wholesome doctrine from the same, for the edifying of the church both in sound judgment and in Christian life.

On the contrary, the second fruit of a false prophet is to deliver and maintain corrupt doctrine, contrary to the wholesome doctrine of holy Scripture. And by this principally he is to be known for a false prophet that intrudeth himself. For the better conceiving of this note we must know that in the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, there are two things principally to be considered: the scope, and the parts thereof. The scope of all their doctrine tends to maintain Christ Jesus God and man, the alone perfect Saviour of the church. And indeed, he which teacheth any doctrine tending to overthrow Christ, either in regard of His natures, or of His offices, the same is a false prophet, (1 John 4:3), *Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus is come in the flesh, is not of God*. The parts of prophetical and apostolic doctrine, are the commandments of the law and the promises of the gospel, and he which overturns either directly, or by just consequence, any commandment of the law or article of faith, must needs be a false prophet; so that a false prophet must be tried by the analogy of faith, comprised in the articles of the Apostles' Creed and in the Decalogue, which contains the sum of all the doctrine of the prophets and apostles; and he which goeth against them, is a false prophet.

3. The third fruit of a true prophet is noted by our Saviour Christ; namely, in his ministry to seek God's glory. Where also He noteth out a false prophet, who in teaching and preaching seeketh not God's glory, but

his own. The same note doth Paul give (Phil. 3:19), calling them earthly minded, seeking their own honour, wealth and glory, and not the things of God; and (Rom. 16:14), *They serve not the Lord, but their own bellies*.

Thus we see the notes of a false prophet, among which the second is the principal whereby he is to be tried; as we may see plainly (Deut. 13:1-4), If a false prophet come, and work a true sign, yet he must die, if by his false doctrine he seek to withdraw God's people from the true God. So when the Jews asked Christ, by what authority He did those things; that is, what warrant and calling He had to do as He did; He answers them by another question touching John's ministry; thereby shewing that that which He did was warranted by the testimony of John; and John's testimony was true, because his calling was from God; and his calling He justifies, because his doctrine (signified by his baptism) was from God. So (Gal. 1:8), He which teacheth otherwise than they had learned out of the prophets from the apostles, let him be accursed, though he were an angel from heaven. And thus much for the meaning of this rule.

The Uses.

1. From this rule we have to answer the papists, and all popish persons, who used to plead in defence of their religion, after this sort: *If our religion be false, shew us the time when it was corrupted, the man that corrupted it, and the manner how it was corrupted; for once we had the pure religion*. We might answer them by the like, that a man might say as well of a ship that is sunk on the sea, that it is not sunk, because no man can tell where, and when, and by what means it took water. But yet further we have here to answer that though we knew not when that religion was corrupted, and by whom, yet seeing their teachers and people have in them, and among them, the necessary fruits of antichristian prophets and people, we can thereby assure ourselves they are corrupt. And though we cannot see the shadow of the sun move, yet we may perceive that it doth move. Now by their fruits it is clear they are corrupt; for they reverse the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, both in the commandments of the law, and in the articles of faith. First, they disannul the first commandment, by making to themselves other gods beside the true God; for they pray unto saints, and therein

acknowledge a divine property in them, and also give unto them the honour due to God alone, and so set up unto themselves the creature in the room of the Creator. The second they reverse by worshipping God Himself, and dead men, in images, and Christ Himself in the crucifix; yea, in a piece of bread, wherein they match the greatest idolatry among the heathen. And the best learned among them teach that the rood, the cross and crucifix, are to be worshipped with the same worship wherewith Christ Himself is worshipped. In the sixth commandment touching murder, they condemn the killing one of another; but yet if a priest come from the pope, and kill a Protestant prince, the Lord's anointed king or queen, that is not only no sin, but a most notable, rare and memorable work. Against the seventh commandment they maintain the vow of single life necessary in their religious orders, whereby, as also by their sins, they cause all filthiness and abomination to abound among them. And for the tenth commandment, they say that concupiscence after baptism is no sin properly. In the articles of faith they overturn those that concern Christ, making Him no Saviour, but a divine instrument whereby we save ourselves; for they make men's good works done by God's grace, after the first justification, truly and properly meritorious, and fully worthy of everlasting life. And His offices they have parted from Him; His kingly and prophetical offices, between Him and the pope; and His priesthood between Him and every popish priest, as we have shewed before; so that by these fruits, we plainly see their apostasy; which is enough, though we know not when and by whom it came.

2. Here also we have to answer such among ourselves as renounce our church as being no true church of Christ, because, say they, we do want true ministers, and have not a right ministry among us. But hence we answer that we have the true church of God, and our ministers be the true ministers of God. For proof hereof, our ministers have the outward calling of the Church of England. They say indeed, our calling is nought, because they have no power from God to call, in whose hands it is. But to omit that question for this time, sufficient approbation of our ministry may be had from the fruits of our ministers, as they are ministers; for to leave the fruits of their lives as insufficient means to judge them by, our ministers teach, through God's blessing, the true and wholesome doctrine of the prophets and apostles, and are allotted and called hereto by the governors of the church, and accepted of their people, whose obedience to the faith is the

seal of their ministry; and this is sufficient to confirm the calling of our ministers. If it had not, Christ would not have said, *Ye shall know them by their fruits*.

3. Whereas Christ saith, *Ye shall know them*, speaking to all His hearers, He takes it for granted that every believer may be able to judge of false prophets; and therefore everyone in the church of God ought to labour for so much knowledge whereby he may be able to know a teacher by his fruits and doctrine. This then sheweth that everyone ought to know the sum of true religion, comprised in the Article of Faith and in the commandments of the law, both for their true meaning, and right and profitable use unto themselves; which thing I note, because I know many deceive themselves herein, thinking that God will excuse them for their want of knowledge, because they are not book- learned. But let us consider, we have everyone this care, to be able to judge of meats which concern our bodies, which be wholesome, and which not; should we not then have much more care of our souls, to be able to discern of doctrines in religion, which be either the poison or salvation of our souls?

4. Whereas wholesome doctrine out of Scripture is a note of a true prophet, it teacheth us that we may lawfully use the ministry of these men, whose lives and conversations be evil and offensive, if so be their doctrine be sound and good. The disciples of our Saviour Christ must not do according to the ways of the Scribes and Pharisees, but yet they must *hear them when they sit in Moses' chair* (Matt. 23:1-3); that is, when they teach Moses' doctrine. And Paul is glad when Christ is truly preached, though it be *not in sincerity of affection, but of envy* (Phil. 1:18). When the disciples saw a man that was not called by any special calling to follow Christ as themselves were, and cast out devils in the name of Christ, they thought it intolerable, and therefore forbade him (Luke 9:49,50); but Christ said, *Forbid him not, for he that is not against us, is with us*. And the like may be said of them that preach wholesome doctrine, though their lives be still offensive; for in doctrine they be with Christ, and so far forth must be approved. Again, consider that the virtue and efficacy of the Word and sacraments administered by men, is not from the minister, but from God. A letter is not the worse because it is brought by a dishonest and unfaithful carrier. Neither doth the evil conscience of the minister defile the good conscience of the

honest hearer, and worthy receiver. This must be remembered, because many take offence at the life of the minister, so as they will not hear his doctrine, if his conversation be scandalous.

5. In that a prophet is to be known by his fruits, and the main fruit of a true prophet stands in the good handling of God's Word for the edification and salvation of his hearers; hence the children of the prophets, and those that are set apart for the ministry of the Word are taught that they must make this the main and principal end of all their studies: to be able to bring forth the fruits of a true prophet; that is, to interpret aright the Word of God, and thence to gather out wholesome doctrines and uses for the edification of God's people. And for the enforcing of this duty let us consider, first, that it is God's commandment so to do (1 Cor. 14:1), *Seek for spiritual gifts, but specially to prophesy*. Again, the greatest skill of a prophet stands in the true expounding and right dividing of Scripture, so as it may become food for men's souls (2 Tim. 2:15), *Shew thyself a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, in dividing the Word of truth aright*. And lastly, this true fruit of a minister serves to build up Christ's kingdom, to beat down the kingdom of sin, and to feed the souls of men with the food of everlasting life. It will be said, this course is good among the common people; but this is not the learning which is required in the handling of the Word in the schools of the prophets. I answer, It is the greatest learning that can be in a minister to be able thus to divide the Word of God aright. It goes beyond the gift of tongues and miracles (1 Cor. 14:1,2). I deny not but that it is a part of learning used of the learned, to take a text of Scripture and to make an ecclesiastical discourse upon the same. But yet the work of a prophet stands rather in expounding Scripture by Scripture, and in dividing the same aright; giving thereout wholesome doctrine for the edifying of the people of God that hear. In former times when the study of Scripture was neglected, men betook themselves to expound the writings of men, and so prophecy was banished, and all sound knowledge in the truth of God; and hence arose diversity of opinions and multitudes of foolish questions. And so will it be with us, if prophecy fail; for to leave the right handling of Scripture, is the way to bring in all error and barbarism in religion.

6. Every minister of the gospel is hereby taught that he ought to be answerable to his calling, walking worthy of the same; for a good minister

is known by his good fruits, and therefore he must be faithful in performing all those duties which his calling doth bind him unto. The titles and calling of a minister be high and excellent, but yet they will not commend any man for good, unless he bring forth the fruits of a minister in a faithful discharge of his ministerial duties.

7. Lastly, hence we must learn not to take offence thought the minister fails in his life and conversation, yea, though there be contentions in the ministry about matters of doctrine; for these are not the fruits of the ministry which is God's ordinance, but of sinful men who bewray their imperfections in this holy calling.

II.

Thus much of the rule. Now follows the proof and explication thereof, by a comparison drawn from nature in these words: *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? So every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit* (vv.16b-18).

The comparison standeth thus: *As a tree is known of everyone by his fruit, so is a prophet by his teaching*. More particularly, *As a good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and cannot bring forth evil fruit; and as an evil tree brings forth evil fruit, and cannot bring forth good fruit; even so, a true prophet teacheth wholesome doctrine, and cannot teach false doctrine; and a false prophet teacheth false doctrine, and cannot teach true doctrine*.

1. Touching this similitude, first observe in general from the ground of this comparison, that our Saviour Christ here makes two kind of trees: a good tree and an evil tree. By an evil tree, meaning that which in regard of any fruit is as a rotten tree, as is the briar, the thorn and thistle; for though they live and grow, yet they are void of good fruit, and so are called evil. Now here it may be well demanded, whence this difference of trees doth come, for all were good by creation (Gen. 1:31), *God saw all that He had made, and lo it was very good*. *Answer*: Whether thorns or thistles were created of God I will not now dispute. It is not certain that they were. But now it is plain there remains this difference among plants: some are good, some are bad; the goodness that is in some comes from God's blessing, but the

badness and barrenness of others comes from the curse of God upon the earth, and upon all creatures for the sin of our first parents, as we may see (Gen. 3:17,18), *The earth is cursed for thy sakeÉ. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee*. And by this we may see the grievousness of our mother-sin; it hath made the earth barren and cursed, and many a goodly plant to become fruitless and unprofitable. And therefore when we behold these things in the world, we must take occasion hereof to consider our own sin, and blame ourselves and not the creatures, for they were cursed for our sakes.

2. Now more particularly: This comparison is here specially applied unto prophets. But if we compare this place with St. Luke (Luke 6:44,45), we shall see the Holy Ghost there restraineth not this saying to the prophets alone, but enlargeth the same unto other men, saying, *A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil*. Now by comparing these together, we may see that this comparison reacheth both unto prophets and to all other men. From whence, we may gather these instructions:

What we are to conceive and think of a man that is not regenerate. We are all by nature branches of the wild olive, and therefore as a thorn cannot bring forth a grape, nor a thistle figs; no more can a man unregenerate bring forth a good work. And this we may more plainly conceive, if we consider a little the works of man. They may all be reduced to three heads: some are evil, as works forbidden of God; some are things indifferent, being neither forbidden nor commanded; and some are good works, as outward duties of the moral law. Now for evil works, they cannot possibly be good in any man. For works indifferent, as eating, drinking, buying, selling etc., they are sins, not in themselves, but in him that useth them being out of Christ. And for outward duties of the moral law, as civil justice, liberality, and such like, they are good works in themselves, because God requireth them, but yet in the unregenerate they are sins: *To the pure, all things are pure; but to them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure* (Tit. 1:15); and, *Without faith, it is impossible to please God* (Heb. 11:6). It will be said that liberality, chastity etc., be the good gifts of God. *Answer*: That is true, and they be good works as they are given and commanded of God. But as they are received and used of the natural man, they are sins; for he fails from the

right use of those actions; both for the beginning of them (for they proceed not in him from a pure heart, a good conscience and faith unfeigned) and also in the end; for he doth them not for the glory of God simply, but withal he aims at his own praise and reputation, or some such sinister respect.

The use of this doctrine is:

1. That it teacheth us to consider and acknowledge the greatness of our original sin. Our natural corruption is most grievous and fearful; it makes us to sin in whatsoever things we do, though in themselves they be things indifferent, or else good works.

2. This overthrows the conceit of popish writers which teach that God gives to all men a universal common grace, or help sufficient, by which they may be saved if they will. And for them which want the means of the Word of God, they say that if they use that common grace of nature well, God will give them further grace whereby they may come to salvation. But here we see a natural man having a good gift of God cannot of himself use it well; the best things that he doth, though they be good in themselves, yet they be sins in him.

