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AND GIVE TO THE POOR.—MK 10:21

AMIAABLE PROFESSORS FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN



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Amiable Professors Falling Short of Heaven

by Thomas Boston

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AMIALE PROFESSORS

FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN

SERMON I

Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest. - MARK 10:21

WHEN Satan had taken man prisoner, he put him in chains, Isaiah 61:1. Chains of several links, even divers lusts and pleasures. With these he attempts to hold them, till he get them in chains of darkness in hell. Jesus Christ hath broken the chains of some of these prisoners of Satan: but very many of them are yet as Adam left them. Some the devil hath in the chain of irreligion and profanity, even a chain so short, as they have no power to set a foot on God's way. Some are in the long chain of formality, as this man; and as for them, you may see, that they are as sure in the devil's grasp as those whose heads he holds in greater restraint. One thing thou lackest. They get so much scope in the ways of God, that they can scarcely think that the devil hath them in his chain. All these, said this man, have I observed from my youth. But when a convenient time comes, the devil can draw them to himself, quite out of God's way. Ver. 22. He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

In the 20th verse this man had made an ample profession of a good life, and in the text we have Christ's return. In which we have, 1.

Christ's gesture towards him, he beheld him, he cast his eyes anew upon him, on that word, looking on him so as to express his inward affection to him. 2. The Saviour's affection to him. He loved him. 3. His answer to him. One thing thou lackest.

1. We have our Lord's gesture and carriage to him. He beheld him wishfully. The eyes are the windows through which the soul looks out, and they admirably discover the affection of the mind; either love or hatred. It was love here, particularly compassion and pity, which is a kind of love especially discovered by the eyes. Christ had a human compassion towards so civil a person.

But why did Christ thus look upon him? Because he was true man, and so capable of true human passions and affections, and particularly of pity towards objects of compassion, which this man in a special manner was. And so we find him affected even to the shedding of tears, over the case of those, on whom as God he was about to bring wrath to the uttermost. When Jesus beheld Jerusalem, he wept over it. And there was much in this man's case to move a generous spirit to compassion.

1. He was a civil discreet man, but possessed of no religion, an absolute stranger to true godliness. There are some people who have neither grace nor manners; they are abominable to the godly, because they have no religion; and to civil men, because they have not so much as common civility. But this man was civil and discreet, yet being without true religion, he was a pitiful sight to move compassion.

Such persons excite compassion because they are dutiful to all but God and their own souls. They feed others but starve themselves. They make themselves lovely to men, but remain hateful to God. Besides if they had religion, it would be much better for them.

Civility and discretion go far to recommend religion to the world, that knows it not, and cannot value it for its intrinsic beauty. Hence we are commanded to be all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, Religion with an unpolished conversation is like gold in the ore; but accompanied with this discretion shines as a piece of gold new struck.

2. He was a man concerned to be at heaven, but likely never to see it; and such an one is a spectacle of commiseration indeed. Some persons are posting so fast to the pit, that they never look over their shoulder to heaven: if they go to hell, they can scarcely say that they are disappointed, for they were not minding heaven. They have found a broad easy way, and they have a mind to hold by it end where it will. But Oh! what shall we say, or what tears of blood may not their case draw forth, whose eyes are still fixed on heaven, while the devil is driving them in an invisible chariot to destruction? They are running to obtain the crown of glory, but have mistaken the way, and will land in eternal reproach. The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them; because he knoweth not how to go to the city. Strive, says our Lord, to enter in at the strait gate; for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able. They are courting their own damnation in a mask, and grasp at a weight of wrath, instead of the weight of glory, which must needs make a fearful surprise when they are undeceived.

3. He was a man of a good natural temper, but no grace. All these, says he, have I kept from my youth. He was none of the devil's lions, filling the place where he lived with the noise of his revellings and extravagancies; but he was one of the devil's lambs, going to hell without letting the world hear the sound of his feet. And such surely is a pitiful sight.

Some persons have grace, but a rugged natural temper like Jonah, who was seldom but out of humour. They have the jewel, but an ill case to keep it in.—Some have good nature, but no grace, they have the cabinet, but they want the jewel to put into it. Ah! what pity is it to see such a fair building empty, or rather made a habitation of devils.

4. He was a man that had done many things in the way of a good life, but marred all he had done with the want of one thing. If you saw an artificer at great pains to make a curious piece of work, and when he had done break all in pieces with a rash touch of his hand, you could not observe it without regret. Or if you saw one make such a piece, but when he comes to one thing necessary to make it useful, he stops there and with all his art cannot master it, would not that be a pitiful sight? So here. Oh! it is sad to think how with some that do many things in religion, there is still something that stands between heaven and them.—Though they are not far from the kingdom of heaven, yet they never enter into it. We have,

II. Christ's affection to him. He loved him. There is a special love which God bears to his own, which cannot be understood of this man, as appears from the sequel, where he shewed he loved the world better than Christ. But there are two things in it.

1. There was a real affection of passion and love in Christ's human soul towards this man, upon the account of the many good qualifications which appeared in him, all the good gifts of God. 2. Forasmuch as in God there are no affections or passions properly so called, (such prove one a man, not God) the love of Christ, as God, is to be understood in respect of the effect, not of the affection; and such love God hath to all his creatures in so far as he wills and does them good, seeing every thing God made was good and is in itself

good. Besides there is a love to men of which the scripture speaks, Titus 3:4. By which God loves his own work and his own good gifts in them more or less according to their measure. Thus he loved him, spoke friendly to him, approving what was good in him, so far as it was good.

Out of this a popish commentator offers to hammer two things. 1. That the man spoke truth, verse 20th otherwise Christ had loved a liar, or a lie. Answer, He might as well have inferred Christ's commending deceit and injustice from his commending the unjust Steward, Luke 16:8. But his keeping of the commandments, so far as he had really done it, was good in itself: his moral seriousness was good in itself and so lovely, and thus he might in that view love him with a general love, as well as the godly with a special love, notwithstanding of defects. 2. The congruous merit of good works before faith, because Christ loved him for these. Answer, What God loves and approves is not therefore meritorious: but if so it was incongruous to set him away without faith, which yet was done and that is to blaspheme.

Here I shall first shew out of the context why Christ loved him. Now to draw from this lovely picture, which yet wanted one stroke to make it complete for salvation, the want of which marred all the rest; I remark,

1. That he was a zealous man; he came running to Christ. Though he had little light he had much heat; much affection for heaven, though little judgment about the way. His zeal carried him to wait on, and not to let slip an opportunity of conversing with Christ, and he would rather marr his gravity by running than lose it. This was good in itself, besides there was something good in his zeal, for it was in a good thing, and herein he condemned many.

Many who run away from Christ, turn their backs on him and his way after they had made a profession of it, 2 Pet. 2:22.

He condemned also those who have no heart for conversing with Christ, but are dragged to duties as the malefactor to the execution; whose heart that way is gone, and they are without all life and vigour in the way of God. Those also whose zeal carries them off the way where Christ walks, and excites them to separate themselves, and to entice others to withdraw from the means of knowledge, how they may inherit eternal life.

2. He was a civil discreet man, and respectful to Christ as a teacher, though he took him not for the Messiah. Rudeness was no part of religion to him, and this was good in itself, though it made him no better Christian, than he who answered discreetly, Mark 12:34. By this he condemned many whose religion makes them rude, and leaves them not within the bounds of common discretion, especially setting themselves to trample under foot the stars that Christ holds in his own right hand.

3. He was willing to learn and asks a religious question; that was good, though not enough. Hereby he condemned many who neither have knowledge nor are willing to be instructed, and those that are puffed up with their knowledge, so as they are above teaching, and who are so far from beginning religious discourse, that they will not hold it up when it is begun to their hand.

4. His question was about the great and main thing of religion, how to be saved. He started not the question about ceremonies and traditions as the Pharisees were wont to do, but about the substantials of practical godliness. That was good, but not enough. He looked beyond time and was concerned for how it might be with him in eternity. By this he condemned those that live like the beasts

grovelling on the ground, and are never considering what way they shall stand before the tribunal of God; and those who will propose any question than what way they shall be saved; who in all their religious questions are sure to abide about the out-skirts of religion and never touch the vitals of it.

5. He was a man of a blameless life outwardly, that had studied to keep the law of God so far as he understood it, and that from his youth. This was good, but not enough; more than Paul's religion before his conversion, which yet condemns many who make no conscience of living according to the very letter of the law of God.

Finally, Add to all this, he was a young man, Matth. 19:20. A ruler and a rich man; yet neither his youth, honour, nor riches, diverted him from these things. There are but few like him in our day, few concerned about their eternal state, while in the flower of youth; especially if they be honourable and rich.—Many of the higher ranks among us, especially of the younger sort, reject religion utterly, and live as if their birth, honour, and riches, gave them a dispensation to be vile. It is like that Christ looked upon him the rather, that there were but few of his kind, that had any appearances of good in them. "Have any of the rulers believed on him?"

I shall now, secondly, shew why Christ loved him on these accounts. The reason was, because these things were the good gifts of God, though not grace, they shewed in so far a respect to the law. They came from God, James 1:17. and he cannot but love what comes out of his own hand, for nothing comes from him but what is good. If God should withdraw from us all that is his, there would be nothing left us but sin, which is the only thing in which there is no good, and that came not from God. Now a jewel is still precious though in a dunghill.

Inference 1. How much more will the Lord love them who are true Christians, not only outwardly, but inwardly. Does he love those external acts of moral discipline, how much more the spiritual man and his graces? Does he discern and love those things that are excellent in natural men, how much more real grace in renewed men, though mixed with corruption.

Again, Learn to love the good gifts of God in whomsoever they appear, and stand not to commend what good is discernable in any person, whatever evil be with it. It is an evil eye that can fix on nothing but men's sores and faults.

Let this commend morality and the external duties of morality to you. Though they are not the whole, they are a part of religion. And though they will not get an eternal reward, yet God usually gives them a temporal one. They are of use to preserve external order in society, and so far contribute to the honour of God and his law.

III. I come to the main thing in the text, our Lord's answer, in which we have two things. 1. A defect alleged against him. One thing thou lackest. 2. A discovery of that defect, namely, his worldliness. Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor.—Here he touches his idol of jealousy, and brings forth the lurking venom of his heart. One thing thou lackest. It does not import, that he had no more wants but one. But, 1. That this was one thing that stood betwixt him and eternal life; and 2. That this one thing marred all his other things.

Doctrine I. Persons may go far in the way of religion, and yet have one thing that effectually stands between heaven and them. Here I shall,

I. Confirm the doctrine.

II. Shew whence it is that one thing should still be lacking in many who come a great length in religion.

I. I am to confirm the doctrine.

1. It appears from scripture instances, where we find persons going a great length, yet one thing mainly their ruin. Herod did many things, but stuck at his lust, would not, could not part with Herodias. That was a step in the way to heaven, that he could never ascend. Judas's covetousness; Demas's snare was the present world.

2. It is plain hypocrites may go far in religion, and may attain a great height in mortification, such as it is, yet it is no less plain there is still some one lust or other where they stop. For an universal hatred of, and resistance to sin, is a mark of sincerity, Psalm 119:6. And their feigned repentance should be true, were there not some sweet morsel still reserved.

3. The godly themselves will readily be found to have one thing that is hardest to subdue and that gives them the greatest trouble, though the power of it be broken. There is a weak side, a sin that most easily besets them. David makes his victory over it a mark of sincerity. "I was also, says he, upright before him; and I kept myself from mine iniquity." If this be so in the green tree, how must it be in the dry.

4. There are some sins, that like Saul among the people, are head and shoulders above the rest. Our Lord calls these, right eyes and right hands. Some sins are like the nails and hairs in the body, which can be taken off without pain. No wonder that some people shake off these; but for sins which the corrupt heart cannot want, more than the body can want the eye or the hand; here is the difficulty, and there is the ruin of many souls. Such are like those who have a male in their flock, but will not part with it for God, but vow a corrupt

thing which they can more easily spare. For further confirmation I shall instance in some particulars.

1. Persons may have many exercises about their case and yet never attain sufficient humiliation, the want of this stands in the way of many to keep them out of heaven; they want root and soon wither away. This is the great spring of hypocrisy and of apostacy. The wound is given but it is not deep enough, hence it is healed again ere ever the corruption be expelled, as in Pharaoh; the ground of the heart is not ploughed up, though the surface be broken, hence sowing among thorns. It strikes not at the root of sin, the sin of our nature, hence it retains its vigour. And this is the cause why all falls together.

2. They may have many changes to the better, yet lack the great saving change, as Judas, the stony and the thorny ground hearers. Persons may be cast into several moulds, yet never into that of regeneration.—Many new things may be about persons while they lack one thing, the new nature. This will effectually bar them out of heaven. New affections may be where the old stony heart remains. A new life where the old nature is still. And what serves all these changes, while that one thing is lacking. "For except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

3. People may do many things in religion, who yet stick at some one thing that they can never do. There are some duties to which men's nature is most opposite, and this produces a difficulty which it is impossible to get over without saving grace. So that these are still the exceptions in the soul's closing with Christ, the right eyes with which they cannot part. Such was the contempt of the world to this man. God points at that in particular, and that by all things they cannot comply with.

4. People may bear many things and yet there may be one thing which they cannot bear by any means.—Even like a person that hath a sore in his body, he can bear a touch any where but in that place. The world is the idol of some people, they can bear any thing but poverty; credit is that of others, any thing but what injures it. Some one thing or another they set their hearts upon, and they can bear any thing but the want of that. God wreathes that yoke about their necks, but they like unruly beasts struggle in the bond and rage as a wild bull in the net. We now proceed,

II. To shew whence it is that one thing should still be lacking in many who come a great length in religion.

1. Because the power of sin is not broken in them, but it still lives and reigns whatever progress they make in religion. Hence it must and will undoubtedly exert itself one way or another. As where a stream is banked up, but the fountain not stopped up, the water will always break out at one place or another, it must have a vent. So here, lust is powerful and if the power of it be not broken, it will domineer and keep the soul in subjection one way or another.