3. Here also we may see what a miserable case we are in while we remain unregenerate; for we can do nothing but sin. We be like to thorns and thistles, which either bring forth no fruit, or else bad fruit. And therefore we must labour to become new plants in Christ's orchard, being ingrafted into Him by faith, and made new creatures by regeneration, having believing hearts and good consciences, that so we may bring forth good fruits unto the praise and glory of God.

4. We may hence learn a general rule touching righteous man; namely, that a man must first be truly justified and sanctified before he can do a good work. First, a tree must have the sap and nature of a good tree, and then it brings forth good fruits, and not before. And this overturns a point of natural and popish religion, that a man may be justified and saved by his good works. But that which follows cannot be a cause of that which went before. The fruit cannot make the tree to be good; but only declare and manifest that it is good; from whence it comes that the fruit is good. And so good works they proceed from justification.

> They say justification is twofold: one, whereby a man of an evil man is made a good man; the second, whereby of a good man one is made better. The first they say is of works, but the second justification is of grace. *Answer*: But this is false; for the fruit makes not the tree a better tree, but if the tree increase in goodness, it proceeds from some other cause, not from the fruit thereof.

"*Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits shall ye know them.*" (vv.19-20).

These words contain a conclusion gathered from the former similitude, which is here also continued; wherein is set down a grievous threatening of eternal damnation, the deserved punishment of all false prophets. As if Christ had said, Look as in an orchard every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire to be burnt; so in the church of God the false prophets shall not always be reputed for a true prophet, but at the length shall be discovered, put off from the church, and condemned. Answerable to this is the saying of our Saviour Christ*, Every branch which beareth not fruit in me is taken away, cast forth, and withereth, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they burn* (John 15:6). And St Peter saith, *Their damnation sleepeth not* (2 Pet. 2:3).

The Use.

1. This serves to comfort God's children in regard of false prophets; for though God's church be troubled with them for a time, yet it shall not always be so; for the time will come wherein they must be cast out, and receive their due and deserved destruction. And this especially must be remembered, to stay and comfort our hearts in regard of the popish religion, which doth most of all molest and trouble us; first, because it is natural, and so readily embraced; secondly, many among us do much affect it; and thirdly, it is maintained by mighty monarchs. But yet for all that it must down, for it is a plant which God never set nor planted (Matt. 15:13), and the chief upholders of it shall be destroyed.

2. This teacheth us to eschew and shun false teachers; and therefore doth Christ add this exhortation (Matt. 15:14*), Let them alone, they are the blind leaders of the blind*; and (Rev. 18:4), *Come out of her* (that is, spiritual

Babylon which is Rome) *my people, for if you partake with her in her sins, ye shall suffer of her punishments*.

3. The words of this threatening being further applied unto all men (as they are in St Luke), do teach us that it is not sufficient for us to abstain from committing gross sins, and to do no man harm, but beside eschewing evil, we must do good. In the last judgment, the sentence of condemnation shall be pronounced against the wicked, not for robbing the poor, but for not relieving of them, and for not visiting and clothing them (Matt. 25: 42,45). Which doth notably confute that vain opinion of many ignorant people, who think that if they live an innocent and harmless life, God will hold them excused and save them; but the tree that brings not forth good fruit must be burnt.

*Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them* (v.20).

Here Christ repeats again the rule He delivered in the 16th verse, which shews that it is a special rule to be observed of us all; for there is no idle word in Scripture, neither anything repeated in vain. The meaning thereof we have heard, and the means whereby a false prophet may be discovered, with the uses thereof; among which we shewed that every true believer in God's church may be able to discover a false prophet, whereto these three caveats must be added:

1. The party that would discover a false prophet must humble himself before God, and have an heart in some sort emptied of all pride and self-love; for *the Lord will teach the humble His ways* (Psa. 25:9); yea, He doth exalt the humble and meek (Luke 1:52); and in all things the humbled heart is preserved with the Lord.

2. The party humbled must yield himself to obey the will of God. *If any man do my Father's will, he shall know of my doctrine whether it be of God* (John 7:17). And David professeth of himself that he was wiser than his teachers, and understood more than the ancients, because he kept God's commandments (Psa. 119:99,100).

3. He must pray unto the Lord, and ask wisdom in faith and in humility, And the Lord will give it unto him, (Jam. 1:5), *If any man lack*

*wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth liberally*. Yet some will say, it is an hard matter to discern a false prophet. *I answer*, we have ordinarily this capacity, when we read or hear read the last will and testament of our ancestors, we are able to conceive and judge of the meaning thereof. Well, our Lord Jesus hath left with us His will and testament in the holy Scriptures; which concerning moral duties, and matters of faith necessary to salvation, is so plain, that it may be understood of the simplest, else Christ would never have sent the Jews to the Scriptures for the certain knowledge of the Messiah. Which notably discovers the fraudulent dealing of the Romish teachers, who in matters of controversy in religion, send us for resolution to the church, calling it the stay and pillar whereto we must lean in all doubts of doctrines. The church I grant is to be reverenced, but yet we must not build our faith upon the doctrine of men. Our Saviour Christ sent the Jews unto the Scriptures; and hereby the Bereans tried Paul's doctrine, and are commended. And indeed, though men be never so unlearned, yet if they come in humility to search the Scripture, and in obedience unto God, praying for knowledge, they may be able by God's Word to discern of false teachers.

# 7:21

"*Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth my Father's will which is in heaven.*" Matthew 7:21.

From this verse to the 24th, is contained another portion of Christ's sermon, being the seventh part of this chapter; wherein he entreateth of the state of those that profess His holy name in His church here on earth. And His main scope and drift herein is to shew that men must not content themselves to profess religion outwardly, but therewith they must join true godliness and sincere obedience. This point is as weighty and of as great importance as any of the former, respecting the main point of man's salvation; and it containeth two parts: a main conclusion in this verse, and a proof and explanation of one part thereof in vv. 22,23.

I.

The conclusion itself hath two parts: 1. That some men professing the name of Christ shall not be saved, which part is afterward explained and confirmed. 2. That some professors of religion shall be saved, which is not only propounded, but the parties also are plainly described.

1. The first part is a most fearful sentence against many that live in the church, that notwithstanding their profession of the name of Christ, yet they shall never be saved. And this is most true, being spoken by Him that hath the power of life and death, who is also the God of truth that cannot lie, saying, *Not everyone that saith, Lord, Lord*, that is, that professeth God to be his God, *shall enter into the kingdom of heaven*. There be two kinds of professors in the church of God that shall never be saved:

1. The first are gross hypocrites, which profess Christ with their mouth, and yet in heart and life renounce Him. Of this sort is, first, the common atheist, who only for fear of the magistrate's laws professeth religion; secondly, the Epicurean, that is, such an one who bears

Christ's name for fashion's sake, and yet his belly and pleasure is his god; thirdly, the worldling, who spends the strength of body and mind, and all he hath, on the world for earthly things. Now none of all these can be saved.

2. The second sort are more close hypocrites, which profess the name of Christ in some truth, and have in them some good gifts of God, by reason whereof both before men and in their own conceit, they are reputed members of the church; and yet for all this they are indeed but hypocrites, which shall never be saved.

And that we may somewhat discern of them, I will note the gifts which they may have, whereby they may come to profess Christ truly. They may be reduced to five heads:

1. The first, is the *spirit of bondage to fear* (Rom. 8:15). This is a certain gift of God whereby a man doth discern the right meaning, and judicial use of the law in himself, concerning sin and the punishment thereof (for though a man by nature know something of the law, yet he knows not all, nor the right use thereof); now by reason of this knowledge, he sees himself in bondage, and in regard thereof doth fear; from where may proceed many good things, as grief for sin, confession and humiliation for the same, and prayer for pardon. Thus wicked Pharaoh confessed the righteousness of God, and that he and his people had sinned (Exod. 9:27). And so did Ahab at the heavy message of God by Elijah (1 Kin. 21:27), *He rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon him, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth*. So Judas when he saw that Christ was condemned, he repented of his fact, being grieved for it, and ashamed to look any man in the face; and also confessed the same before God and men (Matt. 27:3,4).

2. A second gift which a close hypocrite may have is faith; as had Simon Magus, for he believed and was baptised (Acts 8:13). Neither was it a false and dissembling faith altogether, but in some sort a true, though not a saving faith; for he believed, and yet was in the gall of bitterness. So (John 2:23-25) it is said, Certain *believed in Christ, but He durst not commit Himself unto them*. And that we be not deceived herein, we must know that this faith of an hypocrite hath in it three things:

knowledge of the truth, approbation thereof with assent unto it, and a kind of persuasion that Christ is His Redeemer. Of the second degree of this faith we have example (2 Pet. 2:18), where some are said to *be beguiled with wantonness through fleshly lusts, who had clean escaped from them that be wrapped in error*; that is, in idolatry. And of the third degree, we have example in the same chapter (2 Pet. 2:1), where false prophets are said *to deny Christ that bought them*; because for a time they professed themselves to be redeemed, and were also persuaded in a general sort that He had bought them; yet herein they failed: that they did not truly apprehend the merit of Christ, and apply it effectually unto themselves.

3. The third gift of a close hypocrite is a taste of God's favour (Heb. 6:4,5); it is said of some that fall quite away, that they were *enlightened by God's Spirit, and had a taste of the good Word of God, and of the powers of the world to come*, though they were never fed or filled therewith.

4. The fourth gift is good affections; good (I say) not in them, but in their kind, and so far forth as we can judge. They have joy in the good things of God (Luke 8:13*), They that are on the stones are they which when they have heard, receive the Word with joy*. They have zeal for God's glory, as had Jehu (2 Kin. 10:16), and yet he departed not from the sins of his forefathers (v. 31). Thirdly, they have reverence to God's ministers, as Herod to John Baptist (Mark 6:20), *Herod, knowing John to be a just and holy man, feared and reverenced him*.

5. The fifth gift is an outward reformation of life. The stony ground receives the seed with joy, and brings forth some fruit, but it lasteth not. Of such it is said (Heb. 10:29), *They tread underfoot the Son of God, and count the blood of the Testament an unholy thing wherewith they were sanctified*; that is, according to their profession and persuasion.

And thus we see what kind of gifts an hypocrite may have, and yet never be saved.

The Uses.

Use 1. The consideration whereof must move us to look unto ourselves, that we have better things in us than the fear; for here we see we may go on to perdition, carrying the profession of Christ in our mouths. And the rather is this to be considered of us, because many look to be saved who come short of Simon Magus in knowledge, and of Saul, Ahab and Judas in humility; yea, and for faith, far short of the devil himself, who is said to believe and tremble. But how canst thou look to be saved, that in regard of grace, comest short of those which are now condemned?

Use 2. Secondly, hence we must learn to suspect ourselves, and call ourselves to a reckoning about our faith and obedience, and we must not flatter ourselves herein; for these things before-named will not save us. Many have had faith in some truth for some degrees thereof, and also good affections and other gifts; as we have seen, who are yet for all this condemned.

Use 3. Thirdly, seeing there be two sorts of men in the church that shall be condemned, the one whereof have many worthy gifts; this must move us not to rest in these things, but to labour and strive to have our hearts rooted and grounded in the love of God in Christ, and to become new creatures in righteousness and true holiness; and then shall we be as the wise virgins having the oil of grace in the vessels of our hearts, which will never be quenched till we come into the marriage chamber with our bridegroom Christ Jesus.

2. The second part of the conclusion laid down by our Saviour Christ is this: That some men professing the name of Christ in the church of God shall be saved. And these persons are here described unto us by their effect or action, to wit, *The doing of the will of the Father*. And because this is an infallible note of them that shall be saved, I will briefly shew what it is to do the Father's will. The Scriptures best expound themselves: (John 6:40), *This is the will of Him that sent me, that everyone that hath seen the Son, and believeth in Him, should have everlasting life*. (1 Thess. 4:3ff.*), This is the will of God, even your sanctification: and that you should abstain from fornication; and that everyone should know how to possess his vessel in holiness and honourÉ. That no man oppress or defraud his brotherÉ* These two places of Scripture laid together, shew that the doing of the Father's

will stands in three things: in faith, in repentance and in new obedience. Faith is directly expressed in the place of John, and repentance, which is a fruit of faith, as also new obedience, the fruit of them both, in the words of the apostle Paul; for by sanctification is meant repentance, and new obedience by the duties following.

1. For the first, in *true saving faith* there are three things required: knowledge, assent and application.

1. By knowledge, I mean the right conceiving of the necessary doctrines of true religion, especially of those which concern Christ our Redeemer.

2. Assent is, when a man knowing this doctrine, doth further approve of the same as wholesome doctrine, and the truth of God, directing us aright unto salvation.

3. Application is, when we conceive in our hearts a true persuasion of God's mercy towards us particularly, in the free pardon of all our sins, and for the salvation of our souls. Example of this particular applying we have in the apostle Paul (Gal. 2:20), who professeth thus*: Now live not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live is by faith in the Son of God*; which what that is, he sheweth after, saying, *Who hath loved me, and given Himself for me*. And without this particular application, neither knowledge nor assent can save us.

In the sixth of John, Christ propounds Himself unto us as *the bread of life*, and (chapter 4) *the water of life*. Now we know that food, unless it be received, will not nourish the body. Even so, unless we do by the hand of faith particularly receive and apply Christ unto ourselves, all our knowledge and assent will be as food uneaten and undigested.