2. Because it is never complete in them, and where it ceases they will always lack one thing. In the truly godly the change is not perfect, but yet it is that which goes through all. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." All the members of the old man with head and heart are struck with a deadly blow though none of them are killed outright; but in the hypocrite it is not so. They may be wounded in many parts of the old man, but one at least remains entire, like a man whose heart is whole which secures his life, though otherwise in bad case.

3. Because their souls never come to take up their rest in God, which is done only by true faith. "For we which have believed do enter into rest." Man is a weak empty creature and must needs have something to rest in. By nature we have lost God, and they continue under that loss, hence they rest in the creatures, and when God has removed many lusts from them as their pillows on which they laid their head, there must still be one thing left, or they can have no rest at all.—Hence that one thing is something, on which their satisfaction which they neither have in God nor in other things, depends.

4. Because they have two parties to satisfy as double-minded men, conscience and corruption. The reformation attained to conscience, one thing is lacking to corruption. Conscience obliges to do many things, which corruption, reigning, will not let be done. There are duties to feed their hopes, lusts to feed their desires, and thus is the heart divided betwixt Christ and their lusts.

Use 1. Of information.

1. It informs us of the certainty of the mark of grace, universal obedience. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments."—A heart loosed from all idols and hating every false way, is real sincerity. The most refined hypocrisy leaves still one thing that is lacking, one lust, one idol with which the heart cannot part; some lust from which the hypocrite was never weaned and which was never made bitter enough to him.

2. Many good duties and great performances in religion will be lost as to eternal life, 2 John, 8. O it is sad to think how men go many a difficult step in the way of religion and get over them, and yet stick at last in one step and never come to the journey's end.—This brings a sad disappointment, as if a man should plough and sow with others,

but when reaping time comes, he has nothing, as the foolish virgins lacked oil in their lamps.

3. See here the root of defection and apostacy from God, men's falling off from any life and vigour in religion which they have attained. How often is that verified, "your goodness is as the morning cloud and early dew, it passeth away." How is it confirmed in our experience! How flat and dead are many turned since the sacrament; how unlike to those that were witnesses to, and partakers of that work? Alas! where at best one thing is lacking, matters cannot long be in a prosperous state. For,

Where one thing is lacking Satan has still a sure hold; he is like Pharaoh in another case; if ought be left he knows people will come back again. One lust unmortified, not given up, will open the door to the rest, and make their latter end worse than their beginning, Matt. 12:44. He can sink the ship with one leak as well as an hundred.

Again, where one thing is lacking, there has been no real closing with Christ, and where there is no marriage, no wonder the soul doth not bring forth fruit unto God. The branch that unites not with the stock must needs wither, and one unmortified idol will draw away the soul from the Lord.

Where one thing is lacking, there wants but a temptation suited to that one thing, and then the soul is just where it was. And Satan will watch the opportunity to set fire to and blow up the house by the train that is left, especially after solemn engaging to Christ. There are four things I fear have done us an ill turn.

The world. Is there an eclipse come over you in respect of your soul's case, then look that the earth has not got in between God and you; Luke 8:14.—It is a busy time. I am afraid that Martha's business,

hath made Mary's part to be forgotten, and that people have looked so steadfastly upon the earth, that heaven is out of their sight. That is the handle with which the devil holds fast many souls. Reigning sloth hurts many, Eccles. 10:18. Many awaken for a while and begin to work, who in a little give over; sloth creeping on by degrees, which was never truly mortified, like weeds in the spring. Few have Caleb's spirit to follow the Lord fully. But they are at pains to get something, and when they have got it, they fold their hands and sleep, till poverty come upon them, as one that travelleth, and that is the one thing that ruins them.

Self-confidence injures many. Though all should deny thee, yet will not I, said Peter to his Master. When men cast off fear they are near a fall. The mountain is never nearer to being removed, than when persons are saying it standeth sure. A jealousy of ourselves, I fear is the one thing many of us lack, and that is our loss. The fixed stars appear to tremble most; and that Christian stands fastest, who is always afraid lest he fall and lose what he hath attained. When men view the duties of the covenant, and do not improve the grace of it, they will soon turn slack-handed in these duties.

Finally, An unstable mind and judgment is very hurtful. No wonder the tree wither, that is never fast at the root. This was the one thing that ruined the Galatians, for though they had received the Spirit by the hearing of faith, yet when Satan came in upon them, with that they quickly lost all the savoury impressions which they had of the hearing of faith. The wavering temper among us, I am confident, is no small hinderance in the way of the gospel's success. And as I bless God for what stability any of you have attained, so as for you that deserted the message which I had from God to you this day eight days, whether there were many of you or few, and joined yourselves to those, whose work it is to break down what we build up, and that

after that solemn reproof of, and lamentation over that practice, and other heart-breaking pieces of your contempt of the gospel, which was given on the fast-day, and after what you heard and saw on the sacrament day, I do, as the messenger of the Lord, in his name, rebuke you here as obstinate contemners of the message sent of God unto you, and protest as the messenger of God to you, that this rebuke stand before the Lord that sent me, till it be wiped out by repentance, and fleeing to the blood of Christ for pardon; so I leave it before him who confirms the word of his servants.

Use 2d. of Exhortation. I would exhort you, 1. To search and try whether or not there be one thing lacking in you.

2. That finding it out you will labour to get over it. But before I enter on this, I will propose,

Doctrine II. The one thing lacking that stands between a man and heaven may be hid from him and out of his view. This want was a thing this man was not dreaming of, till it was discovered to him by Christ. Now,

I. To confirm this point. Consider the lamentable delusion that some are under as to their state, whereby a man may be a hypocrite and not know himself to be such. "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness." See also Isaiah 44:20. Such was the case of Laodicea. One thing God knew they lacked but they knew it not, Rev. 3:17. How many bless themselves in their hearts whom the Lord curseth. The foolish virgins knew not that they lacked oil till it was too late to rectify the mistake; and the house on the sand was never thought to lack a sure foundation till the storm came.

2. If you consider the deceitfulness of the heart it will not be thought strange, for the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. The deceitful heart can draw a veil over the one thing lacking and entertain it in the house, while the master knows it not. Many evils lurk in the heart which men do not know, till by the special operation of the Spirit they be discovered unto them. How clear doth the sin of many appear to others, who yet cannot be convinced of it themselves; how much more may it be so in those sins which lie not open to the view of the world. Let us inquire,

II. Whence it is so. It may be hid on several occasions. As,

1. Seeing spiritual sins are most subtle, and are not known till the law in its spirituality be carried home on the soul, when that one thing is of a spiritual nature it may be lying hid. So it was with Paul, he discerned not the evil of his Pharisaical duties; for he was alive without the law. A man will easily discern when he performs or omits external duties; but it is very possible he may be leaning on duties, putting them in Christ's room, and yet not know the danger of it for want of spiritual light; nay, nor see those motions of cursed self.

2. That one thing may be taken for a great duty, and their greatest impediment in the way to heaven, may be looked on as their greatest furtherance to it. Alas! it is too, too incident to blinded man to value himself on that for which God undervalues him, Acts 26:9. Fearful are the effects of delusion, and dreadful are the heights to which it may go, so that Satan gets many kept in his dark prison of ignorance of Christ and of themselves with his iron fetters, which they take for God's golden chains. And thus glory in their shame, and look for salvation in that way that will ruin them.

3. That one thing often is in lawful things, and there it is hard to discover it. Many perish by lawful things. This was the ruin of the

young man in the text. It was lawful for him to have great possessions, but in them his snare lay. The world was his idol though he never saw it was so till Christ discovered it to him.—Things in themselves unlawful are quickly seen, the devil soon discovers himself by the cloven foot; but it is not so easy for people to discover their lying in a husband, wife, children, goods, or effects, but there it often lies, Luke 14:18–20.

4. That one thing may be negatives and omissions which are not so easily discerned as commissions.—Swearing may lie heavy on the man's conscience, while the bloody sin of unbelief sits as fast though unobserved; and yet it is that one thing that ruins the world of hearers of the gospel. There are sloth and carnal ease, what havock do they make among professors, but who sees them with that venom in them which gnaws out the bowels of the soul. On the contrary, they are hugged and they are sweet sins which people can keep with little noise, and in which they sleep and slip to hell at their own ease.

5. That one thing often goes under the name of an infirmity which though evil in itself, yet cannot keep one out of heaven. Thus it is veiled with false notions, and the venom of it hid from the eyes of men. The wise virgins slumbered, and the foolish virgins slept, thinking they were no worse than their fellows. Thus many a man deceives himself, while sin reigns in him, but he lives at ease, seeing every man hath infirmities and he hath his also. The truth is, no sin of a believer is a reigning sin, but a sin of infirmity, Rom. 6:14; neither can a sin of infirmity properly be ascribed to a natural man, seeing he is altogether without spiritual strength. The difference lies in these. 1. Reigning sin is committed with a whole bent of will. Infirmity has but a half will, there is another principle in the will against it, Rom. 7:19. The will, as regenerate, opposeth that to which the will, as unregenerate, carries the man; whereas there is no

opposition to reigning sin, but what flows only from an unenlightened conscience. 2. Sins of infirmity are great burdens to the soul, from which it wishes to be freed, and they carry the persons to a hatred of the root of sin, which they look upon as iron fetters, Rom. 7:24 whereas the heart is knit to sin while it reigns.

6. Self-love acts its part here, and so covers this fault, while it magnifies the good that is in men, and extenuates the evil, and is always ready to construe the best of a man's state, and keeps back the soul from a serious and impartial search of what may be lacking in it. —Thus men nourish their disease, and hug the viper in their bosoms that will gnaw out their bowels.

Lastly, There may be a judicial stroke in it, John 9:39. Men sometimes unkindly entertain the discoveries that God makes to them of what they lack, they shut their eyes at the light, and God strikes them blind; 2. Thess. 2:10, 11. Their hearts cleave to it, and therefore they desire not to see it in its ugly colours, they are for peace in it at any rate, and they get it, Isaiah 66:3, 4.

Use of Exhortation. 1. Let one and all of us search ourselves if there be any one thing lacking that stands between heaven and us. I would have you all going in search of this one thing.

Motive 1. Is there not need for it, when you say it may be where it is not observed. If this mortal disease may infect those who find no pain from it, does it not concern us all very nearly to search the innermost parts of our hearts with the candle of the Lord. The mortal enemy is amongst us, and may lie hid, up then and search.

2. If upon search you shall find that there is not one thing lacking, the comfort of the discovery will counterbalance the pains of the search. How comfortable a reflection had David, "I was, says he, also

upright before him, and kept myself from mine iniquity."—And he was a man intent on searching and being searched, Psalm 139:23, 24.

3. It cannot be mortified till it be discovered; and if it be not mortified, it will keep you out of heaven. Search out the poison then, lest it kill you; the one thing wanting, lest it conclude you under the loss of God's favour for ever.

Lastly, God will discover it, if you do not, either here or hereafter. It will not always be kept secret. God will lead out the idol of jealousy and set it before your eyes, whether you will or not, as in the text.

Now to help you in this search I shall lay down some things that may serve to point at the one thing lacking, which is most likely to stand between heaven and you. And because, though the godly do not totally lack any thing, yet they may have one thing which they are in greatest hazard of, and that they need particularly to set themselves against, as that which comparatively is the one thing lacking. I shall lay down such helps as may be serviceable to both.

1. Consider what it is that thou hast of all things least power to resist, that is certainly the weakest side, the one thing thou lackest which of all things else threatens thy ruin most. For all the reproaches, &c. cast upon Jesus and his disciples, we never heard of Judas making any resentment, till that was cast in his way that might feed his covetousness. Men may be as brass and iron with respect to many temptations; yet are weak as water with respect to one thing. Persons may find out a sore by examining the whole body.

2. Consider what way the natural bias of the heart turns. Persons will readily find something upon which their heart fixes most readily and quickly, such is the sin of their constitution, as lust, pride, passions, envy, covetousness. It was lust that gave David the greatest dash in

his way to heaven. Whatever this be, it will be found the sin that most easily besets us.

3. Consider what that is of which the heart keeps the most obstinate hold, and is most averse to part with it. That surely is the right eye, or the right hand. There is an idol of jealousy, which, if the man be denied, he says in effect as Micah, "Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more?" He can less digest the want of it than the want of communion with God.—Look then if there be any thing whereof when thou art deprived, all thy other comforts, all the promises, nay, God himself cannot satisfy thee, but thy contentment stands or falls according to that thing; that doubtless is the one thing lacking, without which the man cannot rest, as Ahab could not be satisfied without Naboth's vineyard.

4. Consider what that is which thy own conscience, and the finger of God in the preaching of the word does most frequently point at, and check thee for, that is likely to be one thing. It is in this case as when a man hath a sore finger, he finds it touched oftener than any other. Double calls then require double diligence for mortification.

5. Consider what it is thy thoughts run most upon, the idol of jealousy will readily take them up most.—And therefore think what it is that ordinarily has thy last thoughts at night, and thy first thoughts in the morning, which are due to God only; that is another god, before the Lord. This is the woful carcase, where it is the thoughts of the heart will be gathered together.