It may be said that hypocrites have knowledge, assent, and a persuasion of God's favour, and therefore this is not a sure note of doing the Father's will. *I answer*: an hypocrite (as Simon Magus) may have true knowledge of God's Word, and give assent thereunto, and in regard of both these have true faith in some degree; yea, he may conceive a persuasion of God's mercy in the pardon of his sins, though falsely in presumption upon false

grounds and insufficient. Now that a man may discern the truth of his faith and persuasion of God's mercy, from that which is in hypocrisy, he is to observe therein three things: the beginning of his faith, the fruits and the constancy thereof.

1. The beginning of true faith is hearing the Word of God preached, especially the gospel; the law going before as an occasion, or preparing-means whereby a man comes to see his sins and his misery thereby, and thereupon to desire reconciliation with God in the pardon of them; and hearing the promises of mercy, to desire faith whereby he may embrace the same, labouring against unbelief. This, though it be not a lively faith, yet it is the beginning of true faith, and no hypocrite hath the same soundly wrought in him.

2. The fruit of true faith is a change of the whole man both in heart and life; making the heart contrary to itself, in moderating the natural affections and passions thereof, and keeping them in compass of true obedience, and causing a man in every estate to rest contented with the will of God, as Isaiah saith (Isa. 28:16*), He that believeth shall not make haste*.

3. Thirdly, constancy in true faith is made known by this: when a man relies wholly on God, even then when he feels no taste of His mercy but hath all tokens of His displeasure. Every man will believe when he hath present signs and pledges of God's loving favour, but true faith being *the evidence of things hoped for* (Heb. 11:1), will make a man believe above hope, as Abraham did. And being *the substance of things not seen*, will cause a man to believe when he sees no tokens of God's mercy. And indeed, he that lets go the hold of God's mercy when he is in distress, may assure himself he never had true faith; for the just shall live by faith in all estates, and will with Job, trust in God though He kill them (Job 13:15).

2. The second work wherein consisteth the doing of the Father's will, is *to repent of our sins*. And this is a fruit of faith. In true repentance there be two things: the beginning and the nature of it.

1. The beginning of it is a godly sorrow, when a man is grieved properly and directly, because by his sin he hath offended God, who hath been unto him so long a Father in Christ. This causeth repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of (2 Cor. 7:10); and it ariseth not so much from the fear of punishment, as from the consideration of God's mercy, making a man displeased with himself for offending so loving a God, who hath been so gracious and bountiful unto him in Christ.

2. The nature of repentance stands in the change of the mind; when any person lays aside the purpose of sinning, and by God's blessing and grace taketh to himself a new purpose never to sin more. This is properly to repent, and if this be in truth, hence will follow the change of the will, of the affections, and of all the actions of the life.

It may be said that an hypocrite may repent as Judas did (Matt. 27:3), and therefore this is not a good note of doing God's will. *Answer*: Judas did repent. He was indeed grieved for his fact, wishing with all his heart that it had never been done. But this was nothing; his sorrow was only worldly, causing death, as the apostle calls it (2 Cor. 7:10), arising from the horror and fear of punishment, not from consideration of God's mercy. It was without true hatred of sin committed, without hope of mercy or purpose to glorify God by new obedience, and so was no true repentance.

3. The third work wherein consisteth the doing of God's will, is *new obedience*; and it is the fruit of both the former, whereby a man being indeed with faith and repentance, doth according to the measure of grace received, endeavour himself to yield obedience to all God's commandments, from all the powers and parts both of his soul and his body. And this I call *new*, because it is a renewing of that in man, whereto he was perfectly enabled by creation. But here it will be said that many who shall never be saved, have attained to reformation of life; and therefore this is not a true and sufficient note of him that shall be saved. *Answer*: True it is, may hypocrites have reformation of life, but yet they fail two ways:

1. First, their reformation is only outward not inward, their thoughts, wills and affections still remain wicked and corrupt.

2. Secondly, their obedience is partial, only to some of God's commandments, not to all. So Herod, he would hear John gladly, and do many things, but yet he would not leave his brother's wife.

But true obedience, which proceedeth from true faith, hath these heads and branches:

1. First, the party must *prove what is the good will of God* (Rom. 12:2).

2. Secondly, he must restrain his life from outward offence which tend to the dishonour of God and scandal of the church (1 Thess. 5:22; 1 Pet. 2:11,12).

3. Thirdly, he must mortify the inward corruptions of his own heart.

4. Fourthly, he must labour to conceive new motions agreeable to the will of God, and thence bring forth and practice good duties; so performing both outward and inward obedience unto God.

And by these may a man discern the truth of his obedience; and thus we see what professors they be which shall be saved.

The Uses.

Use 1. Now considering salvation is promised to them that be doers of God's will, we must hereby be exhorted to become more cheerful in doing God's will by faith, repentance and new obedience. And to further us in this duty we must use these helps:

1. We must labour for a true persuasion of God's mercy in the pardon of our sins, and for the salvation of our souls, This being truly conceived, will urge a man to true obedience, whereby he may shew himself thankful to God for so great a mercy.

2. We must consider that we are the temples of the Holy Ghost, which is a wonderful dignity to a sinful man. And in regard hereof, we must stir up ourselves so to live, that we make not sad the Spirit of God which dwelleth in us.

3. We must consider the blessings of God bestowed upon us both in soul and body, one by one. And this will move us to love God, which love we shall shew in keeping His commandments. *For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments* (1 John 5:3).

4. Let us consider the threatenings of God against sin, and His judgments upon them that live in sin, for every place is full of God's judgments; and these will help to restrain our corruptions, that they break not forth into action.

5. We must meditate on the Word of God, and use fervent prayer unto God for His grace; for by this means David did notably stir up himself to faith, repentance and new obedience, as we may see at large in the 119th Psalm.

Use 2. In that many having faith and repentance and outward reformation of life in some degrees, shall never be saved, we must labour to go beyond all hypocrites in these graces:

1. In faith, we must not content ourselves with a general persuasion of God's mercy, but we must labour to conceive the same to be true and sound touching the remission of our sins and the salvation of our souls. We must look that it have a sound beginning, good fruits, and steadfast continuance.

2. And for repentance, we must labour to see that our sorrow arise from the consideration of the goodness of God whom we have offended; and that it breed in us a change of our minds in the purpose of not sinning. Whereto we must be conformable in the will and affections, and the whole man.

3. And for new obedience, we must be as careful in mind, will and affections, as in the outward actions of our life, to do the will of God; and that in all God's commandments.

Use 3. Many there be that think their case good, because they live a civil honest life, without wronging others openly or wittingly, which thing indeed is commendable; but yet far short of that which is required for

salvation; therefore they must not trust to these broken staves of outward and common honesty, though they be good things in their kind; for many there be that shall never come in heaven, which have had far more in them than these things are. And therefore whatsoever these persons be, they must not rest till they find some portion of true grace in their hearts, by virtue whereof they may plainly see themselves gone beyond all hypocrites in the things that concern salvation.

# 7:22-23

"*Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not by thy name prophesied? And by thy name cast out devils? And by thy name done many great works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity.*" Matthew 7:22-23.

II.

In these two verses, Christ returns to explain and confirm the first conclusion of the former verse, concerning those professors that shall not be saved. The words contain two parts: First, a description of the persons by their behaviour (v.22). Secondly, a declaration of their condemnation (v.23).

1.

1. For the first: The number of professors which shall not be saved is great, *For many* (saith Christ) *shall say unto me*É Indeed we are not able to say how many they be which shall not be saved, for that is a thing proper to God; and yet the Scripture teacheth us that the number of those which shall be condemned is greater than the number of those which shall be saved; for besides that the greatest part of the world in former times did never hear of Christ, here it is plain that among the professors of the name of Christ, many shall be condemned; and (v.13) Many walk in the broad way to destruction, few in the narrow.

Whereby we are taught:

1. First, that we must not frame our lives according to the example of the multitude, to live and do as the most do, because the most shall be condemned. But we must strive to enter in at the strait gate, and to be of that little flock unto whom the kingdom of heaven is promised.

2. Secondly, hence we learn not to content ourselves to live as most men and women do that profess the name of Christ, but we must labour to

go beyond the multitude in regard of the truth of our faith and repentance. It was not sufficient for the wise virgins to bear the name of virgins, to have lamps burning and to go forth to meet the bridegroom; for all these things did the foolish virgins also; but one thing more they had, which was the oil of grace, whereby they were enlightened to go with the bridegroom into his chamber; which the foolish virgins lacking, were shut out of the doors and not admitted to come in (Matt. 25).

2. The second argument whereby these reprobate professors are described, is the circumstance of time when they shall thus plead for themselves why they should not be condemned; to wit, at the last day when they shall come to be arraigned at the tribunal seat of God's judgment. This is a point of great weight and moment, worthy all observation; that men not only in this life and in death, but even at the last day should thus plead for themselves.

Hence we learn that many professing service to Christ, shall conceive in their minds a persuasion that they are the true servants and children of God. They shall live and die in this persuasion, and yet for all this at the last judgment, they shall receive the sentence of condemnation. A thing deeply to be weighed of everyone. And the consideration of it ought to teach us all to take heed of spiritual pride and self-love, whereby men flatter and deceive themselves in their estate, over-weening the good things they have, and falsely thinking they have the blessing of God which indeed they have not. This must move us not only to labour to be purged of this pride, but also teach us to suspect the worst of ourselves, and to judge ourselves severely in regard of unbelief and hollowness of heart. For this will be a means to make us escape the judgment of condemnation at the last day, which Christ shall pronounce against many of those that think themselves to be His servants.

Further, observe where Christ saith, *In that day*, He singleth out the day of judgment as a most terrible day. And saying, *They shall say unto me*, He makes Himself the judge of all the world in that day; and further pointing out their particular pleading for themselves, He gives us to understand that He is very God, who knoweth long before, not only the speeches and

actions, but the very secret thoughts and imaginations of all men that have been, that are, or shall be, from the beginning to the end of the world.

These things laid together and well considered, must stir up in our hearts a special duty, which the apostle had learned (2 Cor. 5:11), *Even to know the terror of the Lord*; that is, not only in judgment, but also in heart and affections to be persuaded of the terrible fearfulness of the last judgment; and in this regard not to content ourselves with the gift of knowledge, and with an outward profession, but to labour for soundness and sincerity of faith, of repentance, and new obedience, both in heart and life. This was Paul's practice in regard of the resurrection to this judgment, he endeavoured himself *to have always a clear conscience toward God and toward man* (Acts 24:16). And this duty is most necessary; for such is our ignorance and unbelief, that we little regard the terror of this day, but either think it shall not come, or though it do, we shall escape well enough.

3. The third argument here used is drawn from the gifts and qualities of the persons which make this plea for themselves. They are such as have *prophesied in the name of Christ, cast out devils, and done many great works in His name*. To prophecy here signifieth to teach the people of God by expounding the Scripture and applying the same to the consciences for their edification. And this office is called prophecy, to grace and commend the office of a minister, because it was the principal duty of the prophets themselves, thus to handle the Word o God for the instruction and edification of God's people, howsoever at some time they did foretell unto God's people things to come. And therefore he which hath this office, and dischargeth the same with good conscience, doth a work no less honourable than did the ancient holy prophets.

*By thy name*.

The name of Christ here signifieth two things:

1. Appointment and commandment from Christ. Men that preach the Word of God, being rightly called thereunto, teach and preach in the name of Christ; for those whom the church calleth lawfully, Christ Himself calleth, and they preach by virtue of His name.

2. Secondly, it signifieth to preach in the room and stead of Christ, to preach that which Christ would preach, and in tha manner also which Christ would use. (2 Cor. 5:20*), We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us* etc. And here we may see a difference among the kinds of teaching which God requireth of men. Masters teach their servants; parents teach their children; and one neighbour and friend another; but all these differ from the teaching of the minister; for he teacheth being called by Christ, and instead of Christ. But the master teacheth not by like virtue, but only by the right of mastership; the father by virtue of fatherhood; and one friend another by virtue of brotherly charity. And this sheweth the dignity of the calling of a minister, and the weight of his office. No master, no father, or ordinary professor hath the like.

*Cast out devils, and done many great works*.

For the better understanding hereof, we must entreat something of the working of miracles; and first we are to see what a miracle is. A miracle is not only a strange work done, but such a work as is above the strength of all creatures, and beyond the whole power of created nature, for it is done by the power of God Himself immediately, which is above the strength of all creatures. Such a work was the staying of the sun (Josh. 10:12,13), and the going backward of the shadow of the dial (2 Kin. 20:11). Secondly, the Lord God alone is the author of a miracle, who created heaven and earth, as David saith, *Thou art great, and doest wondrous things, thou art God alone* (Psa. 86:10). No angel, nor other creature in heaven or earth, no not the manhood of Christ, though exalted above all creatures, is able to work a miracle. How then, will some say, do these men plead their working of miracles? *Answer*: Not as authors, but as instruments and ministers whom the Lord used in the working of them; for men work miracles by believing, on this manner: First, they receive a special instinct and inward motion that God will use them as instruments in the working of a miracle, if they pray unto Him, and command the work to be done. Upon this instinct, they believe that if they pray to God, and command in His name, it shall be done; and lastly, they pray and command according to this instinct, and so the thing they believed is done. And thus is this speech to be understood, *Have we not cast out devils* etc.; that is, thou hast put an extraordinary

instinct into our minds, that if we prayed unto thee, and commanded the devils in thy name to depart, it should be done. This we have believed and accordingly practised, and so have cast out devils, and done many great wonders by thy name. This gift of miracles doth not now befall the church of God; all that the church now hath (for ought I see) is the gift of prayer, joined with fasting, which also must be conditional, depending on God's glory, the good of God's church, and of the party troubled. They may not pray absolutely for this work of casting out devils, or for the doing of such like miracles, much less may they now give peremptory command for the being of them. If it be said that God's church hath all needful gifts, as well now as in former times, *I answer*, It hath all gifts needful to their salvation, and therefore prayer in the church serves now either to deliver the party troubled, or else to procure as good a blessing as deliverance is, which is patience and repentance.