6. Consider for what it is that God most frequently corrects thee, and what conscience hangs most upon in time of affliction. God ordinarily writes his indignation upon the one thing, and levels his stroke particularly against it, and that with a witness, that the guilty conscience can interpret the stroke to be for that. Consider then what

that is, in respect of which thou art as a silly dove that still haunts the place where she has been robbed of her young, Hosea 7:11, 12. That which thou wilt still be handling, though thy fingers have been often burnt in reaching to it. Compare Hosea 14:3. "Ashur shall not save us, neither will we ride upon horses, nor say any more to the works of our hands, ye are our gods, for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

7. What it is in which thy will opposes most the will of God, in which thou hast greatest difficulty to say, the will of the Lord be done, which is the great obstacle in thy resignation to the will of God, Mark 10:21, 22. Is there one thing, that thou couldst part with thy will in all things but in it: that is the one thing lacking. Jonah discovered his weak side to be pride, and love of his credit, this way. And God crossed with him till he was brought fairly to yield it to the Lord. That same was Ahithophel's. God crossed with him, but he kept to the point till he died, desperately hanging himself, because he could not get his own will and his counsel was not taken.

8. Consider what that lust is, that like Joseph's sheaf all other lusts must bow to it. That is it which commands in chief, and is the lust upon the throne. There may be in men's hearts some one or other corruption that is like the great channel into which other lusts, as so many little brooks, disburden themselves. He to whom the world is the one thing needful, will sacrifice ease, luxury, and almost every thing to his favourite object, and will make stepping-stones of all other things to get at it. He who is setting up for self-righteousness will make many lusts fall a sacrifice to it, and build that lust with the spoil of others. For one lust may be contrary to another, and for the principal one all the rest are cut and carved as may best suit it.

9. Consider what is that which is the greatest hinderance of your duties towards God, that either keeps you back from them as the

world made Demas forsake God, or that mars them so that they are performed very heartlessly; that looks like to be the one thing, 1 Sam. 2:24–29. What lies on the heart as the one thing, will readily be found to leave the marks of it on the several duties men perform.

10. Consider what that is in which you can rest satisfied if you have it; though you have not God in it to rest in. There may be one thing the want whereof squeezes all the comfort and satisfaction out of other things to a man. This was the case with Haman. All his honours availed him nothing while he saw Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. Nothing can satisfy a proud man when he is in disgrace. But the enjoyment of their object though they have not God in it gives them rest. Thus the rich man said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Surely that is the idol. Thus we may all see what that one thing lacking totally or partially is with us.

I would exhort you to set yourselves against that one thing to get over it; and prove yourselves sincere by your victory over it. And to urge this, I shall propose,

Doctrine III. That the lack of that one thing will spoil all the other good things we have. One thing thou lackest which stands effectually between you and eternal life, and draws a black stroke through all those other things which you have.

I shall show you how that one thing lacking totally and not got over sincerely, though it cannot be got over perfectly till death, spoils all other things. It doth this two ways, by way of evidence, and by way of efficacy.

I. It spoils all by way of evidence. It will disprove all your evidences for heaven which you pretend to be enough, it will blot them out and

will be a contrary evidence that will prove all the rest false. There are these six sad conclusions, that one thing lacking will prove against you.

Conclusion 1. That you are yet in the black state of nature, not born again, not new creatures for all the other things you have attained. This conclusion is infallibly true, being grounded on express scripture. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." For the new creature from the time of its birth is perfect in parts, though not in degrees. The new man is furnished with all the integral parts, though none of them are come to their full growth. There is something lacking in every part of the new man, but no part altogether lacking. Compare 1 Thess. 3:10. with 2 Pet. 1:9. therefore they are not new creatures in whom one thing is lacking.

This conclusion draws deep. "For except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." If you be not born again you are not the sons of God, and if so, you have no right to the inheritance. See then how this one thing will shut you out of heaven.

2. That you are but hypocrites and not sincere Christians for all the length you have come, Psal. 18:23 and 119:6. Since Christians are universal in their obedience, and will not entertain any one idol, but part with those that are dearest to them. She is an adulteress that takes another instead of her husband. None can sincerely close with Christ, but those that are content to part with all their idols for him, and all true Christians do so, Matth. 13:45, 46.

This goes deep, for if you are hypocrites what avails your religion before the Lord? You are in some sort in a worse case than the openly profane. You are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot; and hell, not heaven, will be your lodging place. See whither the one thing lacking

will carry you: for hypocrites shall have their portion in the place where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

3. That you do not so much as one duty right, or so as to serve the Lord acceptably in any one thing, Isa. 1:11, 15. The reason is, it is not out of love to God, nor from respect to his command that you do what you do; because if it were so, you would regard his authority in that one thing as well as in other things, and true love to God would not allow you to set any thing in his room, James 2:11.

This is a heavy conclusion, what reward can they look for but wrath, that do nothing pleasing in the sight of God, that make themselves and not God their principle and end?

4. That you have not the spirit of Christ in you, however elevated you may sometimes seem to be; and the reason is, because wherever the spirit of Christ dwells he brings forth the fruits of holiness, and these are in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.—Where then there is only some goodness, and not all goodness, as where one thing is lacking, the spirit is not there. And that draws deep, leaving you among sensualists, and cuts off all your pre-tensions to Christ, for if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if without Christ, then without the favour of God, without the covenant, without hope, Eph. 2:12. So does one thing lacking deprive of all.

5. That you are not truly mortified, but under the reigning power of sin; the reason is plain, because your right eye sins are yet untouched. True mortification is universal. While one member is alive the body is not dead. Death takes the life out of every part and so doth true mortification. While one lust is on the throne, Christ is not there. Sin can keep its dominion by one lust as well as by many.

This is a sad conclusion. It makes you none of Christ's, leaves you under the rigour of the law of works, and leaves you no appeal to grace, and binds you over wholly to hell fire, Matth. 5:29; and so far by the saving of one thing, thou eternally lovest all.

5. That you are despisers of the whole law of God and of the whole yoke of Christ, James 2:10, 11. As the breaking of one link breaks the whole chain. The authority of God is stamped upon all his commandments, and he that despiseth it in one despiseth it in all.

This draws deep, showing that you have no kindly respect to any of his laws, and so that they are not written in your hearts, consequently that he is not your God, and therefore you are not his people. How dreadful must it be to entertain that which blots out your name from amongst the people of God.

II. It mars or spoils all by way of efficacy. As we say of the want of original righteousness, so of this, it is not a pure and idle want, but an active want, that has a most malignant influence, as the want of sight makes the whole body full of darkness.

1. It spoils the acceptance of all your other duties before the Lord. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." This the prophet Haggai teacheth the Jews by a similitude taken from the ceremonial law, chap. 2:11–14. The many good things which we have, will not sanctify one thing lacking; but one thing lacking will pollute all our other good things. Saul made dreadful havock among the Amalekites, but the sparing of Agag, the bleating of the sheep, marred the acceptance of all. Will the putting away of many lovers while one is still retained satisfy a jealous husband? no more will the putting away of many lusts while one is retained satisfy a jealous God.

2. It quite mars our pretensions to true repentance and true holiness, for it is of the nature of these to be universal, so as if they be not, they are no more true repentance and holiness. Repentance is a turning from every idol as being from sin, because it is sin, so holiness has respect to all God's commandments. As a man cannot come to a city, unless he go the whole way; to stand at the gate keeps him out the same as if he had stopped at a greater distance. Thus goes the reformation of many.

3. It is an abiding root of universal apostacy. It is enough to keep the soul in Satan's grasp still, and to be in due time an engine for overturning all the fair fabric of their partial religion as in Judas and Demas. That house can never stand sure that lacks a foundation. Hence men of the greatest attainments have lost all, to which the one thing needful has still been the handle. "Therefore we ought to give the most earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

4. It still carries the soul off from God, and mars its resting in him alone as the chief good. The evil heart of unbelief leads to depart from the living God. As it is impossible for a man to grasp heaven and earth in his arms at once, or to fix his eyes on the heavens and earth at once; so the soul cannot fix the heart upon one idol, but that must take it off from the Lord. For no man can serve two masters. Hence if the soul would rest in the Lord, it must forego all others, Psal. 45:11.

Lastly, It will effectually mar salvation. One sin cleaved unto will ruin the soul as well as a thousand. It keeps the soul from Christ, and so leaves the man under the curse of the law, Gal. 3:10. One thing lacking will be a sufficient bar to hold men out of heaven. A right eye

spared will cost the whole body's being cast into hell fire, Matth. 5:29.

Use. Let me then renew the exhortation to you touching that one thing. Set yourselves particularly against it, to fill up that want, to get over that particular idol, to pluck out that right eye. Here is matter of exercise to you which may be near your hearts. You have heard motives to stir up to this duty. I shall only farther propose.

1. Is it not a sad matter to lose all for one thing, to lose all the good that is in you, and done by you and your souls too, and all for one thing? O what a cursed idol is that to which you will offer such a costly sacrifice? What man in his senses, would not rather pluck out an eye, than lose his life by the keeping of it. It is a dear bought enjoyment of an idol that is bought at such a rate.

2. Is it not sad to be so near heaven and yet miss it? Have you come all the way and only one step remains, and yet you will stand there? Why not let go that idol as well as the rest? Why so far and no farther? O will you fall from the very threshold of heaven? Are the children brought to the birth and must they die there?

3. What better will you be than those that have nothing? If a man perish, what better is he if he perish in a brook than in a sea. If you go to hell for one thing, what are you the better for going so far in the way to heaven. O sad, to have many items in religion all dashed out in one but, in the end.

Directions.—1. Labour in the first place to get the deep impressions of the evil of this one thing fixed on your spirits. That is the first wedge to be driven to separate your souls from it. Consider the evil of it, as contrary to the holy nature of God. Consider the evil that attends it as before explained. Till once the evil of sin be seen, the

heart will never be willing to part with it. And look to the Lord for sight in this particular and meditate upon it.

2. Set yourself against it in a way of believing. The law makes nothing perfect. We must go against it as David against Goliath, and fight this battle under the banner of Christ. "I can do all things, says Paul, through Christ which strengtheneth me." Now to do this, we must be emptied of ourselves, stripped of confidence in ourselves for victory in that point as in all others. There is reason for it, for if we are not able to turn away the face of the least, far less of the greatest of the devil's captains, 2 Cor. 3:5 and then we are in a fair way to get over it. "For his grace is sufficient for us, and his strength is made perfect in weakness." The more we see our own weakness, the stronger we are. We must by faith take hold on Christ for all: so particularly that one thing. And we must take himself for it, and so make a blessed exchange of that idol to Christ. The heart of man must needs have something to rest in, and it must always appear to be for something better that we make the change. Then Christ in his riches and glory must be put in the balance with the one thing, and when the soul sees the transcendent excellency of Christ, that will captivate the affections from the one thing to Christ, as the pearl of great price; for till the soul put Christ in the room of that one thing, the heart will never get over it.

We must take him in all his offices, for it in particular, and that first as a Prophet. When we are to grapple with that one thing, look to Christ as a prophet in that particular, giving yourself up to him to be taught and enlightened in the knowledge of the evil of it the way to be led over it. This is the way to bring a strengthening light into your soul against it. "He that followeth me, saith Jesus, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." See David's experience, Psal. 17:4. But when men will hold fast their sin, then their

habitation is in the midst of deceit, through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord.

As your Priest, as for all, so for that particular, were you to look to the merit of his blood, and that first for the pardon of it, as taking its guilt; and next for sanctification, as producing the removal of the power of sin, and of the Spirit for that end. For this blood cleanseth us from all sin. Thus the blood of Christ purgeth sin; as when his side was pierced, blood and water came out together; so when the soul receives a pierced Christ by faith, his blood operates in the soul both pardon and purity, Heb. 9:14. And as the fire that burned the incense, was brought from the altar of burnt offering, so the spirit that burns up corruptions flows from Christ sacrificed for us, in whom our old man was virtually crucified with him. Look to him also in his intercession. That is a part of what he intercedes for, victory to his people in their combats. He sits in heaven as Moses did on the top of the hill while they fight in the valley, Exod. 17:11 and we should combat our lusts with our eye on him, as at the Father's right hand, concerned for us in the combat.

Look to him also as a King, and your King for that in particular, and this do when first under the sense of your inability to overcome it, and with a desire to have it rooted out, you lay it before him, that he may exert his kingly power in subduing it; and forasmuch as he hath offered himself to subdue sin to all that will, accept of him as yours with an eye to that very thing, saying, Turn thou me and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. This is to put yourself under his shadow.—And next, when under the assaults you flee to him for protection, as the damsel attacked in the fields, crying for help from him.

Again, We must do all this, believing the promises suited to that case. The word of promise is excellent armour for victory over sin. The promise assures us of victory and so strengthens the battle. It brings in the bosom of it, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." It puts God's faithfulness and the believer's victory in one bottom, so that if any fail, both fail together. God has made the promise, Micah 7:19. He will subdue our iniquities, and it is our duty to put him in remembrance of it. Say not the promises belong to you, if you be not willing to part with all sin and take Christ. You may as well think to fight casting away your weapons, as to overcome sin not believing the promises. This is to set against it in the way of believing.

Direction 3. Join prayer with fasting upon that particular account. It is reasonable the remedy be proportioned to the disease. Pray much against it always. Let it be a chief matter of concern; and set some time apart by yourselves alone, to wrestle with God against that very thing, and enter into resolutions against it in the strength of the Lord. The wall should surely be strongest where the water beats with the greatest violence.

Lastly, Keep a strict watch against it, beware of occasions to it, Rom. 13:14. This will starve and weaken it. Resist it in the first motions thereof. It is with sin as with a fire, the longer it burns, the stronger it grows; and as a water, the farther it runs, it becomes the larger. If we cannot quench a spark, how shall we quench a flame. Be resolute then, for it is possible to overcome it. Amen.

SERMON II

Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor. -
MARK 10:21. (Second clause.)

DOCTRINE I

GOD will readily meet people with a special trial in the one thing lacking. They will likely be struck on the sore heel, and get strokes there, where they are least able to endure them.