And thus we see what manner of persons they be that shall say, *Lord, Lord*, and make apology for themselves at the last day, and yet be damned; namely, some that have been excellent preachers of the Word, and some that have had extraordinary powers to cast out devils, and lastly, others that have wrought many strange cures and miracles by faith in Christ's name.

1. Now we learn, first, that most excellent gifts will not avail to the salvation of any man or woman, unless they have true faith, sincere repentance and new obedience, whereby they do the will of God; for what an excellent gift it is to be able to teach and preach the Word of God? What a rare thing it is to have heard Christ Himself preach, and to have given Him entertainment? And yet neither of these can save a man. Christ saith here, the apology of preaching can do men no good, and the privilege of eating and drinking with Christ, and of hearing Him teach in their streets, will nothing avail. Christ will say, *I never knew you* (Luke 13:26,27). It is likewise an excellent earthly privilege to be allied unto Christ; and yet Christ preferreth spiritual kindred by faith and obedience far before it, saying to one that told Him His mother and His brethren stood without, desiring to speak with Him, *Who* (saith He*) is my mother? And who are my brethren? And pointing to His disciples He said, Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do my Father's will, the same is my brother, and sister,*

*and mother* (Matt. 12:47-50). And with reverence it may be truly said of the virgin Mary, that howsoever it was a wonderful privilege unto her to be the mother of Christ Jesus, yet if she had not as well borne Him in her heart by faith, as she did in her body, she had never been saved. And therefore Paul saith, *Though we had known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we Him no more; but if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature* (2 Cor. 5:16,17); and, *In Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love* (Gal. 5:6).

The consideration whereof must move us all to labour to become new creatures, and to get the graces of God's children who are regenerate, even true faith, true repentance and new obedience, and not to rest in other gifts though they be most excellent.

2. Again, students that have a great measure of knowledge and other excellent parts, as memory, languages etc., must learn not to be puffed up therewith (for *knowledge puffeth up* (1 Cor. 8:1)), but withal to get the saving graces before named; for without a repentant and believing heart, all the gifts they have will never save them; nay, rather they must be abased thereby, for without true saving faith, all other gifts be as so many millstones, to press them deeper into the pit of destruction.

3. Thirdly, here note that many learned preachers who have soundly handled the Word of God for the conversion of others, shall yet themselves be condemned, like to the carpenters that built Noah's ark, and yet were drowned in the flood. The consideration whereof must teach all ministers, according to the counsel of the apostle (Acts 20:28), To take heed, first unto themselves, and then to their flocks. So Paul bids Timothy, *Take heed unto thyself and unto learning, continue therein; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee* (1 Tim. 4:16). Secondly, to be followers of Paul in the practice of mortification, who did *beat down his body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means after he had preached to others, he himself should be a reprobate* (1 Cor. 9:27). Thirdly, the people of God are here also taught their duty; for seeing this fearful judgment shall befall some ministers of the Word, that notwithstanding their

preaching, thy shall be condemned; therefore God's people must not rest upon the example of their minister's lives, but cleave fast unto that wholesome doctrine, which they gather soundly and directly out of the Word of God. His life and practice is no sure rule to follow, further than it agreeth with the Word of God. And therefore Paul saith (1 Cor. 11:1), *Be followers of me, as I follow Christ*. But the Word is a true rule and square, *and as many as walk according to this rule, peace shall be upon them, and mercy* (Gal. 6:16).

4. Fourthly, seeing some workers of miracles must also be condemned, this teacheth us not to trust them which bring unto us doctrines because they are confirmed by wonders; for such as work wonders may deceive themselves in the matter of their own salvation, and therefore much more may they deceive us in this or that particular point of doctrine. Whereas therefore sundry points of popery, as purgatory pilgrimages, invocations of saints, and such like, are avouched to be confirmed by miracles (which no doubt were but forgeries and lying wonders), yet let it be granted that they were true miracles, that proveth not that we should believe them, because the Word of God doth not condemn the same unto us; for beside that which is revealed and recorded in Scripture, we must receive no doctrine in religion, be it never so miraculously comfirmed.

2. *And then will I profess to them I never knew you; depart from me ye workers of iniquity*.

Here Christ sets down the just condemnation of those men which make an apology for themselves at the day of judgment, and wonder at their condemnation; and withal He answereth them in that wherein they shall plead for themselves.

The words contain three parts:

1. A profession made by Christ to these men that He *never knew them*.

2. A commandment of Christ unto them, *Depart from me*.

3. A reason of the commandment, *Ye workers of iniquity*.

4. For the profession of Christ: *Then* that is in the day of judgment, at that time when men shall wonder at their condemnation; making apologies of their service to God; even *then*, saith Christ, *will I profess* etc. In this phrase Christ alludeth to the fact of these hypocrites, for they professed the name of Christ, and did plead service done unto Him; as if He should say, Many in that day which have professed my name in the world, shall plead their service done to me; but I will make another profession unto them, that is, I will make it clear and manifest unto all the world, that I never knew them, and that their profession of me was in vain.

The words of Christ's profession are of great weight and moment, containing some difficulty in regard of the sense, which must be searched out. The knowledge of God whereby He knows His creatures is twofold: General and special.

1. God's general knowledge is that whereby He understands and sees all things, both past, present and to come; and in regard of this it is said, *All things are naked and open before His eyes with whom we have to do* (Heb. 4:13). And by virtue of this, Christ here foretelleth what shall be the apology of some wicked men at the last day. And in regard of this general knowledge, all men are known unto God, and the most secret actions of wicked wretches. (Jer. 32:19*), His eyes are open unto all the ways of the sons of men, to give unto them according to their ways, and according to the fruit of their works*.

2. The special knowledge of God is that whereby He acknowledgeth, approveth and accepteth of His creature to be His, vouchsafing unto it His special favour. Now this enlargeth not itself to all and every man; for some there be on whom He will shew His favour, and of them it is said, *The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous* (Psa. 1:6). Others there be on whom He will not shew forth His mercy, and on them it is said, *The way of the wicked shall perish*. Which opposition sheweth what is meant by God's knowledge of the godly. So likewise (Rom. 11:2*), Will the Lord destroy His people whom He knew before*? That is, whom He approved and loved. And of this special knowledge He speaketh in this place.

*Never*

This word excludeth all time, as if he should say, I do not now, neither ever did approve and accept you for mine own; yea, even in that time when you professed me, preached and wrought wonders in my name; even then I say, I did not accept and approve of you.

From this form of confession, we are to learn sundry points of doctrine:

1. First, hereby is plainly confuted and overthrown the opinion of some Protestants who hold that Christ shed His blood for all and every man without exception, and that in regard of God's purpose and will He died for all men; for Cain as well as Abel, for Judas as well as for Peter, and for them which shall be condemned, as well as for them which shall be saved. But mark what Christ saith here to them that shall be condemned: *I never knew you*, nor approved of you for mine. But if Christ died effectually for all and every man in the world without exception, then He bought all and every man without exception, with the price of His blood; and if that, then everyone without exception is Christ's; and those which are truly His, Christ will undoubtedly acknowledge for His own. But here we see Christ will not acknowledge all and every man to be His, and therefore undoubtedly He did not purchase by the price of His blood, all and every man to be His without exception. I deny not but that Christ died for all men in the sense of Scripture; but the Word of God never saith that on God's part, and in regard of the purpose of His will, Christ died for every man without exception. And whereas it is thought to be an hard speech, to say that God would have some particular men deprived of grace and redemption by Christ, let us well consider this one thing, and it will not seem strange, no not in man's reason. God created man in His own image, in righteousness and true holiness, and he gave unto him a blessed estate in an earthly paradise, and that not only for himself, but for all his posterity. For whatsoever he received by creation, he received not only for himself, but for his posterity, being then a public man, and bearing the person of whole mankind, both in the state of his innocency, and in his fall. Whereupon Adam falling from that happy estate, all mankind being in him, fell with him, and so lost God's

image and that good estate which they enjoyed by creation in Adam. Now consider this well, if God had never endued man with grace, nor given him means to come by happiness, and yet had excluded him from all means of grace and happiness, this indeed might have seemed hard; but considering that by creation he gave man happiness, and likewise ability to persevere in the same, if he would; is it any marvel, seeing all men have of themselves lost their own felicity, that some should be deprived of it forever? Nay, rather it is a wonder that all are not condemned which come of Adam; for God in His justice without all cruelty might have condemned every man; and indeed it is His endless mercy, that He hath given Christ to be a Saviour unto some, and that any are made partakers of this salvation by Jesus Christ.

2. Secondly, Christ here saith of some, *I never knew you*. Yet speaking of others, He saith, *I know my sheep* (John 10:14), and again, *I know whom I have chosen* (John 13:18). And Paul saith, *The Lord knoweth who are His* (2 Tim. 2:19). Now from these places we may gather that there is an eternal work of God, whereby He puts a difference and distinction between man and man, angel and angel, acknowledging some to be His own, and denying the same of others. If God Himself had not avouched this in the Word, no man might have taught it; but being here plainly propounded, it is with all reverence to be acknowledged and received. And that it may be the better conceived, two points are here to be handled: First, upon what ground and reason God doth know some to be His, and doth not know nor acknowledge others for His own. Secondly, what is the fruit of this knowledge of God in man.

1. For the first, why God should know some to be His, and not others, no other reason can be given but God's good pleasure alone (Matt. 11:25,26). Christ setteth down this distinction between man and man saying*, My Father hath hid the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven from some, and revealed the same to others*. Now what is the cause hereof? *It is even so, O Father* (saith he), *because it so pleaseth thee*. So (Rom. 9:13-18) in Jacob and Esau, Paul shews this distinction of mankind: *I have loved Jacob and hated Esau*, saith the Lord. Neither did this difference come from their works, either good or evil; for this

> difference God put between them *before either of them had done good or evil*; but it is wholly ascribed to the will of God, *who will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth*. This must not seem strange unto us. We permit unto men to use their own discretion in their own affairs, and this is a sufficient reason to stop any man's mouth; It is mine own, *may I not do with mine own what I will*? (Matt. 20:15). Again, in princes' proclamations, we submit ourselves to this clause: *it is our pleasure*; so likewise, a man having a flock of sheep, may send some of them to the fatting for the slaughter, and others keep for breeding; this God permitteth unto man, and it is not counted cruelty amongst men. Now if we give this liberty unto man over the creature, why should we not much more give it to the creator Himself over man, seeing the basest and least creature is something in regard of man, but man is nothing unto God? And therefore, though these mysteries cannot be comprehended by reason, yet even in reason we may see some resemblance of the truth and equity of them, which must move us with reverence to submit ourselves unto the sovereign will and pleasure of God herein.

Upon this ground of difference and distinction between man and man, we may well be admonished to beware of the error of some divines, who thus define of God's will touching man's estate. They say it is the first will of God that every man in the world should be saved, if they would; and therefore (say they), He ministers unto them all helps both of nature and grace, whereby they may repent and believe if they will. And having laid down this His first will, He then (say they) foresees that some men will not believe, nor persevere in the faith; and hereupon it is (in their conceit) that He will not know some men for His own. Again, foreseeing that others will believe, and persevere in faith, them He knows and acknowledgeth to be His; dealing herein like unto a good father that hath many sons, who would have them all to do well, and to have each one a good portion; but seeing that some will not become frugal and obedient, he changeth his mind, and doth disinherit them. Or like unto a good prince, who would have all his subjects to do well; but seeing some to be rebels, he is of another mind, and willeth their death. *Answer*: But this opinion is a mere invention of man's brain; for whereas they say that God by a second act of His will acknowledgeth some for His own, and not others, upon the foresight of

their faith and unbelief, whereas by His first will He would have all men to be saved, it is not true; for the first will of God is to know some, and not to know others; the ground whereof is His good pleasure alone, and no foreseen works in them. And therefore it cannot be that He should will all men to be saved equally, Cain as well as Abel, Judas as well as Peter. Again, their opinion confutes itself, for God foresees men's faith and unbelief, because He hath decreed the same, and His decree depends upon His own will alone; and therefore unless we make the same thing in the same respect, both the cause and the effect, we cannot make foreseen works the ground of difference between man and man. Then their comparisons are not fit. A father would have all his children to do well, and to enjoy his portion. True, and more than that, he would make all his children to do well if it lay in his power to make them good. The change of his purpose in disinheriting his son, ariseth from the impotency of his will, that cannot do that he would. And the same must be said of the will of princes toward their subjects. But if there should be such a will in God to have all men saved, if He could save them; then undoubtedly all men should be saved, for *who hath resisted His will*? (Rom. 9:19). Nay, *whatsoever the Lord willeth, that doth he in heaven, in earth and everywhere* (Psa. 135:6; Dan. 4:30).