I shall first show how this is done, and then give reasons for the doctrine.

I. I am to show how this is done. The Lord has many ways of doing it.

1. Sometimes in the fury of his jealousy, he removes the idol of jealousy out of the way. Men set their hearts on some things in preference to others, and God directs his hand against these things in a special manner. He takes from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters. They lay themselves down to rest in something besides God, and he draws the pillow from under their head. There is not a readier way to make people quit of a thing, than to make an idol of it.

2. Sometimes by the reducing of a man to the necessity of quitting either that one thing, or his profession and pretension to Christ, as in the text. This touches a man to the quick. When Christ and the world go together, a man may follow both with ease, and get his good name among others, and opinion of himself, kept up; but when they part, he must betake himself to one of them only, and either lose that limb or lose the whole body, which is hard work go as it will. People are

readily brought into this in the time of a storm on the church: even as where there is a hole in a house the storm will seek in there, though it may escape notice in the summer.

A 3d way is, the wind is still blowing in a man's face with respect to that one thing, providence crossing him in it, and denying it to him, which makes a combat betwixt providence and the man's heart, the one pressing forward, the other driving back. So it was in Jonah's case. A man sets his heart on one thing above all things; and God denies him that one thing above all things. There is a crook in his lot, his heart cannot bend to it, and God will not make it straight; and let him do what he will it remains still crooked; for God will have the man's heart either bow to it or break, Eccles. 1:15. see Hosea 2:6, 7.

A 4th way is, God's making men's plague and punishment arise out of their sin, that one thing lacking, that they are most grievously wounded with the serpent they have hugged most. The Jews preferred Cæsar to Christ, and God made Cæsar their scourge. Many times God makes people's idols to be the great crosses they have in the world. Thus Isaac's fond love to Esau was punished, Gen. 25:28 compare chap. 26:35.—Whatever gets more of the heart than God gets, will readily turn upon the person himself with a stroke.

A 5th way is, by a flood of temptation beating on a man's weak side. That one thing may lie undiscerned while there is no temptation to draw it forth; but temptation will exhibit a man in his own colours, witness Judas and Demas. Whatever it be a man lacks, the storm of temptation will readily find it out. There will not want temptations suitable to the sin. So they get temptations of that sort, which of all they are the least able to resist. Let us now,

II. Give the reasons of the doctrine.

1. Hereby the Lord vindicates the glory of his omniscience, levelling the stroke against that which has the chief room in the heart, he thereby discovers a special eye on the idol of jealousy, and teacheth men that nothing can be so hid or smoothed over, but he will know it thoroughly. Of the church of Thyatira he says, "I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give to every one of you according to your works."

2. Because God hath a special hatred of that one thing, and that because it is a sin to which the heart cleaves most; and always the more the heart cleaves to any thing, the more is the Lord provoked. It is that which of all things takes up his room in the heart most; no wonder then a holy God leaves special marks of indignation upon it.

3. For the discovery of their state before the Lord. Hereby God discovers hypocrites, while these strokes on that one thing lacking makes the heart cleave more fast to it, and discovers that hold which it hath of the heart. This may be the mean whereby God discovers a person's own naughtiness to himself. And hereby the sincerity of others is discovered, while they forego that which otherwise they have least will to part with at God's command, Psal. 18:23. This makes them like Abraham who showed that he feared God by not withholding his only Son from him.

4. To wean their hearts from it, Hoses. 2:6, 7.—God refuseth to give men ease in their idol of jealousy that they may give up with it. He puts gall in the breast of the one thing, that the heart may be weaned from it. With the more ease one enjoys an idol, it grows the stronger; but the more strokes that are made on it, it is in the fairer way to be broken.

Use of information. 1. The way to remove any thing from us, or to make it uneasy to us is to make an idol of it. The fixing of the heart upon any thing inordinately, is that which makes it a mark to the arrows of God, Ezek. 24:25. So here, the world is his idol, and now he must part with it or God's favour.

2. Where there is one thing lacking, there is an open fountain of much misery. Where the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. What is said 1 Tim. 6:10. we may here apply; "The love of money is the root of all evil." Men by that one thing lay themselves open to sharp trials from God, as in the text, and to terrible temptations from the devil. While one thing is lacking, there is something for a holy God to aim his stroke particularly against; and something for Satan to fix his temptation where it will most surely take effect.

3. Then there is no lasting rest in the bosom of an idol. There will always be such a reckoning at length as Samson got. They will not rest very long there, but they will find thorns under their heads. Stolen waters may be sweet a while, but they will be bitterness in the end.

4. This may let you see the evil in that one thing lacking. It cannot but be singularly evil which he levels his stroke against. And such is that idol be what it will. It is that which is set up specially in God's room that gets the cream of the affections, and is the great hinderance between people and heaven.

5. Then where you find you are trysted with special trials, look that your sin lie not in that, wherein your affection lies. It will readily be found so. If the Lord in his providence cross thee in such a thing, look that the heart hath not been too much wedded to it. If you meet with many temptations in one particular, take heed that be not a very

weak side of yours, that you must either get made stronger, or you will lose all.

Use 2d. of Exhortation. 1. If there be any side in thee weaker than another, then expect a trial on that side.

2. When thou art meeting with trials in that way, join in with the hand of God against that one thing lacking. If you have discovered the one thing, you may likewise see how the Lord is trysting you with special trials in that point. When then God is at work against it, be you so too.

Motive 1. Not a trial you meet with in that way, but it is the voice of God to you to mortify it. If you find God has made a wall, as Hosea. 2:7. it is for that end that you may return. Why would he stop you or make your way uneasy, if he were not calling you to return.

2. You have the advantage of help towards the victory over it. The more bitter God makes it to you, it may be the easier to part with it.

3. If you continue it still, take heed that the vizor be not pulled off your face by a temptation suited as in the text.

Lastly, The Lord in that case hath you upon your trials for eternity; and if you be right metal you will not perish in the furnace: you will stand by resting on God, whatever he take from you. You will rather quit the one thing than Christ.

Doctrine II.—The world is the one thing that effectually stands between many professors and heaven.—Here I shall,

I. Show what of the world it is that stands between many professors and heaven.

II. How the world effectually stands betwixt men and heaven.

III. How this comes to be the one thing, that commonly stands between professors and heaven. And then add some improvement. I am then,

I. To shew what of the world it is that stands between many professors and heaven. I shall not here speak of the god of the world, his immediate temptations; nor of the men of the world, their persecutions, oppressions, reproaches, ill example, and the like, all which have a dreadful influence; but confine myself to the things of the world, which are what the text aims at. Now this monstrous beast pushes men out of the way to heaven with two horns. These are,

1. The pleasures of the world. These are great impediments in the way to heaven. They are Satan's silken cords by which he draws many after him. There is first the pleasures of the eye, which the apostle John calls the lust of the eyes. By these doors the heart often breaks forth and unites itself to the world, and separates from God. Therefore Job made a covenant with his eyes, that they should not be panders to the lusts of his heart. The carnal heart is as a bird in a cage, whose door the eyes are, that scarcely can be sooner opened on objects agreeable to the carnal disposition, but as soon the heart flies out at them. A very gourd stole away the heart of Jonah. Two graceless sons of Eli were a great snare to him.

Add to these the pleasures of the flesh, which are more grossly sensual, arising chiefly from the senses of tasting and touching, 1 John 2:16. These often drown the soul in perdition. They are such as gluttony, drunkenness, and all sorts of sensuality in which the sensual appetite seeks its satisfaction. This induced Paul "to keep under his body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when he had preached to others, he himself should be a cast away."

These two ruined Adam and the professors of the old world. Love of pleasure and a form of godliness may meet in the same persons, even as certain fowls sometimes fly in the air, and sometimes swim in the water, 1 Tim. 3:4, 5.

2. The profits of the world. These are thorns that choke the word, Luke 8:14. These keep such a hold of the hearts of men that they let go their hold of Christ, Mark 10:22.

There is a snare in the having of the world. Hence Jesus said "that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." How many are ensnared with the much business they have, which they would not have if they had not so much of the world already.—"The abundance of the rich suffereth him not to sleep." How hard is it not to embrace and set the heart upon a smiling world?

There is a snare also in the want of the world.—Hence the wise man prays against poverty, "lest he should be poor and steal, and take the name of God in vain." By this snare the world drags men after it, the bait is before them and they follow it till they are caught with the hook. When the miserable world even tramples us under its feet, even then we are ready to adore it. When it flies from us we follow it. What wonder then if we love it, while it caresseth us. We proceed,

II. To show how the world effectually stands between men and heaven.

1. As it carries the heart away from God and sets it on itself, and thus the world is set in the room of God. Hence covetousness is called idolatry. Thus many worship the world's trinity, instead of Father, Son, and Spirit. And this is done especially three ways. When men esteem it more highly than they do God, his favour and communion with him, pursuing the world as their chief good; weighing their

happiness or misery according to their having or wanting the world. Their cry still is, who will shew us any good? This appears in their being more satisfied in the enjoyment of the world, than ever they were in the enjoyment of God, and more cast down at the loss of it, than at the loss of the Lord's countenance.

Again, When they love it more than God. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." How ardent are men's affections ordinarily to the creatures, beyond what they are to the Lord.—They are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Hence when God and the world stand in competition they will forsake him to gain the world. They will venture to buy a little of the world, at the rate of his displeasure.

The heart also is carried away from God, when men trust in the world more than in God. "Soul, says the rich man, thou hast goods laid up for many years, take thine ease," Mark 10:23, 24. From this we may see, that it is hard to have the world and not to trust in it. There is great need of grace to lift up the hearts of men who have full houses, to look to God for their daily bread. It is hard to have the world, and not to be secure because we have it: and we are ready to make gold our confidence. Hence, says Paul, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

2. As it diverts men's minds from heaven and eternal life, and thus carries them away from the chief thing, the great work of their salvation. "Martha, Martha, said Jesus, thou art careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful." Ah! how many are fixed to this earth, that they never get leave to look upward. God calls us to run, so as to obtain the prize, but Satan throws his golden balls

on every side, and while men are busy gathering them up, they lose the prize which God sets before them. Thus men trifle away precious time, and never open their eyes till death. They are busy, very busy doing nothing. The poor how to get, and the rich how to keep and manage; and while they are thus busied, their lusts appointed of God for death, make their escape, and their souls go for them.

3. The world stands between men and heaven, as it spoils their duties egregiously, makes them unacceptable to God, and unprofitable to themselves. The destructive influence of the world upon religious duties clearly appears in a variety of respects. Sometimes the world jostles out religious duties altogether, leaves no room for them, and makes people neglect them.—Thus we find, Luke 14:18. that the business and enjoyments of the world prevented those that were bidden from coming to the gospel feast. Care for the body leaves no time for care about the soul. Martha's business hinders Mary's choice. Men involve themselves so deeply that they cannot get time for the concerns of their souls. The care of their house, their farm, their work, their cattle, often goes between them and their spiritual duties. Hence these persons have prayers and family exercises of religion at night, because their work is over, but none in the morning, because their business, which they reckon of greater importance, will not allow it. But if it even leaves them time, it leaves them no heart for it. Accordingly we find, that the world very much indisposeth men for religious duties, even when they have time for them. A man that is ever uttering the world's cry, who will shew us any good, is very unfit to offer up the saint's prayer, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. As wet wood is unfit for the fire, so the man that is drowned in worldly pleasures, is unfit for the enjoyment of the pure pleasures of communion with God. And as the troubled water is unfit to receive the image of the sun, so the heart tossed with the cares of the world, is very unfit to lay the great

business of salvation to heart, and entertain communion with God in duties.

Again, The world makes the duties of these persons very lifeless when they come to them. They are run out of breath in pursuing the world eagerly before they come to them, hence nothing remains for God but a few faint wishes, for the cream and strength of their spirits is spent on other things. Though they shut their eyes, they see still a thousand vanities, and though the door is closed the thief is in the house still, that steals away the heart, in the very time that it leaves the tongue speaking to God. And readily something will be minded when they are on their knees that had escaped them before.

Finally, The world prevents men from looking after the success of their duties. They give in their petitions to the Lord, but they are so busy with other things, that they cannot wait to see what answer they get. And thus the world in the heart makes men perform their duties as a task, or as a by-hand work.

4. The world stands between men and heaven, as it is a great enemy to the efficacy of the word upon their hearts. It prevents the entrance of the word into the heart. It is rare for the riches of this world not to make men proof against the word. And oftentimes racking crosses in the world make the word tasteless to those that are under it. By their crosses the Israelites were filled with murmurings. They embitter a carnal spirit, that knows no comfort but what is drawn out of the creatures. And as the world often prevents the entrance of the word, so it also chokes it when it hath taken some hold of them. How many convictions, resolutions of amendment, and fair blossoms of reformation have been choked among these thorns? Hands and head full of the world again, have soon emptied the heart of all good motions, and brought persons back to their wonted security. The

bewitching world brings them back that have apparently been fairly set on the way to heaven. It remains,

III. To show how the world comes to be the one thing that commonly stands between professors and heaven.

I. Because there is a liberty allowed us to use the world, and therefore men think they cannot go wrong in this. Even religion enjoins us to be careful about it, and the march between lawful and unlawful is so small, and the hearts of men so deceitful, that they easily pass over into an excess. The world being a thing lawful in itself, the snare is not so easily seen as in other things which are in themselves absolutely forbidden. See the context.

2. Because this sin can be more easily covered than many others. It puts on a fair name of frugality and honest care about our business, and the venom of the heart's cleaving to the world does not appear to others, so that the man has something to defend his practice before men. And so gets his idol and his profession to keep to his ruin.