2. A second point to be considered in the distinction of men, whereby God knoweth some to be His and doth not acknowledge some others for His, is the fruit of this knowledge of God. It is an effectual and powerful knowledge, working mutual and strange effects in man's heart, towards God; for from this, that God knoweth some to be His, there followeth another knowledge in man's heart, whereby he knoweth God to be his God. So Christ saith (John 10:14), *I know my sheep, and am known of mine*. Look as the sun casts down his beams upon us, by means whereof we again see the body of the sun; even so the knowledge of God, whereby He knoweth us for His, worketh in our hearts a knowledge of God in us, whereby we know Him for our God. So (Gal. 4:9), *Seeing ye know God, or rather are known of God*; so that the knowledge of God whereby He knoweth us to be His, is the ground of our knowledge of Him to be our God. Again, in this knowledge of God, whereby He knoweth His elect, is contained His love towards them; for He knoweth and accepteth of man, and therefore loveth him; and this brings forth in men love to God again.

> *We love God because He hath loved us first* (1 John 4:19). So likewise God by His knowledge chooseth us to be His peculiar people; and hence comes our choosing of God to be our God; for look as the seal sets a print in the wax like unto itself, so the knowledge of God bringeth forth such fruits in us to Godward, as therewith God beareth and manifesteth towards us.

On the other side there be some whom God never knew, and the fruits hereof in them be the fruits of justice. God not knowing them, they know not God; and the fruits of this knowledge, as love, and giving their hearts unto God, they have not. Indeed the sins which men commit, come not from this, that God knoweth them not, but from the corrupt will of man; and yet these wants of knowledge, of love, and faith to God, as they are punishments, come from this, that God doth not know, nor acknowledge men for His.

Now whereas this knowledge of God is powerful in His elect, to produce from them true knowledge, affiance, and love of God again; we are to be admonished to labour to feel in our hearts these graces, which are the impressions and fruits of God's knowledge of us, that by them we may be able to say, I know God to be my God, and Christ my redeemer. Let us therefore labour to know God aright, and to love God in Christ, and in His members, by true love; and to choose the true God to be our God, bestowing our hearts and affections on Him; for by these graces we shall know certainly that God knoweth us, loveth, and chooseth us for His sons and daughters in Christ; because these graces in us are the proper fruits of the knowledge and love of God toward us; even as we may know the prince's broad seal by the form of it in wax, though we never see the seal itself. And on the contrary, we must take heed of that heavy judgment of God, whereby men go on without knowledge, love, and affiance in God; for these are fearful tokens of His wrath, befalling those whom He never knew.

The Use.

Whereas God knoweth some men for His own, and will not acknowledge the same of others, and that only upon His will and pleasure, we may see here a wonderful and unsearchable mystery; which first of all ought to stir us up, not to plead with God, but in an holy reverence to wonder at, and to

admire His unspeakable power and sovereignty over His creature. (Rom. 11:32), *God hath shut up all under unbelief, that he might have mercy on all*, saith the apostle. Now he doth not reason the case further, but there stayeth himself, with an admiration of God's wonderful power and wisdom, crying out (v.33), *O the deepness of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out*.

This must strike out hearts with fear and trembling towards God in regard of His judgments. The apostle Paul speaking to the Gentiles of God's ancient people, saith*, The Jews are cut off through unbelief, and thou standest by faith*; and thereupon makes this use unto the Gentiles: *Be not highminded but fear* (Rom. 11:20).

Hence we are taught not to sooth up ourselves (as usually we do) on hope of mercy in the death of Christ, without some ground hereof through true grace; but rather with fear and trembling, so long as we have time, to labour in the means of salvation, which is God's Word, prayer and sacraments, to become true members of Christ, because we may deceive ourselves with a vain profession; for though God's mercy be endless in itself, yet it admits restraint to usward; and indeed shall never be extended to all, nay, not to many that in their lifetime made full account thereof in their vain persuasions.

3. A third point here to be observed is this: that such as professed Christ's name here on earth, and yet after shall be condemned, never had true faith, nor true repentance, sound love, nor hope; they might have some kind of faith, I confess, and many other excellent gifts; but if they had had true faith, thereby they should have pleased God, and been approved of Christ, and so at some time also, have been accepted and acknowledged of Him for His own. For this we must learn and hold as the truth of God: that where true faith, love and hope are truly wrought, there they remain forever, at least in the root. They may seem for a time to be lost, but yet never can be quite extinct, *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance* (Rom. 11:29).

4. Fourthly, here it is plain that those whom Christ will not save, He never knew. Hence it follows that whom He knows to be His, them He

> will know to be His forever. This point must be remembered, because it is the true foundation and ground of the salvation of men's souls. We are said to be saved by faith, and by the Word of God, yet only as by means, not as causes. But the only cause of our salvation, and of the means that bring us thereto, is this knowledge of God, whereby He accepteth and approveth us to be His own.

Hence we may gather that those who are elect unto salvation, shall never perish; for whom God once knows to be His, them He knows to be His forever. And therefore (Matt. 24:24) it is made a thing impossible that the elect should perish. And the apostle takes it for granted that the election of God is unchangeable (Rom. 9:11), remaining ever, according to His purpose. This knowledge of God is that foundation which *remaineth sure* (2 Tim. 2:19). The first grace of all is God's favour, choosing some men to be His of His mere good will; and this first grace, to whomsoever it is vouchsafed, remaineth for ever, admitting no change or alteration, nor interruption. This doctrine must be remembered, as the stay of our faith, and a sure foundation of sound comfort in any distress; for true believers in time of affliction find in themselves much unbelief, and great proneness to fall away from God. Yet here they have a sure stay whereon to rest, they must go out of themselves, and fasten their faith on God's election, knowing hence, that though they be frail and subject to fall away of themselves, yet their salvation remains fast, grounded on the knowledge and election of God. So the apostle Paul comforts himself and the godly (Rom. 8:33,34), *It is God that justifies, who shall condemn*? And v. 35, *Who shall sever us from the love of God in Christ*, whereby He loveth us? And indeed, if a man have received true assurance of God's favour, though but once in all his life; yet by that one sign he may assure himself of his salvation, upon the ground that God's love is unchangeable, though ever after he live in temptation, For whom God loveth, He loveth to the end (John 13:1).

2. *Depart from me*

This is Christ's commandment to those whom He never knew, though they professed His name; and it is a most fearful commandment, being all one with that (Matt. 25:41), *Go ye cursed into everlasting fire*.

Now hence we may gather that the second death is properly a separation from the comfortable fellowship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and withal, a sense and feeling of God's wrath in that separation. This appears by the contrary, for life everlasting stands in fellowship with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Now here a question may be asked concerning the suffering of Christ; for our doctrine is that He suffered the second death. Whether then was He severed from God in His suffering? *Answer*: Christ our Saviour on the cross stood in our room and stead, He bore upon Him the sins of His elect, and for substance, the whole punishment due to the same, which was both the first and second death. But yet concerning the suffering of the second death, there remains some difficulty. Touching it therefore we must hold this ground: that our Saviour Christ suffered the second death, so far forth as the suffering thereof might stand with the union of His two natures, and with the holiness and dignity of His person. And here these caveats must be marked:

1. That in His manhood He endured a very true separation from the Godhead, and from His Father; yet not in regard of subsisting and being, but of sense and feeling only. And therefore He cried, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*? (Psa. 22:1), having for a time no sense of God's favour, but only the feeling of His wrath and displeasure.

2. In His passion He did endure the sorrows of the second death. He did not die the second death, for then He should have been overcome and utterly separated from His Father in subsisting and being. But He suffered the second death, and in suffering overcame it; as a man may be at the point of death, and feel the pains of the first death, and yet recover.

3. Christ endured the pains of the damned, yet not in that manner which the damned do; for He endured them on the cross, they in the place of the damned. Christ suffered them for a while, they endured them for ever. Christ suffered the second death, yet so as it prevailed not against Him; but the damned are overwhelmed of it, it prevails over them, and causeth them to blaspheme God. Now their blasphemy increaseth their sin, and their sin causeth their torments to be multiplied for ever. This

doctrine is suitable to the Word of God, and to reason; for in man's reason, the death of the body could not be a remedy to such persons as are condemned to a double death, both of body and soul.

The Uses.

Use 1. Seeing the second death is a separation of man from God for ever, we must labour in this life to have some true fellowship with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that having it once, we may enjoy the same for ever. This fellowship we shall come unto in the right use of the Word, sacraments and prayer; for in the Word and sacraments, God condescends to speak unto us, and to deal familiarly with us, and in prayer we talk with God.

Use 2. Note also to whom this commandment is spoken: *Depart from me*; namely, to such as come near unto God with their lips, but yet keep their hearts far from Him. In consideration whereof, we must not content ourselves to profess the name of Christ outwardly, but we must draw near to God with all our affections, our love, joy, fear and confidence, and yield obedience to His commandments. So shall we escape this fearful commandment of final departure from Him.

*Ye workers of iniquity*

This is the reason of the commandment; for the better understanding whereof, this question must be handled: How these men, that make such profession, can be called workers of iniquity; many of them whom undoubtedly live in a civil and unblameable life outwardly, and could not be charged with any horrible capital sins? *Answer*: There be many great sins for which men may be called workers of iniquity, and be as vile in the sight of God as the murderer and adulterer, though for outward life they be unblameable.

As first, hypocrisy, which is proper to the professors of religion, whenas they content themselves to hold religion outwardly, but yet do not bring their hearts, nor conform their lives to their outward profession.

Secondly, to profess love and worship to God, and yet not to perform duties of love and mercy unto men; for we must love and serve God in the works of brotherly love.

Thirdly, to have the heart addicted to this or that sin or sins; whether secret or open, in regard of the world, it skilleth not; for this is to be a worker of iniquity in God's sight: when the heart taketh a settled delight in any sin. And they are not so called because their iniquity is always outward and seen to the world.

Lastly, all the sins of the first table, especially the sins against the two first commandments, as not to know God, nor to love God, or to trust in Him above all, not to worship Him in heart and life together; these are all works of iniquity, greater than the sins of the second table in their kind. And in regard of these also, professors are called *workers of iniquity*.

The Uses.

Use 1. Whereas Christ calleth those professors, *workers of iniquity*, whose profession covered their sins from men's sight; we may note that Christ is a very strict observer of men's ways, even of the most secret sins, which appear not to the world. Though men may be deceived by professors in this world, yet Christ cannot be deceived, but at the last day of judgment, He will find them out what they be. Many deceive themselves with a persuasion of mercy, because Christ is a Saviour, and so presume to go on in sin; but they must know that Christ is also a severe judge, who doth straitly observe men's sins, and will condemn the workers of iniquity, as well as pardon them that repent; and therefore we must not flatter ourselves to live in sin because He is a Saviour; but rather fear to sin because He is a severe judge against all iniquity.

Use 2. This shews that Christ prefers an honest and godly life above most worthy gifts, even before the gifts of prophecy and miracles; and therefore our principal care must be to frame our hearts and lives to true obedience unto our God in all His commandments.

Use 3. This must stir us up to true and unfeigned repentance. If we have not yet repented, it must move us to begin it. If we have repented, we must do it

more; for Christ will pronounce a fearful sentence of condemnation upon many professors, because they live in sin, though they have prophesied in His name, and cast out devils, and done many great works; yet because they have been in heart addicted to some sins, He shall say unto them at the last day*, Depart from me*, and, *Go ye cursed into everlasting fire*. The horror whereof, seeing Christ hath so long before made it known unto us, ought to move us to humble ourselves, to turn unto God, and to break off the course of our sins, even in the purpose of our hearts. And if we will not now tremble and turn, the day will come when we shall hear a faithful commandment, and obey it, and not be able to turn from it. But if we shall now turn to God by true repentance and new obedience, we shall in that day hear the blessed voice of absolution upon ourselves, whenas the fearful sentence of condemnation shall be pronounced upon others.

Use 4. Whereas many men shall be condemned because in heart they have been addicted to some open or secret sins, we must in the fear of God labour to purge our hearts from all sin, so as we be not addicted to any one sin, with purpose to live therein. Yea, we must labour to turn ourselves from every evil way, from sins in thought, in affections, in behaviour and actions. The purpose of our heart must be not to live in any one sin, so as if we fall, we may yet truly say, it was against our purpose and intent. And therefore, we must labour to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, even in the most secret part of our souls. It is not enough to leave sin when it leaves us, by reason of weakness, or want of opportunity. Thus doth many an aged man, who having lived in hardness and lust all his youth, doth at length, by reason of weakness in old age, leave those sins in practice; but yet his heart is still addicted to them, and therefore even then, when he cannot go without a staff, will he take great delight in rehearsing and remembering the tricks of his youth. Now this man hath no repentance; for his delight in the remembrance of sin past, is all one before God, as if he had lived still in the practice thereof. Our prayer therefore must be with David, to the Lord continually, that He would incline our hearts unto His commandments, and not to covetousness, or any other sin (Psa. 119:36).

# 7:24-27

"*Whosoever then heareth of me these words, and doeth the same, I will liken him to a wise man which hath builded his house on a rock, and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was grounded on a rock. But whosoever heareth these my words, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which hath builded his house upon the sand: and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and the fall thereof was great.*" Matthew 7:24-27.

"*Whosoever then heareth of me these words, and doeth the same, I will liken him to a wise man which hath builded his house on a rock, and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was grounded on a rock.*" (vv. 24-25).