3. Because unsound professors never bring their hearts to rest in God, and yet bring them off the gross pollutions of the outward man, and therefore it follows of course that they rest in the world, and that is their great idol. They forsake the fountain, and therefore go to the streams. They forsake the most polluted streams, and therefore swim in those that are not so gross.

4. Because worldliness is opposite to many vices in which the profane part of the world is drowned. Such as idleness, prodigality, luxury and riot: and so while fools shun one rock they split upon another. While some men toss the world from them as a ball at their foot, they take it up as a burden on their back, while they ought only to use it as a staff in their hand, to help them on their journey to another world.

Use of Exhortation. 1. I would exhort you to search and try whether or not this be the one thing thou lackest, whether the world be your idol or not. You must know that the world may be the poor man's as well as the rich man's idol. The excessive love of the world may lodge in a poor man's breast, as well as a rich man's. They are not all rich of whom it is said, "whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, and who mind earthly things." You may gather the knowledge of this, from what has been said before in general, and more particularly. 1. Does your joy and sorrow, confidence and fear, depend on the success of worldly things? then surely it is your idol, the fountain of your joy, the spring of your sorrow, Luke 12:19. Grace will teach people to hang their joys and sorrows on another pillar, even on the God of their salvation. Hab. 3:17. Ah! how many have felt more joy in a good bargain, than in the covenant of grace; and more sorrow in some deadly loss, than in the loss of the favour of God; and are more afraid that things go wrong with them in the world, than with their souls.

2. When people have sense of worldly things, but no proportionable sense of spiritual things, that shows that they are more taken up with the world than with their souls, Matth. 13:22. It is sad to think how many have as much skill as their neighbours for the management of worldly things, but are completely stupid in the things of God.

3. When the heart so cleaves to it, that it is the person's element, so that in the very duties of religion, the heart is going out after the world, Ezek. 33:31. and the time spent in these duties is wearisome, ever saying in their hearts, "when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?"

4. What is it that thy heart is most bent to pursue? "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." If your treasure be above,

you will be most bent on securing that; if not, the world surely is thy idol, as that which lies nearest thy heart.

II. See then that this stand not betwixt heaven and you. Beware that be not the one thing lacking. Let us shake off this idol, and be denied to the world, if ever we would see heaven. I speak particularly to those that are professors.

Motive 1. The world has been the ruin of many eminent professors of religion, as Judas, Demas, and others. They followed religion, but with the world in their heart, hence by the weight of it, they fell at length, as stars from heaven. Oh! shall we not be afraid of the rocks upon which, we see that others have split before us. Look on it as a fearful root of apostacy, which while it sits fast, there is not one pin of all your religion sure. The devil has still a handle to catch you by and bring you back again, 1 Tim. 4:10.

2. That very thing appears to be the great cause of the decay of religion, that has seized upon the professors of this generation. It is manifest that there is a great decay of religion among professors, and alas the world has a great hand in it. I will tell you three differences between professors now and formerly. Formerly God was always pulling the pillow from under their head, and that kept them awake: now they have had long ease, and they are fallen asleep. Thus, even Noah went astray in a time of ease, Gen. 9:20, 21. In the time of persecution they were kept awake, and were concerned for the temple of God without and within them; but now our own houses go between us and our concern for it.

Formerly they cared less for the world and then they had more of it; and now they care more for the world and they have less of it. They were ready to quit with what they had for God, and he blessed what

they had; now they are like to part with God for the world, and he blasts it.

Formerly enemies took it from them, and they parted with it to them freely; now God is taking it from them, and their heart goes with it. And yet he is the same God that deals with them now, that dealt with them then. Oh! is not this sad, that we should grudge it to him whatever way he is pleased to call for it.

Brethren stir up yourselves; mind heaven more, and the world less, if ever you would be recovered. Out from among the stuff, if you have a mind for the kingdom.

3. The world is the cause of many scandalous out-breakings amongst professors, that expose religion to the scorn of a profane generation. Love of the world makes many break over the bounds of common honesty, if they can but get it secretly done. Hence so much injustice in men's dealings one with another, cheating and circumveining one another; and biting and devouring one another for trifles, lasting feuds and enmity betwixt professors: all flowing from this one thing lacking.

4. Do you not know better things to be taken up with? Is there not treasure in heaven to be sought after? The having of the world cannot make you happy, the want of it cannot make you miserable. But treasure in heaven will make you happy. Behold then on what you set your hearts. Let the profane world that know no better seek these things, but why should you who know better do so.

5. You will lose all your religion by it. 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. You will finally lose heaven itself, for this is the doctrine of the text.

SERMON III

Sell whatsoever thou hast. - MARK 10:21. (Second Clause.)

THE Papists will have this to be an evangelical counsel, not a command; that is a good work shown to us by Christ, but not commanded, only commended by him. But all the counsels of God are commands, Rev. 1:19, 20. and all perfection is commanded peremptorily, Matth. 5:48. And for the one before us, it is a plain command peremptorily obliging him to obedience. True, it is not an universal command, but personal and explanatory, to discover the worldliness of this covetous wretch; and God having called for this at his hands, he could no more possess them with a good conscience. Hence in general

Doctrine III. It is the duty of all to sit so loose to whatever they have in the world, as to be ready to part with it at the call of God. I will show,

I. When it is that people have a call from God to part with what they have. Here I remark,

1. That when in the holy providence of God, it comes to this, that people must either sin or suffer; when they must either part with their goods, or part with a good conscience, then God calls us to part with what we have. Hence we read, that in such times, "the saints took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves, that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance." At such

times all that is called for and kept back, is robbed from, and cursed by God. It is not long since the violence of persecutors brought professors to this strait, and we know not how soon it may again be the case. But we must give it to them, though it be not theirs; for it is no longer ours than we can keep it without sin. The blood of the soul is such watering to what we have, that we cannot expect that it will thrive after. The world is the garment, which like Joseph, we must leave behind us, when we cannot retain it without sin.

2. When needy objects present themselves to us, and we are in capacity to help them, then God calls us to part with it to them. Hence it is said, "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again." It is a dangerous thing to refuse God a loan. The poor have a right to a portion of our goods, by virtue of the command of God, who hath given them to us with this burden, as the duty which we owe to him of whom we hold, as Lord of the earth. This is a time in which we have many such calls, let us then take heed we keep not back what God is seeking from us. "For whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." Even then though people should be straitened themselves, yet let us remember how the deep poverty of the Macedonians, abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

3. When what people have hath been acquired unjustly; what is got unjustly is not ours in the sight of God, and therefore God calls us to part with it again. Zaccheus when converted said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Whatever is got unjustly is a moth among the rest, and brings a curse with it.—Surely they have a slippery hold of what they have, that possess other people's property as their own. Unjust dealing makes many persons'

property go away from them very suddenly. Have not our eyes seen the ill gotten goods of persecutors and others, that have enriched themselves with the spoils of the Lord's people, vanish away from among their hands by virtue of a secret curse. How often do estates go from hand to hand, being purchased so much by injustice and oppression, which they will not restore, and God makes them vomit it up again. "The wicked man hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly." In such a case then, both conscience and interest call for parting with it, Job 20:10.

4. When God by his providence is pulling it from us. Then it becomes us to say with Job, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Sometimes God lays comforts to our hands, sometimes he returns and calls for his own again; then we should be ready to part with them. This is a day, in which God has many on their trials this way, take heed that you behave under them. When God is pulling away with his hand, let not your hearts draw against him. Never cast out with God and heaven for this world's goods; never have a worse thought of him and his way, because he will have back his own again, but thank him for what he leaves you. Let us now,

II. Give the reasons of the doctrine.

1. Because it is the command of God. "Love not the world, saith he, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." He hath placed us in the world, and he commands us to sit loose to it. The authority of God should sway us. They sit too fast who are not ready to rise at his call.

2. Because he hath power to take from us whatsoever we have. He hath a right to it. It is his own, and may he not do with his own what he pleaseth?—Whatsoever he hath given us, he hath not denuded himself of the right to it. The use of it during his pleasure is ours, the property his. He is also able to take it from us, whether we will or not. Keep as fast a hold as you can, God can easily divide you and it. And indeed people are never more exposed to this, than when they hold very fast. Now what reason, what wisdom in not sitting loose to that to which God hath still a right, and is perfectly able to take whenever he pleaseth.

3. Because he hath given us the use of what we have on no other terms, but to part with it when he calls for it again. It is then a loan more properly than a gift. We are not to sit so loose to grace, for it is an irrevocable gift. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. But for the world we are tenants at will, and he may raise us at any time, nor did he ever set us down upon other terms. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." God hath stamped uncertainty upon all our enjoyments, which, when we look to them, tells us to keep a loose hold of them.

4. Because otherwise we put them in God's stead, and are therefore guilty of idolatry. Therefore it is said, If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For if there be any thing which we are not ready to part with at God's call, then there is something we love more than God, seeing we will rather displease him than part with it. How can we say we love him, when we will not part with what we have for his sake? Is there any thing to be laid in the balance with his favour? Is there any thing can compensate the loss of it? Any thing at the rate of which his frowns are purchased, that ought to be regarded.

5. Because there is nothing worthy of its room with us, after God has called for it from us. For it cannot be expected that God and it will lodge together after. "Neither will I be with you any more, said God to the Israelites, until you take away the accursed thing from among you." Whatever is thus kept will be fair to be a plague to you. Laying up often proves a plague, when God calls to laying out. "There is, says the wise man, a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. But those riches perish by evil travail." See the end of the rich man, Luke 16:19–23. Take heed that what you keep up, do not go a worse way and take away more with it, Mal. 3:8–10. God takes away all the good out of that which people cannot part with for him.

6. Because we must part with it sooner or later, and this is the most pleasant way of parting with it. It is true, people may be longer in parting with it. But they will never part with it so easily as that way. Ripe fruit falls easily from the tree, when the unripe must be violently plucked. When the heart is loosed from what we have, it is easy letting it away, by what it is when the heart holds by it, till it is forced to let it go.—Again, we can never part with it so honourably. The liberality of the Macedonians was a clear evidence of the grace of God bestowed upon them. No thanks to you when God takes it from you, whether you will or not. People must let go what they have when they are utterly unable to keep it any longer. Oh! how honourable is it to forsake the world at God's call, Song 4:8.

Use of Exhortation. O then sit loose to the world and whatsoever you have in it. Sell whatsoever you have in this respect. There is a twofold spiritual market spoken of in the scriptures. The first is that in which sinners are called to buy whatsoever they want. "I counsel thee, saith Jesus, to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame

of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see." This market is opened in the gospel, and God has stored it with whatsoever may suit our necessities. The second market is that in which sinners are to sell whatsoever they have.—This market is mentioned, Matth. 13:44–46. All that have a mind for heaven must trade in both these markets. It is the last of these of which I now speak, and invite you to trade in. I shall speak of five things respecting this market.

I. The opening of this market. This God himself hath done by open proclamation in his word, bearing two things.

1. That whosoever will bring whatsoever they have to this market and sell it, it shall be bought, and they shall get an upmaking price for it, a thousand times more than it is worth. See the text. See also Matth. 19:29. Matth. 6:19, 20. Whoso will thus lay out their treasures in earth for God, shall lay up treasures in heaven. Is not this an engaging market?

2. That all are obliged to bring whatsoever they have to it, and sell it there. So says the text. It is laid on us as a peremptory duty, thus to sell all, Song 4:8. 1 John 2:15. It is not left to our option whether we will do it or not, but enjoined with certification of God's highest displeasure if we do it not, Matth. 16:25, 26. And there are many who are set up as monuments of God's indignation, because they would not do it.

II. Who is the buyer? In the other market God is the seller, and sinners are the buyers: here God is the buyer, the sinner the seller. It is the Lord, the happy merchant resigns it, whomsoever he employs to receive it. God can employ the wind, water, fire, enemies, thieves, oppressors, devils, death, and the like, to receive it. But it is to himself that it goes. For he gave and he taketh away. It is he that

payeth the price, though not of debt, yet of grace, even treasures in heaven. "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is God that makes the offer for it, and strikes hands with the sinner for the up-making reward. Now who would refuse to part with all to him, who leaves it for the most part, and his blessing with it unto the sinner for a long time, when once it is given up to him, and they are ready to part with it. No sooner the soul enters home to Christ, but it lays all down at his feet, saying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do," and he leaves it with them till he see need to call for it. Again, yea, he never actually takes it from them, but when it is good for them to want it.—"For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." When Isaiah intimated to Hezekiah, the judgments that were to come upon his family and kingdom, the king said, "Good is the will of the Lord which thou hast spoken; he said, moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days." So indeed runs the promise. "All things shall work together for good to them that love God." All is for their good, for all things are theirs. And faith will make the soul say, He doth all things well. All is best that he doth.

III. Where is this market kept? This sale of all to God is made in the heart of the sinner. It is in the innermost parts of the soul that this solemn transaction passeth. When God begins to deal with a soul, he puts the soul out of its sinful rest, and then all that a man hath, is brought out and viewed in the heart. The Saviour comes with his gold tried in the fire, and offers the exchange, and the soul seeing the emptiness of whatsoever it hath, sells, renounces, and gives over all to the Lord, and consents to the blessed offer. And so necessary is this, that if it were most solemnly made by the tongue, or at a communion table, if it be not done in the heart, it is no bargain. But however secretly it is managed, there are two witnesses to it. These are 1st, The man's own spirit who knoweth the things of a man. "O

my soul, says David, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord." This is as a thousand witnesses, and can often condescend on time and place, where this solemn bargain was made. The 2d, Is the Spirit of God, who is a joint witness with our spirit. "For the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." He likewise seals the blessed bargain, as the privy seal of heaven. "For we are sealed with that holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." Thus the bargain is secretly ratified. And in the sacraments it is publicly sealed, both on God's part and the sinner's part. In these the sinner renounceth the devil, the world, and the flesh, and openly declares his willingness to part with all for Christ.

IV. What are these things we must sell in this market. It is whatsoever we have in this world. We must sit so loose to it as to be ready to part with it whenever God calls for them at our hands. There must be nothing but what we thus sell in affection. Particularly, 1st. Our nearest relations. "If any man, saith Christ, come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." True, we are to love them, and that as ourselves, yet not as our God, and therefore we must be ready to part with them at his call. It was the commendation of Levi, that in the cause of God, he regarded none of these, Deut. 33:9. If thou be a true Christian, if God should take away husband, wife, children, and other relatives from thee, it would be but the delivering up of what thou didst solemnly part with to him, when you closed with Christ. O what fast holds do we keep of these things! How unready to part with them! How ready to quarrel with the Lord upon these things! but consider our Lord's words, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me."

2. Our goods and possessions be they great or small, lest we be like him of whom the text speaks, ver. 22. We must part with all to the Lord, houses, and lands, and goods, and be ready to part with them at a call, and lay them all down at the Lord's feet that he may dispose of them as he will. Though our idols were of gold, they must be sold off as thick clay that can do nothing but lade us, when God calls for them. For no man can serve two masters. In the day you take God for your Lord, you must renounce mammon's Lordship.

3. Our worldly pleasures and satisfactions. These also must be laid down at the Lord's feet; and we content to be without them, as well as with them, and never to launch so far, but when God calls we be ready to come ashore. If God shall please to deny us even our lawful desires, mingle our drink with gall and make us of those that never eat with pleasure, we must be ready to give up with what he sees not meet to let us keep.

4. Our credit and esteem is in the world. This is a great mercy in itself. For a good name is better than precious ointment. But it is oftentimes a great idol, so that the credit of many goes between God and them. But we must lay it at the Lord's feet among other things. There are few that have much of it but they suffer an eclipse of it some time or other. God even sends for it, and sometimes to be a stepping-stone to his glory. We should not refuse it to him, but be content to follow him through ill as well as good report. They have not made this sale that are not content to part with it at his call, and even lie down among the pots till he himself bring them out again.

5. Our liberty and ease. "I am ready, said Paul, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." The flesh cries, man spare thyself; but the Spirit offers the flesh to the Lord, that he may dispose of it as he will. It is a mercy to have liberty

and ease, but we must be ready to part with them if we should never get an easy hour, but be hunted as partridges, till we get to heaven. He that loves his liberty so as not to part with it at God's call is yet the devil's bond slave, and has not been at this market.

Lastly, Our very life must be brought hither and sold. For unless a man hate his own life also, saith Jesus, he cannot be my disciple. You must give your bodies to the Lord, not only for service, but for a sacrifice also if he requires them. And when you have made this bargain it is no dear purchase, Acts 20:24.—There are none that go to heaven, but are martyrs either in affection or action. Perhaps the Lord may have use for your strength, beauty, leg, or limb, and perhaps for your blood. You must not stand with him for any of these things, but make them his by resignation; and when he calls for his own let him have it with good-will. Most probably he will not seek your life, but in a natural way, but you must be ready so as to part with it, if he call for it. "I am ready, said Paul, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus."

V. In what this sale consists.

1. In the heart's renouncing its property in these things, Matth. 16:24. These things the heart of man naturally looks upon, and holds as its own, as suited to its corrupt state; and therefore its own by choice, Luke 12:19. Hence so many carnal my's, my corn, my cattle, &c. but not a word of my God among them all, Hos. 2:5. Now there must be a selling of them in affection. The heart must quit its firm hold of them, and so be loosed from them, the bonds of iniquity that bound the heart and the world together being broken. "If any man, said Jesus, come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

2. In the heart's resigning of these things unto the Lord, saying with Paul, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do. The soul must thus give up all unto the Lord, that he may do with them as with his own, what he pleaseth, 1 Sam. 3:18. 2 Sam. 15:25, 26. No soul closeth with Christ aright, who does not lay all its enjoyments, even life itself at his feet. These were the man's gods before, now they are laid on the altar for sacrifices to the true God, and the man is ready to surrender them all to him.

3. The heart's accepting of the treasure in heaven, for and instead of them, so says the text, thou shalt have treasure in heaven. God does not desire us, nor will the heart part with these but for something better, Matth. 13:44–46. Thus the heart riseth from off the earth and embraceth heaven. And the former my's are changed unto my Lord, and my God. But treasure in heaven is far off from them. How then can they accept of it? Answer, Many a good bargain is made, where there is not hand payment. But they get a present right to heaven and all the treasure.—All things are theirs, and they are Christ's. They are immediately heirs of glory. "For to as many as receive him, Jesus gives power to become the sons of God. And if children, heirs, then heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." They have then a right to all the weight of glory. They have also God's bond of payment, and what though he take a day, it will be punctually kept. All the promises are theirs. They get the earnest in hand. "After they believe, they are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." Thus as the spirit of the world goes out, the Spirit of the Lord comes in. Now this earnest is both part of the price, and a pledge of the rest. Yea, they get the chief, the best part of the treasure in hand, Matth. 13:45, 46. The one pearl of great price. Christ is theirs, who is God's unspeakable gift, he is the great leading and comprehensive one of all. Thus is that blessed bargain made.

VI. How is this sale to be managed. If you would manage it right,

1. You must sell wholesale. God will not bargain for parcels. The text is express. All or nothing.—God needs none of these things. It is your heart only that he is seeking; and he would buy up these things that your hearts may not be led away with them. Now the heart may go a whoring after one as well as after many; therefore if there be any one thing, which thou wouldst keep up, God is set to have that by all the rest; and if you will not give it to him, he will take it, and give you nothing for it but wrath.

2. You must not value your wares, nor think God in your debt when you resign these things to him. We can pay no proper price for heaven. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Is there any proportion betwixt what we have, and the weight of glory. Besides we do but give him his own in this case; and we are in his debt for grace to induce us to part with them. "But who am I, said David, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." This is no proper sale, but all is of grace. If you give up what you have with an opinion of merit, you will lose it and your reward also: it will dye your blood (though you should give it) as black as hell.

3. You must sell willingly, God loves a cheerful giver. If it be not done with the whole heart, it is not done at all to purpose. It is all one among men whether the seller be willing to part with his goods or not, if he but say the word it is enough. It is not so here.—This transaction is done in the heart; and by the heart. And if the heart do not give up with these things, though the hands deliver them up, you cannot look for the treasure in heaven.

4. You must do it in the view and in the faith of a treasure in heaven. If this man in the text had possessed the faith of this, he had not gone away sorrowful. God loves to be trusted. This was the thing which made the possessors part with their goods, and the martyrs with their lives. "They knew that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Yea, they did not accept deliverance from death, that they might obtain a better resurrection." If we had the faith of this, we would part with what we have more cheerfully than we do.

5. Absolutely and for ever without thoughts of claiming our possession again. It is not for a time we must make this bargain as many unfaithfully do at a communion, or some solemn time, and just return as they were, taking as firm a hold of the world as ever, 2 Peter 2:22. But the treasure in heaven must be an eternal covering of the eyes to you.

Lastly, presently. "To-day if you will hear his voice, then harden not your hearts." The things to be sold are now in your hand, you have it in your power to part with them. But perhaps this night they may be required at your hand; they may be taken from you, and then you will not have them to sell. We cannot promise you this market to-morrow.

Let me therefore now renew my exhortation to you, to sell all in this respect, to sit loose to the world, to renounce and resign it, to accept of Christ Jesus as your all in all. In this consists your loosing from the world. And endeavour through the whole of your life to sit loose to it, which, in consequence of that selling, lies in these three things to which I exhort you also.

1. Look on whatsoever you have as no more your own but the Lord's, which he may dispose of as seems good in his eyes. This follows on your having renounced and resigned them. You are not your own,

but bought with a price. Hence the children of God are said to look on themselves as pilgrims and strangers in the world. Their language is, "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." If you take me, says Christ, let these go their way. If you will have Christ to be yours, let all you have be his, and look on it as such.

2. Place so little dependence upon what you have, as that you may be able to stand without them, when they are called from you. "This I say, Brethren, the time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none. And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away." If you take the treasure in heaven instead of these things, it follows of course, that as he that sells his land, especially for more than its worth, can live without it on its price; so in the want of these things, you will rejoice in the Lord, and will joy in the God of your salvation. Why should a man's heart sink, when the thing sold is delivered, while he hath more than the worth instead of it. O it is a sad mark when a man falls, while any thing of the world is removed, as a house when its pillars are overturned.

3. Be ready always to part with them when God calls for them. If they be not yours, you are but stewards of that which is the Lord's, and why should he be refused what of his own he calls for? And what is that to you, or to any of us, whom he employs to receive it, or to whom he obliges you to give it up. You are in his debt for the use you have had of his so long. For God might have obliged you to deliver up all in the moment of sale. In the moment that you renounced the world and took Christ, he might have stripped you naked of all earthly enjoyments, and by virtue of your own voluntary resignation.

Again, there is no term for delivery condescended upon, but it is to be made on demand. Should we not rather wonder then, that God is so long in calling for his own, and that he leaves us the use of it so long, especially considering we so much abuse it. Surely this is not the manner of men. Therefore,

When God calls for any thing we have, we should part with it freely, and not grudgingly. O it is a sad matter that God must wring his own out of our hands; and that we should spoil the gift with the surly way of giving it. If the heart had not too fast a hold of it, we would part with it more freely, as a matter of bounty, and not of covetousness. We should also do it thankfully, we should not only barely submit, but submit thankfully, saying, good is the will of the Lord. There is matter of thankfulness, that we have had it so long in loan, and that ordinarily God takes not all his own way at once; but while life is left he leaves the best, For the life is more than meat, and the body than raiment. And if life itself be called for, we must even be ready to die for the name of the Lord Jesus. We should also be ready to acknowledge that we are not losers at his hand.—"We should with Paul, count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ; for whom we suffer the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that we may win Christ." In allusion to David's excessive sorrow for the death of Absalom, we may remark, that often the manner in which we part with what we have, says, we think that God is in the wrong to us.

Perhaps it may be objected that these things might do well enough in the parting with the world for the cause of Christ? but that is not our case, and so these things do not concern us. Answer. It may however come to be your case, and therefore you ought to sit loose to the world in view of it. It is true also that many go to heaven, that never suffer by persecutors for religion, but none go there but through

tribulation. Do you think that God never hath people on their trials, whether they love Christ, or the world best, but when enemies are fining, plundering, or hanging them, if you do, you are mistaken. See the text. Your daily crosses are trials of this nature; and let me say it, sometimes these prove a greater trial than the other.—Some have given what they had to enemies with better will, than to God taking it away immediately by his own hand. Again, the cause is still the same, for in private trials, our love to Christ and the world are still in competition, and whatever way God calls for it, we must part with it, for his sake.

Motives To press this duty of sitting loose to the world.

1. Consider the vanity of the world. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." This world is a heap of vanities. Men are carried away snatching at shadows.—All things in the world are so empty and uncertain, that no dependence can be placed upon them. There is an insufficiency, and an emptiness in all earthly things. They are greater in expectation, than in enjoyment.—A man shall as soon fill his hand with the wind, as his heart with the world, Prov. 23:5. These things are also uncertain. There is nothing constant here but inconstancy. The world is a wheel, in which that spoke that was now upmost, is next the lowest. Nothing is secure, our relations may be lost by death; and sometimes there is less satisfaction in the having of them, than it were so. How quickly do worldly goods go away, Matth. 6:19. Pleasure is attended with pain and is short lived. The most untainted reputation may die with the bite of a malicious tongue. Our life itself hangs on a thousand uncertainties.

2. You must part with all you have sooner or later. Death approaches, that will permit us to carry nothing away but a coffin and shroud. Let men hold as fast as they will they must part. It is wisdom then to sit

loose to that which we cannot keep, especially when we are not sure of retaining them one moment. It is bad preparation for death to be fixed to them.

3. Consider that sitting loose to them, is necessary preparation for suffering. We may be called to suffer. God hath told us, "that in the world we shall have tribulation," and he will have all that come to him to lay their account with it. Besides, it is very probable the things that concern us make haste. Things have a very bad aspect at this time. Our enemies are lifting up their heads. But above all that which may strike a damp into our hearts, is the sin of the land ripening for the sickle of vengeance. The gospel is despised; atheism, profanity, and irreligion, abound more and more. All flesh hath corrupted their ways. As for our great people generally they have burst the yoke.—Ministers and professors have had long ease and they have all gathered much mud. The gospel does generally so little good, that I believe there are not a few who could be content to welcome the cross, so as the gospel might have more influence on the hearts of themselves and their people. But O how will ye stand it, if not loose to the world. A carnal heavy heart, is a heavy weight on all good motions of the soul. If a storm blow, it will blow out the fire of some, and blow up the fire of others.

4. Consider that if ever you have engaged to Christ, then you give up the world in profession, when you were baptized, and you that sat down at the Lord's table you have solemnly renounced and resigned it.

Lastly, Consider that persons have the most unsure hold of that to which their hearts are most attached.—Jonah was exceeding glad for the gourd. You cannot take a surer way to make yourselves quit of any enjoyment, than to let it run away with your heart. They that sit

loosest to the world have the surest hold.—"Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."

Doctrine IV.—A heart loosed from the world, so as to be ready to part with whatsoever we have at God's call, is necessary to evidence our sincerity. This was the very thing by which our Saviour discovered the hypocrisy of the man in the text.

Reason 4. Because the soul cannot reasonably lay hold on Christ, but it must needs let the world go. The laying hold on Christ, necessarily infers our loosing our hold of the world, Luke 14:26. We may as soon grasp heaven and earth at once, as fix on Christ and not loose from the world.