After the delivery of many notable instructions in this sermon of our Saviour Christ, whereby He hath sufficiently shewed Himself to be the true prophet and doctor of His church; in this verse, and in those which follow to the 27th, He comes to lay down the conclusion of this excellent sermon, wherein He doth stir up His hearers to a notable duty; namely, that they should not make light account of His doctrine, contenting themselves barely to hear, read, or to learn the same; but further, to go about the practice thereof in their lives and conversations. And for the effecting hereof, He lays down here at large, the fruit of true obedience to the Word.

In this conclusion are these points contained:

I. A main duty to be done of all His hearers; that is, to hear and do the words of Christ: *Whosoever heareth these my words, and doeth the same*.

II. The property of this duty: it is a note of great wisdom: *I will liken him to a wise man* etc.

III. The fruit of this duty: safety and security against all perils of body and soul, in the 25th verse; all which are amplified by their contraries in the 26th and 27th verses, as we shall see in their place.

I.

The first point is the main duty of every good hearer, namely, to join practice with knowledge of the Word of Christ. This duty is oft urged upon us by the Holy Ghost, (Rom. 2:13), *Not the hearers of the law, but the doers thereof shall be justified before God*. And St James stands long on this duty (Jam. 1:22), *Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls*; which after, he enforceth both by the vanity of hearing without doing (vv. 23,24), and by the blessing that accompanies obedient hearing (v.25). And (Luke 11:27,28) when a woman in admiration of Christ's doctrine, pronounced her blessed that bare Him; Christ answered, *Nay, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it*. And in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13), there are four kinds of hearers, three bad and one only good, who do hear, know, receive, embrace the Word of God, and withal bring forth fruit plentifully. And natural reason may persuade us of the weight of this duty; for the best learning that men have in human things, is too little or of no use without practice; much less can divine doctrine then profit a man, without obedience be joined therewith.

The Use.

The consideration hereof must move us to pray to God the Father in the name of Christ, that He would vouchsafe His Spirit unto us, whereby our hearts might be inclined, disposed and bent to an unfeigned love and obedience of God's precepts delivered in His holy Word, because it is our duty to live in the practice of that we hear. Yea, we must pray so to perform obedience in our life that our consciences may not only not accuse us, but also excuse us before God in regard thereof; or at least, in regard of our true endeavour and desire to obey. This duty being practised, will minister true comfort unto us in time of distress, yea, in the fearful case of death itself. Hereby did good king Hezekiah comfort himself at his death, that he had *walked before the Lord with an upright and perfect heart* (Isa. 38:3). And the Word of God is plain for this comfort, *If our hearts condemn us not, then we have boldness towards God* (1 John 3:21), always provided we

have a good understanding of our duty to God, for an ignorant conscience will falsely excuse.

II.

The property of this duty. It is a part of great wisdom, for he that heareth and obeyeth, is the only wise man*, I will liken him* (saith Christ) *unto a wise man*. This point is likewise with care to be remembered, that the hearing and doing of the Word of God is a special part of true wisdom. This is notably verified in the 32nd psalm, which is entitled *David's learning*; and indeed it is a notable psalm of learning, containing the sum of all religion; which David bringeth to these two heads: his repentance and new obedience. So (Deut. 4:6), the people's obedience to God's commandments is counted by Moses their wisdom; and for this cause, he there saith*, They shall be counted the wisest people under heaven*, because they served and obeyed the true God; to which purpose it is said, *The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, a good understanding have all they that do thereafter* (Psa. 111:10).

Hence we learn these instructions:

1. All superiors, magistrates, masters and parents, are bound to go before their inferiors in wisdom, as they are above them in authority; and therefore considering obedience is true wisdom, every superior ought to go before his inferiors in obedience to God's commandments; for this only is true wisdom, without which all other wisdom is but folly and madness.

2. Hence, all students who profess themselves to seek for wisdom and learning, are taught especially to give themselves to learn and obey the will and commandments of God; for this is true wisdom, both before God and man. And it is a great blemish and disgrace for any man of knowledge to lead a loose and dissolute life; this argues their want of God's fear, which is the very ground of true wisdom.

3. This gives a good caveat to ignorant persons, who persuade themselves they may continue in their ignorance because they are not book-learned. But they deceive themselves, for obedience is true wisdom; and therefore

they must labour for so much knowledge as will bring them to this wisdom here commended.

Now to come more specially to this true wisdom, we must search out wherein it lieth. This is expressed in these words: *which hath builded his house on a rock*; which St Luke setteth down more largely (Luke 6:48), saying, *he digged deep, and laid his foundation on a rock*. In which words three parts of this wisdom are propounded: 1. To dig deep; 2. To make choice of a rock for a foundation; and 3. To build thereon.

1. The *builder* is the professor of the name of Christ; and this *digging deep* to find out a fit foundation, signifying thus much: that he that would make sure his own salvation, must come to a deep search and examination of his own corrupt heart, that he may know the iniquity thereof; as also he must renounce himself and his pleasures; and whatsoever may hinder him in this building he must cast out; for without this deep search and ransacking of the heart, there can be no sure foundation laid, nor certainty of salvation attained.

2. The second point of this wisdom is to choose a foundation to lay our salvation upon; and that is the rock Christ Jesus Himself alone, God and man, He is *the chief corner-stone on which the whole building is coupled* (Eph. 2:20,21). *Neither is there salvation in any other; for among men there is given no other name under heaven, by which we must be saved* than Christ Jesus only (Acts 4:12), *and no other foundation can any man lay than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ* (1 Cor. 3:11). Christ is the rock and corner-stone, and true Christians are living stones upon Him (1 Pet. 2:5). As for our works, they are fruits, but no part of this foundation, unless to them that build on the sand, like foolish builders.

3. Thirdly, having found a good foundation, we must build thereon. Our souls and our salvation must be builded on Christ. This is done by our faith in Christ; for as mutual love joins one man unto another; so true faith makes us one with Christ; (Eph. 3:17), the Holy Ghost saith that Christ doth dwell in our hearts by faith. And (Psa. 125;1), *He that trusts in the Lord is as mount Sion that cannot be removed*. Yet here two caveats must be remembered:

1. That Christ is a rock, yet not every way that man frames in his own heart, but only so as He hath offered Himself in the promise of the gospel, which is the Word of the covenant of grace. And for this cause we must labour that this Word of God's grace may be rooted and grounded in our hearts by faith; for it is all one to believe in Christ, and to believe the Word that reveals Christ unto us. So saith our Saviour, *He that refuseth me, and receiveth not my Word, hath one that judgeth him* (John 12:48). And, *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you* (John 15:7). We therefore must be like the good ground; for as it receives and keeps the good seed, so doth the good heart receive and keep the word of grace, which being rooted in our hearts, keeps us united unto Christ, and therefore it is called *the engrafted word* (Jam. 1:21), which being mingled with faith in our hearts is profitable, for it knits us fast to Christ, and makes us grow up in Him unto perfection.

2. We must set all the main affections of our heart on Christ; if hereby must we shew forth our faith. We must so esteem and love Christ, as that in regard of Him we *count all things loss and dung* (Phil. 3:8), with the apostle; yea, we must so delight in Christ, that we desire Him wholly, and receive nothing into our hearts but Christ alone. Thomas desired but to put his finger into His side (John 20:25), but we must go further, and desire to have our souls washed in the blood that issued hence, and to have our hearts possessed by His Spirit, whom He giveth to His church.

The Use.

Seeing Christ Jesus is the rock of our salvation, our duty is to have our hearts rooted and founded on Christ. They which be as the stony ground, hear and receive the Word, and it takes some rooting in them, and brings forth some fruit; but as the rooting is not deep, so the fruit is never ripe, and therefore when heat cometh, it withereth. So it is with professors. A man may be one in name, and bring forth some fruit of the Word which he hears, and yet be deceived in the matter of his salvation, because he is not rooted and founded in Christ. This is the point which Paul stands much upon in sundry of his epistles (Eph. 2:20,21; 3:17; Col. 2:7); for shew of grace will not serve the turn. Indeed in these happy days of peace, any grace makes a

man seem to be a Christian; but when the parching heat of persecution comes, unless we be thoroughly rooted in Christ, we shall never continue to the end, nor bring forth fruit with patience.

III.

The fruit of this true obedience, in which men by faith build themselves on Christ Jesus, is security and safety against all temptations of the devil, the flesh and the world; meant by the standing of the house that was built upon the rock, notwithstanding the falling of the rain, the beating of the floods and the blowing of the winds (v.25); a most notable fruit which nothing else but true obedience can procure unto us. Wealth cannot minister this comfortable security; nay, the more wealth, ofttimes the more trouble; and unto many, riches are the cause of a fearful downfall. No strength of man, nor power of any princes can procure this safety, and yet Christ vouchsafeth the same to them that hear His Word and keep it.

1. The consideration hereof must move us to be most willing and ready to perform obedience to that holy Word of God which we read and hear; for such a benefit comes by it, as no creature in the world can procure besides; and the rather we must inure ourselves hereto, because our sins deserve an end of these happy days of peace, and we may justly look for the black days of persecution, which when they come will surely be our ruin, unless in these days of peace we hear the Word and do it.

2. Secondly, from this fruit of true obedience we may gather that he which once hath true faith in Christ rooted in his heart, shall never lose the same, either wholly or finally, but shall continue therein unto the end, and enjoy the fruit thereof for ever. For by faith a man is truly built on Christ, as on a most sure foundation, so as neither temptations nor persecutions can drive him off; though they may assault and shake him, yet they can never throw him down. But if a man might quite lose his faith, then might he be beaten down that is built on Christ, which thing this text denieth.

3. Lastly, this teacheth us that he that is built on Christ by faith, must look for fearful trials and temptations; for he is like an house built on the sea bank, against which wind, and rain, and waves, do all beat and rage. God's servants must not look to go to heaven in ease, but they must wait for trials

and temptations coming hand in hand, as wind and rain, and wind and wave commonly do. And therefore the more careful and earnestly must we labour to be surely grounded on Christ, that though they assault us, yet they may not throw us down.

*"But whosoever heareth these my words, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which hath builded his house upon the sand: and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and the fall thereof was great."* (vv. 26-27).

In these verses our Saviour Christ layeth down four other points contrary to the former, belonging to an evil hearer:

I. The fault and bad practice of an evil hearer: *to hear Christ's words, and not do the same*;

II. The property of this vice: *it is a point of extreme folly*;

III. The practice of this folly: *in building upon the sands*;

IV. The fruit and issue of this building: *fearful ruin and destruction*.

I.

*The practice of a bad hearer*, from which Christ would terrify all men in this place is *to hear and not to do*. This is no small fault. The ground that receiveth seed and rain, both in measure and season, and yet bringeth forth either bad fruit, or none at all, is by all men condemned for bad ground. The apostle saith, it is *near unto cursing, whose end is to be burned* (Heb. 6:8). The waters that come and issue from under the threshold of the sanctuary (Ezek. 47:1), whereby is meant the Word of God, when they come into any ground they are of this nature, if they make it not fruitful they turn it into barrenness (v.11). A subject that knows his prince's will, and doeth it not, is indeed no better than a rebel. How much more then is he that hears the Word and doctrine of salvation by Christ, and yet makes no conscience to do the same, to be judged for bad and barren ground, yea, for a rebel against God Himself. (1 Sam. 15:23), Samuel telleth Saul that *rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and transgression is wickedness and idolatry*. And the reason

is plain, for they that submit themselves to hear God's Word, are sundry ways bound to perform obedience. First, by the law of creation, as they are God's creatures. Secondly, by the law of redemption, as they are Christ's servants, bought by His most precious blood. Thirdly, in regard of their adoption, as they are, or at least hold themselves to be, His children in Christ. And fourthly, in regard of His merciful providence whereof we have daily experience. In regard of all these, we ought by way of thankfulness, to shew ourselves obedient unto His Word. And therefore, he that hears the Word of God, and will not do the same, sinneth grievously against God, which in its kind God hateth as the sin of witchcraft. Now this sin of disobedience is a common sin. We are all hearers, but where almost is the man that answerably is a doer? Men content themselves with the bear action of hearing, like unto the papists, who think God is well served with the work done. But the principal thing we omit, which is the treasuring up of God's Word in our hearts that upon just occasion we might practise the same. Yea, which yet is more lamentable, men are so far from yielding conscionable obedience to the Word, that the endeavour thereunto is commonly judged superfluous niceness and curious preciseness. But this sin of hearing and not doing, will bring many fearful judgments upon us, unless by true repentance it be cut off.

II.

*The property of this bad practice*. It is a point of great folly: *He that heareth and doeth not, shall be likened unto a foolish man*. This the Author of all wisdom Christ Himself avoucheth. And the Holy Ghost by St James doth notably describe this part of folly: *They that be hearers and not doers, deceive themselves, being like unto a man that beholdeth his natural face in a glass* (Jam. 1:22-24); either to spy out some spot, or discern his own countenance; *but when he hath considered himself, he goeth his way and forgetteth immediately what manner of one he was*.

Again, this folly will further appear in this: if a man should shew forth great parts of wisdom in sundry things pertaining to his body, and yet fail in the main point of all, every man would count his wisdom but folly. Now such are all they that hear the Word of God and do it not; they shew some parts of wisdom in coming to hear, and in seeking to understand; and yet if they

come not to practise, they fail in the main point of their salvation, which indeed ought to be sought for in the first place.