2. Because it is impossible, that the love of God and the world can be both predominant in the heart. One of them must prevail above the other. If it be the love of God, then it will command the love of the world to give place, Heb. 11:25, 26. If it be the love of the world, then it leaves no love to God, because no predominant love. "For if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This proves the man a hypocrite. For whosoever will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God.

3. Because otherwise our obedience is not universal, there is some one thing lacking, that will bring shame on us at last, Psal. 119:6. Such cannot follow the Lord wheresoever he goes, but have their exceptions at his commandments, which discover their hypocrisy.

4. Because otherwise there is no universal resignation to the will of God, which is necessary to prove the sincerity of the heart, Acts 9:6. If this be wanting there is nothing done; there is no giving to the Lord what he chiefly seeks, namely that we may be all his. A certain

evidence, the work of grace was never carried through else we would have been a people of willingnesses. Psalm 110:3.

Use 1. Of Information. This writes death.

1. To all covetous wretches whose hearts are glued to the world, so as they cannot part with it at God's call, as in the text. That idol mammon hath many adorers, who set their affections on things on the earth; whose excessive love of the world overturns all their pretences to the love of God. These are they whom God abhorreth, and whom he excludeth from heaven, 1 Cor. 6:10 and whose end shall be destruction.

2. To those who can part with many things at God's call, yet have some one thing that the heart is fixed to, in which their will can never comply with the will of God to part with it, such was Ahithophel's reputation. God will have all or nothing. It is all one, whether the persons have many idols, or only one: if there be any thing he cannot part with for God, he is, and will be miserable.

3. To those who though they cannot part with what they have for God, they can part with at the devil's call, and give it out on their lusts to satisfy them.—How liberally will men bestow on their lusts, who look on all as lost that is given out for God and his service, like Nabal, 1 Sam. 25:36 and those described by the apostle James, chap. 4:3, 4.

5. To those who instead of parting with what they have, will part with God and a good conscience to gain something more of the world. Common honesty is failed with many, especially of the poorer sort, who giving themselves up to picking and stealing to the dishonour of God, and disgrace of the society to which they belong. Alas it is sad, that that should be all the effect of God's heavy hand on families.

These things are kept hid from the eyes of men, but there is a God that sees and will bring such persons to a dreadful account, 1 Cor. 6:9, 10. Zech. 5:3, 4.

Use 2. Of Exhortation. Evidence your sincerity by being ready to part with what you have at God's call. I told you before when God calls you to part with what you have. Now when any of these is your case God hath you on your trials. Accordingly I exhort you,

1. That whenever it is so, that you must either sin or suffer loss. Choose always the last. The greatest loss in the world is to be chosen rather than the least sin. A man should rather lose his life than tell a lie. Consider there is more evil in the least sin, than in the greatest suffering or loss. Sin is a sinful evil, the other but a penal evil. There is some good in the evil of punishment, the good of justice, there is none in sin. Losses come from the Lord, sin only from the devil. Sure that which comes from the devil, must be worse than what comes from God. Sin is the only object of God's hatred: if all other evils in the world should centre in a man, God could love him for all that; but if all other goods should meet in him, God would hate him for sin. There is more evil in sin, than there is goodness in all the angels of heaven; therefore when it entered it spoiled all their goodness, and made them devils, which could not have been, if the goodness in them had been greater than the evil of sin.

Again, If you intend to follow the footsteps of the flock you must take this way. As for the fearful, that fear suffering more than sin, their doom is, "to have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Daniel would rather be cast into the den of lions than sin. The primitive Christians chose loss and

poverty, yea, prisons and death rather than sin, Heb. 11:25, 26, 35. It is better to be God's prisoner, than the devil's freeman. Nay, they chose hell rather than sin. They whose experience hath given them a commentary on 2 Cor. 7:11. clearing, indignation, fear, vehement desire, zeal, revenge, will own it. It was a saying of Chrysostom, I thus think, and I will constantly declare, that it is more bitter to sin against Christ, than to suffer the torments of hell.

SERMON IV

And give to the poor. - MARK 10:21. (Second Clause.)

FROM these words taken in their strict connection with the preceding and following clauses of the verse, I would exhort you to make conscience of giving to the poor. This is a duty at all times, and the present is in a peculiar manner a hard time. Many are reduced to great want, and it is certainly God's call to us, in a special manner, now to put on bowels of mercy for that effect. Here I shall show,

First, How or in what manner God calls us to give to the poor, and,

Secondly, Bring forward motives to enforce this duty. I am then,

I. To show how or in what manner God calls us to give to the poor. We are to do it,

1. Under a sense of the command of God. "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." God asks it of us by the mouth of needy creatures, and it should be given as to him, who in that way calls for it. This is necessary to make it a Christian giving.

2. For his sake. Love to the Lord should be the source of it, and his glory the end of it. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the fruits of all thine increase." He gave us what we have, and it should be laid out for his sake. Hear our Lord's own words, and from them learn how highly he values this duty. "Whosoever, says he, shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Again, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

But it may be objected, that there are but few to whom we can give it as saints. Answer, It is a sad truth, most of the poor of the world are poor every way. But you see the rule in this case. It therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, them who are of the household of faith." Though poor are not God's saints, they are God's creatures; not true Christians, yet men of the same blood with ourselves, and so our neighbours, whom we are to love as ourselves. See Gen. 9:6.

3. Humbly without any opinion of merit or valuing ourselves upon our charity. "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." It is but God's own we return him, why should we think much of it. They that think to buy heaven with their works of charity, will find that they have sold it by their presumption.

4. Compassionately and tenderly. Hence it is called shewing mercy, because it should flow from a charitable and compassionate mind, pitying those that are in distress. The injunction is, "Put on therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." And thus it will be given without shameing the poor. Thus Boaz caused, "let some

handfuls fall on purpose for Ruth, and leave them that she may glean them, and said, reproach her not."

5. Seasonably, when there is most need. Unnecessary delays must be carefully avoided. The command is, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it." Say not to thy neighbour, "Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give; when thou hast by thee." A gift in season is a double gift. And much of God's goodness is sometimes seen in that.

6. Cheerfully, with real good will. The Lord loveth a cheerful giver. What is given with a grudge, is much lost before the Lord. Why should we that are but stewards of our Lord's goods, grudge to give out at his command.

But to this it may be objected that the poor are often unthankful. Answer, That is their sin, but let it not be your temptation. You are to give as unto the Lord, and look for your reward at his hand, not at the hands of those to whom it is given. "Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great; and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." We are then to seek God's honour, not ourselves in the matter.

7. Liberally, according to your ability; making it a matter of bounty. We must give as God hath prospered us. We cannot determine what, and how much is to be given particularly, but that must be determined by every person considering his own ability, and the need of the object. "Those to whom God hath given much, of them much is required." But though a man have not a farthing to give, he ought to give in affection, and whatever way it is in his power to help the poor he is bound to do it. Our own straits do not altogether excuse us, though they warrant us to give the less, as the widow's

mite was fully enough for her. Men are even bound to labour and work for that very end, that they may have to give to the poor, Ephes. 4:28. 2 Cor. 8:1–4. I shall now,

II. Bring forward some motives to enforce this duty.

1. We are not absolute masters, but stewards of what we have in the world. The world is God's household. To some he hath given the stewardship, others are to be fed by them, Luke 16:10, 12. we must give an account to him of our stewardship, even to him who could have put us in their case, and them in ours. The due consideration of this, would make us more easily part with a portion of what we have to the poor.

2. It is a duty bound upon us with ties both divine and natural. The law of God, in the scriptures, requires it, 2 Cor. 9th and 13th chapters. Nature itself binds it on us, teaching us to do to others, what we would others should do to us, if we were in their case. It is not only charity, but humanity itself that commands us to supply the necessities of the poor. And therefore unless we divest ourselves of humanity we must attend to this duty.

3. Consider the evil of shutting up our bowels from the poor. It is a sin of a deep dye. It is horrid ingratitude to God. He hath given unto us so much, and yet we will not part with a portion of it back again to himself when he calls for it. It is Christ himself that asks alms of us by the mouth of the poor, Matth. 25:40, 45. Now, if Jesus Christ came to us personally, what a dreadful thing would it be to deny him.

It is perfidiousness to God, and unfaithfulness in the charge which he hath committed to us. It is as if a steward should turn all to his own use, which the master hath entrusted to him for the maintenance of the family. It is even a kind of theft, and that of the worst sort,

robbing the poor of what God has made their due. This God will punish, though the laws of men do not.

It is a decree of murder, 1 John 3:15, 17. For as the fire may be put out by withholding fuel, as well as by pouring water upon it, so a man's life may be taken away by denying to him the supports of life, as well as by doing violence to him.

4. Consider the evil that follows it. It is a disposition of soul most disadvantageous, attended with a train of miserable consequences. It brings a moth into what a man hath, and is the highway to poverty and want. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." For while men thus hold together, God in his anger scattereth what they have. It is also a very black mark against the soul in religion. It is inconsistent with the true love of God. "For whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him." Yea, it declares a person to be void of all religion, James 1:27. It is followed with most dreadful threatenings of the Lord's shewing no mercy to such. "They shall have judgment without mercy, that have shewed no mercy. Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard."

5. Consider the excellency of a charitable frame of spirit, ever ready to communicate to the poor. It is a blessed thing even by our Lord's own verdict, and he commends it as a thing more to be desired than received. It is more blessed, said he, to give than to receive. In this duty we do in a special manner put on the image and likeness of God, Luke 6:35, 36. Our Lord Jesus Christ when he was in the world, though he became poor, yet by his own example he recommended

the duty of giving to the poor. It is selected from among other works, and applauded in the day of judgment, Matth. 25.

6. Consider the advantages which attend it. God has bound many signal advantages to it by promise. It is the very way to secure a through-bearing. Give in this way what you have at God's call, and you shall be provided for. "He that giveth to the poor shall not lack; but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse." It is the best way to secure our means that are liable to so many accidents, Eccl. 11:1–3. Laying out for God is better security than laying up what God calls for, for thus it is put in a sure hand, who will be sure to pay it again, Prov. 19:17. It is the best way to be rich, as that way is pointed out by the Lord. If we thus honour God with our substance, our barns shall be filled with plenty, and our presses burst out with new wine. Solomon observes the accomplishment of this, for there is that scattereth, says he, and yet increaseth; and every age hath produced instances of this truth. You may see a cluster of benefits annexed to this duty, Psalm 40:1–5.

Lastly, To sum up all, God has promised mercy to those that are thus rightly qualified. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Therefore our Lord tells us how to improve the goods of this world for eternal life. "Make to yourselves, says he, friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."—See also 1 Tim. 6:17–19. I shall shut up this by recommending to your serious reading and meditation, two passages of holy writ, Deut. 15:7–11. Observe upon verse 7th, That the poor as well as the rich are to be treated as brethren; and a hand shut to the poor, is an evidence of a hard heart. Observe upon verse 8th, We should give bountifully. Verse 9th, It is a dreadful thing to have a poor person justly table a complaint before the Lord against us. Verse 10th, We must not give with a grudge, and what is

given in that way, will bring a blessing on what is behind. Verse 11th, The world shall never see the day in which men shall be able to serve God without cost and expences. See also, 2 Cor. 8th and 9th chapters.

I would now, in strict connection with the doctrine of the text, exhort you to give evidence of your sincerity by parting with, and restoring whatever ill-gotten goods any of you have. This reacheth to thieves, to oppressors, to cheaters, to unjust dealers of every description, and all that possess any thing of their neighbours' got unjustly. Restoration ought to be made of the thing itself taken away if possible, and if not, of the value of it. And restoration is to be made to the true owner if he can be found, Neh. 5:11, his heirs, or to whomsoever his goods belong, and failing these, to God, bestowing it to be employed to pious uses, or towards the poor, Numb. 5:7, 8. Luke 19:8. If the person be not able, I judge in that case confession should be made, if a great evil do not follow, and the party engaged to restore if ever he be able, and in the mean time he be ready to do whatsoever he can towards the compensation, as by service, Exod. 22:3.

But the retaining of ill-gotten goods is a continued theft, oppression, or cheat, and it is inconsistent with sincere repentance knowingly and willingly to keep still that which ever is the matter of our guilt, and the accursed thing among our stuff. To repent and yet still to enjoy the sin willingly is a contradiction. That man repents not of the wrong he has done to others, who, though he can, yet will not mend it, and is not disposed to give every one their own.

Lastly, I exhort you to give evidence of your sincerity, by parting willingly with what providence will not allow you to keep, but pulls out of your hands. Whatever satisfaction the Lord denies you in

worldly things, whatever losses you meet with, know this, God hath you on your trials, and the mere parting with them will not evidence your sincerity, for that you must do, whether you will or not: But you must do it freely.

Submissively, without murmuring against the Lord either in your hearts or words. So Aaron parted with his sons, He held his peace. Lament. 3:27, 28. God must have his own at his call, and we should not entertain a wrong thought of him for it.

We must do it contentedly and thankfully. If the Lord will take away any thing, we should be content to want it. Saying with David, "Behold here are we, let him do to us as seemeth good unto him: and let us learn in whatsoever state we are therewith to be content;" and to love him as well under the want, as the enjoyment of it.

Consider you are put to the trial. In that case the devil alleged that Job was a hypocrite; the trying point which he chose was losses and crosses in the world, Job 1:9–11. But Job proved himself sincere in that way. They that put in for the crown, must pass their trials for it under the cross. But of this afterwards.

SERMON V

And thou shalt have treasure in heaven. - MARK 10:21. (Second Clause.)

DOCTRINE I

A VIEW of the treasure in heaven is the best expedient to sink the value of the world in the hearts of men. This is the method our Lord

takes with this man. This is the argument by which he tries to separate his heart from the world.