1. By this we may see how to correct and reform our foolish conceit we have of men in the world. We think of those that have worldly wisdom to be able to go beyond others in the greater affairs of this life, that they are the only men, deserving best place of government both in church and commonwealth. But we must know that these men, though they have never so good heads for the things of this life, yet if they fail in the knowledge of this duty to God, or in the practice thereof, are here by our Saviour Christ noted with the brand of folly. The rich man in the gospel had notable forecast for the augmenting of his wealth. When his substance increased, he could pull down his barns and make them greater, but yet because he failed in the main point of his salvation, he is noted for a rich fool (Luke 12:20). And therefore in all sorts and estates of men, he is the wisest, who hath grace to know, and answerably to obey the will of God.

2. This must excite us to a careful endeavour after true obedience to God in all His commandments. We all desire to be freed from the reproach of folly among men, and we take it for a great disgrace to be counted fools. Well, if we would avoid this ignominy indeed, let us be willing to hear and carefully obey the Word of Christ, both in thought, word and deed; otherwise, let men judge as they list, God will account us fools.

III.

*The practice of this folly*; which consists in this: that *he builds his house upon the sands*; whereby is signified another thing concerning the soul; namely, to build our salvation upon insufficient foundation; and that doth every hearer of God's Word that makes not conscience of obedience. For profession is as it were the erecting or rearing of an house. And the not performing obedience withal, is the setting of this house upon the sands. There be three sorts of men that thus build upon the sand:

1. The papist that will be justified and saved by Christ; but yet withal he must have works of grace to concur for the increase of his justification, and for the accomplishment of his salvation. Now this is to build upon the sands, when we join works with Christ in the matter of salvation. For

though Christ be a sure rock in Himself, yet if we will fortify Him by our works, we fall from this rock into perdition, and our foundation is no better than sand. (Gal. 5:2,4), *Behold I Paul say unto you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothingÉ. Ye are fallen from Christ, whosoever will be justified by the law*; in which places the apostle labours to overthrow the opinion of the Galatians learned of the false apostles, which was to join works with Christ in the matter of justification. (Rom. 9:32*), Christ became unto the Jews a rock of offence, whenas they would be saved by the works of the law*.

2. A second sort that builds upon the sands are the common Protestants; by whom I mean such as bear the name of Christians, and yet rest themselves contented and satisfied with their civil lives; thinking that because they abstain from outward evil and gross sins, and do no man wrong, therefore God will hold them excused; whereupon they profess religion more for obedience to the laws of men, than for conscience to God. But this will not serve the turn; these men, though they profess Christ outwardly, yet indeed they deny Him; for by their course (though it may be they think not so) they will needs become saviours, and so christs unto themselves; which thing they do when they stay themselves on their own civil life. The Scribes and Pharisees for outward actions were very godly, and many of them lived unblameable; but yet Christ saith to His disciples (Matt. 5:20), *Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*. And Paul goes somewhat further, speaking of himself when he was an apostle (1 Cor. 4:4), *I know nothing by myself, and yet am I not thereby justified*. This was a notable thing, for a man to walk so uprightly in his calling that his own sanctified conscience could not accuse him of any offence therein, either against God or man; and yet this is nothing in the matter of justification, wherein the righteousness of the whole law must be fulfilled, which cannot be done by the obedience of sanctification, which is not perfect in this life. And therefore Paul desires not to be found of God therein (Phil. 3:9), much less by civil righteousness, which consisting only in outward behaviour, may be in those that never have the Spirit of grace to renew their souls, as the apostle witnesseth of the Gentiles, that some of them do by nature the things contained in the law (Rom. 2:14); that is, outwardly. But without the Spirit, they are none of Christ's, *for he that hath not the Spirit of God is none of His* (Rom. 8:9),

neither can possibly enter into the kingdom of God; for *except a man be born again of water, and of the Holy Spirit*, that is, be regenerate by the Holy Ghost, *he cannot enter into the kingdom of God* (John 3:5).

3. The third sort of those that build upon the sand is the Protestant that is more forward in religion than the former. I mean such as do hear the Word of God ordinarily, and receive it with joy, bringing forth some good fruit thereof. It had been hard, I must confess, to have called such men foolish builders, without good warrant out of the Word. But Jesus Christ hath revealed them to be such as build upon the sand; for in the parable of the sower (Luke 8:13), *They that receive the seed in stony ground, are they which hear the Word, and incontinently with joy receive it; but they have no roots, which for a while believe*, there is some fruit, *but in time of temptation they go away*. Of such St John speaketh (John 6:66), *From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him*. They were His followers, and heard Him gladly, or else they should never have been called His disciples, but their going back doth plainly discover their sandy foundation. Of such also he speaketh in his epistle, *They went out from us, but they were not of us* (1 John 2:19). For a time they professed Christ, and so were among the faithful, but when trouble and persecution came because of the Word, then they went away, wanting true humility and sound faith, whereby they should have been built upon Christ; which want in time of peace they could not espy.

The Uses.

1. Seeing that men which hear and receive the Word of God with joy may build upon a sandy foundation, we must not content ourselves herewith, but further pray to God for this one blessing: that He would write His Word in our hearts by the finger of His Spirit, as He wrote the law on tables of stone in mount Sinai; for our hearts are deceitful, as the prophet speaketh (Jer. 17:9), and in the time of peace will counterfeit grace, which in time of trial will vanish away as the mist before the sun. Now God hath promised this blessing to His church in the New Testament (Jer. 31:33*), After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts* and (32:40), *I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me*. This therefore we must pray for, that the Word which we

hear may enable us to obedience in the time of peace, and arm and strengthen us against temptation in the day of trial, and so become the power of God to our salvation.

2. This must move us to look unto the deceitfulness of our hearts. The case is weighty respecting the eternal state of our souls, and yet through spiritual guile we may easily deceive ourselves herein; for who would not think himself to be in a good case, when he doth receive the Word with joy and bring forth some fruits thereof? This indeed is a good step towards grace, but if we go no further, we deceive ourselves; this will not serve our turn in the time of trial. As yet we are but those who receive the seed on stony ground; the graces which we make shew of will be like the grass on the housetop, which withereth in the blade before it shoot forth. Wherefore we must look well to our souls, that in our profession we carry a true heart toward God, and keep a good conscience in ourselves. And for this cause we must see that we be thoroughly humbled in ourselves for our sins, that we trust not in ourselves but in God, and make His mercy in Christ to be our chief treasure. Also we must remember that we are not our own, but God's; for He hath bought us, and so we must not take liberty to dispose of ourselves as we list, but must subject ourselves wholly to His blessed will in all things. And because He hath revealed His will in His holy Word, according to which He would have us to frame our lives, we must endeavour to prove and try what is the good will of God and acceptable, and let the obedience of our lives express our faith in God and reverence towards His Word. And if thus we make God in Christ our joy and fear in the days of peace, we shall be sure to find Him the Rock of our salvation in the time of trial.

3. Seeing men may receive the Word with joy and bring forth some fruit, and yet build upon the sand, we must not content ourselves with this, that we know Christ to be a Saviour, and do embrace true religion in profession; but we must labour for the power of this knowledge in ourselves, that we may know Christ to be our Saviour, and may feel the power of His death to mortify sin in us, and the virtue of His resurrection to raise and build us up to newness of life; for knowledge in the brain will not save the soul. Saving knowledge in religion is experimental; and he that is truly founded upon Christ, feels the power and efficacy of His death and resurrection,

effectually causing the death of sin and the life of grace, which both appear by new obedience.

IV.

*The effect and fruit of bad hearing*; that is, *fearful ruin and destruction*, resembled by the issue of building on the sands.

*The rain fell, the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and the fall thereof was great* (v. 27).

Here, two things are to be noted: First, the cause of this fearful ruin*, The falling of the rain, and the beating of the floods and winds*; Secondly, the quality of this ruin, it is great and fearful, *The house fell, and the fall thereof was great*.

1. For the first, floods and wind and rain do here betoken trials and temptations, which are here said to befall the professors of the name of Christ. Whence we learn that everyone that doth profess true religion must look for a day of temptation and trial. It is God's will that whosoever taketh upon him the profession of His name, should be tried and proved what he is. Thus He permitted Adam presently after his creation, to be tempted and tried by Satan; the smart whereof we all feel unto this day. And God gave Abraham a commandment of trial, when He bade *him take his only son Isaac whom he loved, and offer him up for a burnt offering in mount Moriah* (Gen. 22:1,2). So He left Hezekiah to himself to try him, and to make known what was in his heart, *when the ambassadors of the prince of Babylon came unto him, to enquire of the wonder which God had done in the land* (2 Chr. 32:31). And John Baptist saith of Christ, *that He hath His fan in His hand*, to sift and try the good corn from the chaff (Matt. 3:12). And Christ tells Peter that *the devil sought to winnow the disciples as wheat* (Luke 22:31). And for the trial of his faith and patience*, God gave Job and all that he had into Satan's hands, except his life* (Job 1:12; 2:6). And Christ tells the church of Smyrna (Rev. 2:10), *The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have affliction ten days*. And St Peter makes it a thing requisite, that the faith of God's servants should be tried by affliction, as gold is tried in the fire (1 Pet. 1:7).

The Use.

We now have by God's mercy true religion maintained and professed among us, and are freed from the bondage of the Turk, Jew and papists, in regard of their idolatries and superstitions. These are inestimable blessings, which we must labour to walk worthy of, and therefore must stand fast in our profession, and quit ourselves like men in the maintenance of true religion, not suffering ourselves to be deprived of it by any adversary power; for times will come when we must be assaulted. The floods, wind and rain of trials and temptations will beat upon the house of our profession; for God hath so dealt with His dearest servants, and we may not look to get free. Now without a good foundation we shall not keep our standing. We must therefore in this happy time of peace and truth, which is to us the day of grace and mercy, seriously labour to have our hearts endued with some good measure of lasting grace, as of sincere love, sound hope, and faith unfeigned, which as good gold may abide the fiery trial of afflictions. This is Paul's counsel to the Colossians (Col. 2:6,7), *Seeing you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him*; that is, go on forward in the same profession. But how? *Rooted and built in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving*. And when he had told the Ephesians of the mighty spiritual enemies that they must wrestle with (Eph. 6:12,13), for the keeping of faith and a good conscience; he bids them *take unto themselves the whole armour of God, and put it on, that they may be able to resist and stand in the evil day*, that is, the day of trial. In earthly kingdoms every prudent and well-governing state will have munitions in store, and men in readiness for their defence against an enemy. And surely in God's kingdom everyone that doth profess the truth, should labour to be furnished with sound grace, that they may be able to fight for the maintenance of the faith. If an householder knew that thieves would come upon him, he would not be taken unprovided. Well, we are taught that trials will come, and therefore let us not be unprepared.

2. The second point in this effect is the quality of this ruin and fall: it is great and fearful. *It fell, and the fall thereof was great*. The thing resembled hereby is most fearful, to wit, that such professors of religion as in the days of peace did not join practice with their profession, shall fall away in the time of trial, and come to most fearful perdition. This is the principal point

that Christ here aims at, whereby He intends to terrify men from dissembled profession. And the consideration of it must work effectually in our hearts; for we by God's mercy and blessing, have had the light of the gospel for many years together, in such measure as was never in this land before. So as in regard of the means it may be said of us, as Christ said of Capernaum, that we are even *lifted up to heaven* (Matt. 11:23). The true light now shineth, and in that regard, blessed are our eyes for they see, and our ears for they hear. But yet though the most among us be hearers, where is our obedience? We have indeed the blazing lamp of outward profession, but where is the oil of grace? Alas, some among us grow to be peremptory and flat atheists, denying God that made them, and making but a mock at Jesus Christ. Others, not a few, under the name of religion, root their hearts in the world, some in profits, and some in pleasures, and none of these almost regard religion. Others profess religion, and yet live in gross sins, as swearing, drunkenness, uncleanness, etc., making no conscience of gross impiety in their lives. So that if we look into the general state of our people, we shall see that religion is professed, but not obeyed. Nay, obedience is counted preciseness, and so reproached; but we must know that in the end this profaning of religion will soon turn all God's blessings temporal and spiritual, into fearful curses, both of body and soul. If ever anything bring ruin upon us, it will be the contempt of God's Word professed. And therefore let us in the fear of God endeavour ourselves not only to know and hear the Word of God, but to turn unto God from all sin, and especially in regard of this sin of disobedience to the Word of God.

Lastly, Christ notes the quality of this fall to be exceeding great, to shew unto us the great danger of hypocrisy. For there is great difference between these three sorts of men: a sinner that makes no profession of religion, an hypocrite that makes a great shew of piety in profession, and a true believer whose life and conversation is answerable to his profession. For a true professor may fall into sin very fearfully, as Peter and David did, and yet recover again. Also he that is a most notorious sinner, as Manasseh was, may be converted and repent. But when a professor that is an hypocrite in religion is tried, he falls quite from Christ, and makes apostasy from his profession; and in this regard, his fall is called *great*. And therefore seeing professors may thus fearfully fall away; let us in the fear of God, labour in some truth of heart to yield obedience to that we hear.

# 7:28-29

"*And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these words, the people were astonied at his doctrine. For he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*" Matthew 7:28-29.

These two verses contain the issue and event of this sermon of our Saviour Christ in His hearers. And in them we may observe two points:

I. First, the good fruit that came of this sermon (v.28).

II. Secondly, the cause and reason thereof (v.29).

I.

The fruit was the astonishing of the people; which St Matthew sets out by three circumstances:

1. Of the time when it appeared; to wit, after the sermon was ended;

2. Of the persons in whom it was wrought, the people, that is the multitude;

3. Of the matter whereat they were astonished, namely, at the doctrine of Christ.

1. Touching this astonishing of the people, in it many things are to be observed:

1. That though the person of our Saviour Christ were lowly and base, yet His doctrine in preaching was of great force in the minds of His hearers, for it did amaze and astonish them. This caused the officers that were sent to take Him to return without Him, alleging the majesty of His doctrine for the reason of their fact (John 7:46), *Never man spake as this man did*, and when the governors came with a band of

men to apprehend Him*, so soon as He did but tell them He was the Christ, they went backward, and fell to the ground* (John 18:6).

This sheweth unto us that the voice and sentence of Christ given at the last day of judgment, will be most fearful and terrible. For if His words were thus powerful in His base estate of humility, what force will they then have, when He shall come in glory and majesty in the clouds, accompanied with thousands of angels, whenas His sight shall be so terrible that men shall call to the mountains to fall upon them, and to the rocks to grind them in pieces, if it were possible? Well, let the consideration hereof move us to be obedient to His voice in the ministry of His Word; otherwise we shall one day be subject to that fearful voice of condemnation, *Go ye cursed into everlasting fire* (Matt. 25:41).

2. This astonishment of the people argues some fear and reverence in them towards Christ, which is some commendation unto them. And yet it proves not the truth and soundness of their faith and conversion (though no doubt many that heard Him were hereby converted); for a man may be amazed at Christ's doctrine, and yet not be converted thereby (Luke 4:22), the people of Nazareth did marvellously affect the doctrine of our Saviour Christ, admiring it, and yet they believed not in Him, but took exceptions against Him, because He was the son to Joseph the carpenter. Pharaoh, Saul and Ahab, when they were reproved by Moses, Samuel and Elijah, they were oftentimes much amazed and confounded in themselves; and yet they did never truly turn from their sins. And in this place I take it, this astonishment of the people is recorded, rather for the commendation of Christ's ministry than to note out the faith and conversion of the people.

This we are to observe for special cause; for it is the ordinary manner of the most of our hearers, to mark more or less what is spoken, to approve the doctrine, and to speak well of the minister, which be good things in their kind; but yet this is not enough. We must further labour to receive the Word by faith, to repent of our sins, and to conform our hearts and lives unto the Word. (Luke 11:27,28), When a woman through admiration at Christ's doctrine, *pronounced her blessed that bare Him, and the paps that gave Him suck*; Christ took occasion thence to give unto her and the rest of the

hearers this lesson: *Nay, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God and do it*. (Acts 2:37), at the first sermon of Peter after the giving of the Holy Ghost, the people were greatly amazed at His doctrine, and *being pricked in conscience, cried, Men and brethren, what shall we do*? Now, Peter suffers them not to stand still in this astonishment, but labours further to bring them to true faith and repentance, and to have the same by baptism confirmed unto them, saying, *Amend your lives and be baptized* (v.38). And so dealt Paul with the jailer that would have killed himself upon the sudden sight of the prison doors being open; for after he was truly humbled, he brought him to believe (Acts 16:27-31).

It may be here demanded, why our Saviour Christ at this sermon did no more to the most of His hearers, but caused them to wonder; whenas the apostles converted many thousands at some one sermon, and after brought the whole body of the Gentiles to the faith? *Answer*: No doubt He was able to have converted them all, and we may persuade ourselves here were many converted, though it be not recorded, and though indeed the most were only astonished. But this came so to pass that His promise made to His disciples might be verified (John 14:12), which was that they should do greater works than Christ did; whereof this questionless was one: to convert more in their ministry than Christ did. And the causes hereof were two:

1. That our Saviour Christ might shew Himself willing to undergo that base estate of a servant wherein He was born and continued till His exaltation; therefore He was content to restrain the power of His Godhead even from His ministry, until He were exalted into glory.

2. That He might make it manifest in His apostles' times, that being ascended He did not only sit at the right hand of His Father, that is, rule as a king over all in His princely office; but also that He did indeed govern His church by His Word and Spirit. And this reason Christ addeth (John 14:12), to prove that His disciples should do greater works than He did, *because He went unto His Father*, there to rule and govern His church.

It may yet further be asked, why Christ did not convert them all, seeing He was able, being true and very God? *Answer*: No doubt (as hath been said) many here were converted, yet not all, because Christ was *now the minister*

*of circumcision* (Rom. 15:8) (as the apostle speaketh), that is, though in regard of His Person He were the prophet of the whole catholic church, yet at this time in this action He was preacher only to the church of the Jews; in which regard He performed this duty as man only, and so could do no more but deliver His Father's will unto them, and shew Himself willing to convert them. And in this manner He speaks unto Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37), *O Jerusalem, JerusalemÉ. How often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathereth her chickens; I would, but ye would not*; that is, as the minister of circumcision in mine own Person, and as God in the ministry of my prophets.

Thus much of the astonishment itself.

2. Now followeth the circumstances whereby it is amplified and set out; and they are three:

1. The first circumstance is the *time* when they were astonished, namely, *when the sermon was ended*. No doubt they were amazed in the time of His delivery; but yet they were silent all that while, and shewed no signs of their affection till the sermon was ended. And this good order ought to be observed of all God's people in the public ministry of the Word. In the building of the material Temple, there was no noise or knocking heard, so much as of an hammer (1 Kin. 6:7); whereby was signified that in the assemblies of the saints, where God's spiritual temple is building, there should be the like heavenly order observed; men should hear with quietness and silence, and shew their affections afterward.

Secondly, we are here taught to labour not only to be affected in the act of hearing while the doctrine is delivered, but to treasure it up in our hearts, that we may afterward be affected with it, as this multitude was.

2. The second circumstance here noted, is the *persons* who were thus astonied; to wit, the *people* or the *multitude*; for after the sermon was ended, they gathered themselves into companies, and made known one to another the affections of their hearts towards Christ's doctrine. Here we may gather that our Saviour Christ delivered His doctrine plainly, unto the conference of the meanest, and to the capacity of the simplest;

else they could not thereby have been brought to wonder. And this is a precedent for all ministers to follow in the dispensation of the Word. So did Paul (2 Cor. 4:2,3) in such plainness deliver the Word of God, that *if it were hid*, he saith, *it were hid to them which perish*.

3. The third circumstance is the *object* of their astonishment; that is, His *doctrine*. *They were astonied at His doctrine*. This teacheth us that the Word of God must be so delivered that the doctrine itself may affect the hearers. It is a carnal thing for a man so to preach, as the consideration of his wit, of his memory, of his eloquence, of his great reading, may affect the hearers. Many worthy parts (no doubt) were in our Saviour Christ, for which He might well be admired; and yet in the dispensation of His Word, He labours by His doctrine only to affect His hearers. And so must all they do that will be followers of Christ.

II.

Thus much for the fruit of Christ's sermon. Now follows the cause thereof, which is Christ's authority in teaching (v.29), *For He taught as one having authority, not as the scribes*. This authority in Christ's ministry was caused from three things:

1. From the matter of His sermon.

2. From the manner of His delivery.

3. From the things that accompanied His teaching.

1. The matter of His sermon was the incomparable excellency of heavenly doctrine. Thus much His enemies the scribes that came to tempt Him, did confess (Mark 12:14), *Master, thou art true, and teachest the way of God truly*. And this was long before confirmed by Moses, who delivered the promise of Christ unto the people, into whose mouth God would put His Word (Deut. 18:18). (John 7:16), Christ confesseth *that His doctrine was not His own, but His Father's that sent Him*.

2. The *manner* of His teaching was heavenly; and this shewed itself in sundry things, for:

1. Christ taught in His own name as a lord of His doctrine, and not as a messenger or interpreter thereof, as the prophets were.

2. His speech and delivery was with special grace (Luke 4:22*), The people wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth*; wherein He expressed His humility, His meekness, love, mercy and compassion, plainly shewing by His speech that He was endued with all gifts of the Spirit above measure. In this regard it is said (Isa. 50:4), *God gave Him* (that is Christ) *the tongue of the learned, to be able to speak a word in due season*, for the comfort and appeasing of a distressed conscience; which no man but Christ is able to do.

3. As he delivered the Word vocally unto the outward ear, so he was able by the power of His Godhead, to make His hearers to give attendance, and to receive and believe that which He taught.

4. And lastly, His zeal for His Father's glory and His earnest desire to bring the souls of men unto salvation, which were principal ends of His ministry, did also add grace and authority thereto.

3. The things that went with His doctrine did also cause authority in His ministry; and these were two:

1. *Miracles*; as curing the sick and casting out devils; which did greatly confirm His doctrine unto His hearers. When he had cured one that was both deaf and dumb (Mark 7:37), *the people were beyond measure astonished*.

2. *An unblameable life*; for He was *Jesus Christ the righteous*, who performed all things that the law required, fulfilling the will of God in suffering, and suffering in His obedience.

Further, note the phrase in the original it is said here, *He was teaching*; that is, it was His usual manner and custom thus to preach with authority. Herein Christ is a notable precedent unto us for sundry duties:

1. First, hereby every minister of God's Word is taught to maintain the credit of his ministry, and to preserve the same from contempt;

especially in his own place and his own person. Though Christ were here in a mean and base estate, yet He would not suffer His calling to be contemned, but gets grace thereunto. And Paul chargeth Timothy to *see that no man despise his youth* (1 Tim. 4:12). And to Titus he gives the like admonition (Tit. 2:15), *These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. See that no man despise thee*. Now in the example of Christ, we shall see how this is done, not by outward pomp and estate, or by earthly means; but by truth and soundness of doctrine, by zeal for God's glory, and for the good of men's souls, and by an unblameable life.

2. Secondly, hence all God's ministers (if they will be followers of Christ) must learn not only to teach sound and heavenly doctrine, but to observe therein a divine and spiritual manner of teaching. (1 Cor. 2:4,13), Paul saith, *his preaching was not in human wisdom, but in the plain evidence of the Spirit; comparing spiritual things with spiritual things*; which is then done when the people may acknowledge the grace of God in the teacher. And it is said of the ignorant man, who is rebuked of the prophets (1 Cor. 14:25*), He falls down on his face, and saith plainly that God is in you indeed*. There is great difference to be made between discoursing in philosophy, which may be done by human wit, and preaching in divinity. He that can discourse well in philosophy, cannot thereupon presently preach and dispense the Word of God aright; for preaching is a spiritual duty, which cannot be performed by natural gifts only. The prophet Isaiah must have his tongue touched with a coal from God's altar, before he could speak and utter God's Word unto the people (Isa. 6:6,7). And Paul, the most famous of the apostles, desireth in all his epistles *to be prayed for that his mouth might be opened*; whereby he doth signify that to deliver wholesome doctrine in spiritual manner, for the glory of God, and the good of His people, is a great matter, and cannot by natural gifts be attained unto. And indeed this is that teaching which saves the soul, and affects the heart of him that belongs to God; which is the thing that every minister of God's Word ought to labour for.

3. Thirdly, seeing Christ in His preaching doth maintain the authority of His ministry, every man in his place is taught to maintain and preserve

the dignity of his profession. We are all of us by our profession Christians, and by baptism the sons and daughters of God; now our duty is to walk worthy of this our calling, and to take heed that we bring it not into contempt. It is a most heinous wickedness for any man to bring a slander upon the name and religion of God; and yet nothing is more frequent in this our age; for men will needs be Christians in profession, and therefore will receive the sacraments, which be the highest top-sails of all profession; and yet in their lives they are profane, and live as they list; yea, and if others will not join with them in their wickedness, they will not spare to scorn and revile them. But herein they sin fearfully, in dishonouring their profession; and though they charge others with hypocrisy that endeavour in some truth to be answerable to their profession, yet they themselves practice most gross hypocrisy, whenas they will bear the name of Christians in profession, and communicate with the Lord in His holy ordinances, and yet make no conscience of sin, but scorn those that do. (Eph. 4:1), Paul prayed for the Ephesians, that *they might walk worthy the vocation whereunto they were called*. And (Tit. 2:7), he exhorts Titus hereunto, that *in all things he should shew himself an ensample of good works, with uncorrupt doctrine, with gravity, and integrity* etc. Yea (v.10), he requires servants to *shew such faithfulness in their service that they may adorn the doctrine of God*.

*And not as the scribes*

For first, they failed in the matter; they delivered not the doctrine of God but the traditions of men about washings and tithings. Secondly, they failed in the manner; they taught coldly, and without zeal. Thirdly, they failed in the end; they taught in pride and ambition, seeking themselves, and not God's glory. But Christ, as we have seen, taught far otherwise; and although He misliked their preaching, both for matter, manner and end, yet He vouchsafed to hear them, or else how could He have reproved these things in them? Which shews that Christ would not separate Himself from their assemblies, whose doctrine he disliked, with the delivery thereof. And therefore no man ought to sever himself from the Church of England, for some wants that be therein. We have the true doctrine of Christ preached among us by God's blessing, and though there be corruptions in manners

among us, yea, and though they could justly find fault with our doctrine; yet so long as we hold Christ, no man ought to sever himself from our church. And thus much for this sermon.

THE END

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Edited and published by Honza Pokory honza@pokorny.ca

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