Reason 1. Because the heart will always hold to the world, till it see something better to which it may cleave. The heart is an empty hungry thing that must have something to feed upon. It is needless to desire it to part with husks, unless you shew it bread enough which it may have, then it will throw away the husks with goodwill. Till God effectually overbid the world, it will always keep the man's heart.

2. Because the treasures in heaven infinitely transcend the world, and all that is in it; so that when they are both seen together, the world must, as the stars, disappear before the rising sun. A man may highly value a cottage in a wilderness, but place it in a city amidst splendid buildings, and he would be ashamed of it. Therefore Satan hinders men to look upward. The world is a contemptible heap of dust, to a man who views it from among the stars, Phil. 3:20, 21.

Not to insist, but make short work, I shall come to the application of this point. And the best use which I can make of it is to try this method with your hearts, to loose them from the world and make them heavenly. I might use many motives to urge you to bid an eternal farewell to the world, that you might take up your rest in God. I might open the gates of the bottomless pit, that the smoke thereof might blind your eyes, and the flames flash in your faces, to stop you in the pursuit of these miserable vanities. I might tell you,

1. That this miserable world is the devil's bait, with which he draws men in shoals down the stream, into the sea of God's wrath, Matth. 4:9. And which is most sad, he draws many with baits made of that, who yet never taste the bait. How many have been eternally ruined, pursuing some worldly thing which they could never reach; but lost both their souls and their pains; yea and before they could get at hell,

they have got a hell within them of tormenting passions, because God would not bow to their will, and give them what they would have had. I might also tell you,

2. The sweet of the world's cup will soon be exhausted, but you will never get to the bottom of the dregs of it, Luke 16:25. There is a now thou art tormented, that will never be over. There will be a long eternity to pay the expense of this foul feast, which the heart is making on the things of the world.

3. The fire of God's wrath will loose those firm holds of the world, that the fire of God's word cannot.—The things of the world run so fast away with the hearts of men, that they cannot hear God's voice calling them to return. The lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life hang so about men now, that they cannot get looked up to behold the beauty of Christ. But the fire of hell will burn them off, and leave them to lie down naked in the flames. Dives's table is drawn now. The rich man, Luke 12 has no more to do with his barns. When Judas went to his own place, he left the thirty pieces behind him.

4. The world and all you have in it, will be in flames ere long, and you will perish in the flames, if you escape not now in time. All these things are "reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Be not then so fond of that which will make an ill end. Haste and escape for your life, for there is a shower of fire abiding the world and all that take it for their portion.

But I would rather open heaven's door to you, to give you a view of the treasure there, according to our Lord's method in the text, in which he teaches other two things, namely,

Doctrine 2nd. Whosoever will sell whatsoever they have in the world for Christ, they shall suffer no loss, they shall have treasure in heaven.

Doctrine 3d. But they that will needs keep their hold of the world, may bid an eternal farewell to the treasure in heaven, for they have neither lot nor portion in it. These are forcible motives indeed! O that they might take with us. For the first of these. I have been telling you of a market to be held in your hearts, where you should sell to God whatsoever you have. I come this day in his name to make an offer for whatsoever you have, that the blessed bargain may be closed.—And I intreat you all to take it to you. Let not poor persons think themselves unconcerned, because they have nothing: if it were as far from your hearts as from your hands, you would be happy people. Let none think themselves unconcerned here as if this were not their temptation. I know there are some ready to say, with a whole heart, they care not for the world and need not the exhortation to part with it. I have no hope of prevailing with these people while of that mind.

1. I believe all in the world who are exercised unto godliness, will allow you to stand alone, and tell you to reign as kings without them. For in themselves they feel a body of death that cares so much for the world, that they have much to do to keep it down, and that they find no easy work with their various worldly lusts.

2. Let me ask you, how got you that heart of yours loosed from the world? I am sure it would abide a pull of the hand of Omnipotence ere it was done: have you felt this? "For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" But alas the victory of

many over the world, comes to them in a morning dream, and is itself but a dream.

3. How do you get free of the world's grasp? If this costs you hard struggling, you will not think you care not for it. If it costs you none, I will tell you the mystery of your great ease that way. "The strong man armed, still keeps the house with you."

4. What means the bleating of the sheep; and your other symptoms of love to the world. There is a blind generation that cannot see their own defilement, unless they be completely sunk in gross actions. They do not, they cannot view the secret outgoings of the heart after idols. What means the Buts in your desires of the world—but as much as to keep your credit—but as much as will procure an honest through-bearing and the like. Whether does your heart slip most easily away to the thoughts of God, or the world; and which of them is it easiest to keep at? Nay, does not the world many times jumble out your duty to God, or at least indispose you for it? Whether looks religion or the world likest your by-hand work. Nay, nay, lay your hands on your mouths, and cry unclean, unclean. To you is this word of salvation sent, that you may make the blessed exchange. Sell all to the Lord, and you shall be happy for ever. God is asking of you whatsoever you have, that you will just now part with it to him in affection, this moment take your heart from the creature to himself, and quit it freely in affection when he calls for it.

More particularly, that you will thus quit to him whatever you have in hand of the world, be it little or much, your goods and effects, relations, pleasures, comforts, and life itself. Lay all at his feet. Also, whatever you have in heart, the lust of the eyes, the lusts of the flesh, &c. Call in your desires now that are pursuing the world, and give them to Christ.—Leave the heart pursuit of created things. And you

shall have treasure in heaven. We are allowed to offer you this in his name. We are ambassadors for Christ, and have warrant to transact this bargain with you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you will honestly consent to it, and this moment give up with all, we declare the treasure in heaven shall be yours. And to make this offer take with you, I shall now proceed to lead your attention,

In the first place, To the nature of this treasure.—And then shall unfold to your view, its special and excellent properties. Let us then,

I. Consider the nature of this treasure in heaven.

1. It is a treasure in respect of variety and plenty. It is not one thing but many, that makes up a treasure. You are desired to part with many things, but God offers you more instead of them. What a poor scanty thing is this world. All that is in it is soon told. We have the inventory of it drawn to our hand, and it consists but of three things. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." But this treasure consists of all things. "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things." Neither heart nor eye can ever reach the bottom of it.—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man, to conceive the things which God hath laid up for them that love him." The apostle's arithmetic fails him to count this treasure, I will only tell you of four things which you will get in it.

1. The whole collection of the graces of the Spirit, each of them more precious than gold. These make a person all glorious within and without also; whereas the world's treasure goes but the half of the way, yea the least of the worst half too. "The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold." If ever your eyes be opened you would give ten thousand worlds for the least of these graces, however little valued now. Now whenever the soul goes to

Christ from the world, Christ just stamps his image on that soul. When they believe they are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.

2. The whole glorious collection of the privileges of the saints, peace, pardon, a right to heaven purchased by the blood of Christ. All is in the treasure. God will heap privileges upon you. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." Will you leave this cottage of the world, forget your father's house, and you shall be brought into the family above, and have a right to all the privileges of the members of the family.

3. The eternal weight of glory above. Even the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Put the world in a balance with it. O how little is it. All the angels in heaven through eternity shall never be able to count the weight of it.

Lastly, The whole Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. The Father shall be your Father, Christ yours, the Spirit yours. O the infinite fulness of God, which no creature is able to comprehend, in whom the soul shall find a treasure casting up something new through all eternity.

2. It is a treasure in respect of preciousness. We do not make treasures but of things of worth. O! are not the graces of the Spirit, the privileges of the saints, the weight of glory and the enjoyment of God precious indeed. What is the world but a heap of loss and dung, according to Paul's account of it. Solomon reckons up all that is in the world, and sets down the title in two great cyphers, Eccles. 1:2. Vanity in themselves. Vexation in the getting, keeping, using and losing of them. And is this the price of your labour, sweat and cares?

Are we so mad on loss; so unsatisfied and restless in pursuit of dung; so eager on vanity and so fond of vexation. O bewitched mortals, once look above, behold, a treasure well worth your pains, a treasure of precious things.

There is no refuse in this treasure, all in it is precious. The pleasures there are perfectly pure, free of all dregs, the riches there are durable; the glory there eternal, the very streets of the city are paved with pure gold. O then "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

This treasure was purchased with the precious blood of precious Christ, 1 Pet. 1:19. Silver and gold could never have bought it. O how precious must that be, that cost the blood of the Son of God, not a few drops, but a treasure of blood. He was wise, and would not pay more for it than was needful. He was just, and a Father, and would not put his son to needless expence, especially of blood.

This treasure is wrapt up in precious promises. In the holy scriptures are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises. What is it that makes them precious, but the precious treasures that are in them, Matt. 13:44, 46. O if you had the eye of faith to see into the promises, you would see them big with glory, you would see their happiness in words and syllables, eternity couched in a sentence, an eternal weight of glory wrapt in a word.

3. It is a treasure in respect of closeness. Treasures are not laid open to every one's view. This treasure is a hidden treasure, Matt. 24:44. It is hid to the most of the world, they never hear of it. It is hid to the unrenewed man, he cannot see it, no not when even the light of the gospel shines to make it visible. It is in a great measure hid to believers. For it doth not yet appear what we shall be. And even in

glory they will not see to the very end of it. But for the world its treasures are common to the worst, who often have the largest share of them. And no doubt you have a hundred times seen completely through them, that there is no satisfaction to be had in them.

Now this treasure is the Lord's offer to you, will you accept of it or not? Have you any heart for it? Say Amen to the bargain then, and go your ways home, and make a solemn resignation of all you have in heart or hand to the Lord, and take this for all, and it is yours. I am now,

II. To unfold to your view the special and excellent properties of this treasure.

1. It is a real treasure. Other treasures have but the name, not the thing of a treasure. Consider the treasure in heaven consists of the most certain realities. It is a substantial treasure. Earthly treasures are not so. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not. But the heavenly treasure is filled with substance. Hebrew. "That I may cause those which love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures." The expression is massy. Earthly treasures are not what they seem to be to their possessors. They are but gilded vanities that deceive the eyes. They make men but full and rich in a dream; "as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth, but he awaketh, and his soul is empty." The reputation which they have in the world they owe to men's imagination, not to themselves.

But the treasures of heaven are not only what they seem, but more than they appear to the possessors of them. They are so as spoken of in the gospel, 1 Cor. 2:9. Heaven will be a far greater surprize to the saints, than Solomon's glory was to the queen of Sheba. They are so as they appear in the glass of ordinances. The saints would not

exchange for ten thousand worlds what they thus behold, how much more when face to face, Psal. 4:6, 7. They seem great, but are greater.

Again, Earthly treasures are not in respect of stability. We may say of the treasures as of the man of the world. After all his shew "yet he passeth away, and, lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." They are bound to the possessors.—They are but sojourners with, not married to them, can leave them at any time. We may as easily lay up a treasure of water in a sieve, or treasure up moments of time which are not, ere they be numbered, as a real treasure of the world. For the world passeth away and the lusts thereof, Haggai 1:6. But the treasures in heaven are fixed and stable, through eternity; we may say they are. Eternal wrath is, and will be always, the wrath to come. So likewise are the treasures in heaven. This treasure is, that is, it is married to the man that once takes it by the hand. They will always be led to them. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Earthly treasures are not comparatively. They have no reality in comparison of treasure in heaven. I am is the name of the treasure in heaven, exclusive of all other, Exod. 3:14. All the treasures on earth have more of privation, than either matter or form. There is infinitely more of nothingness, and not-being than being in them. What they are may soon be told, but what they are not can never, till we search out the Almighty to perfection. Heap together all the gold of the universe, the most exquisite pleasures, highest honours, comfortable relations, and all that ever were, or shall be in the world; add to these all the angels in heaven, united to you as one flesh, the little substance that is in all would be overwhelmed with a heap of wants, as a filing of gold under a mountain. Such are the treasures of

heaven, that all else dwindles into nothing besides them, as a taper before the sun in his meridian splendour.

2. The treasure in heaven, is a treasure of things truly precious and excellent. Earthly treasures are not so. The men of the world acknowledge this, that a treasure is only of precious substantial things. We shall find, say they, all precious substance. But they miss their mark; the godly only obtain it. What is the world and all that is in it, but loss and dung, vanity and vexation. It is but a scheme or draught of a thing.—Greek, 1 Cor. 7:31. and that a passing scheme. Heaven only is the house in which we can dwell. The Spirit of God calls all Agrippa and Bernice's pomp but a fancy, Greek, Acts 25:23. And is a heap of loss, emptiness, and fancies, the treasure with which you are so much bewitched. The best name they get is good things; but mark, they are only the wicked's good things, Luke 16:25. Well may they call them their goods, for there is nothing good in them, about them, or waiting on them, but these things. Thy good things, said Abraham to the rich man, I indeed got good things, but not my good things, they were my comforts, not my treasure.

But the treasure in heaven is a treasure of precious things indeed. Jesus saith, "I will cause those that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures." It is a weight of glory. This world's glory is as light as a feather, soon blown away; but this is massy and weighty. If you seek for riches in it, there are durable riches and righteousness. For pleasures, then at God's right hand are pleasures for ever more. If you seek for gold, you will find it among your feet, were you at it; "For the street of the city is pure gold, as it were transparent glass." One jewel in that treasure is of more worth than all of the world, that ever hands could gather together; that ever hearts did, nay, or can conceive. "For wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared with it.

3. It is a treasure for the soul. Other treasures are but for the body, the worst part of the man. Treasuring them up is but laying clay to clay. But treasure in heaven is suitable to the nature of the soul. The soul is a spirit, and this treasure is spiritual containing "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."—The soul cannot feed on the things of the world, more than the body can do on ashes. He was a fool that thought his soul could take ease in the treasure, laid up in his barns, Luke 12:19. Debase not the high born soul, to match with things of the world. It is an unsuitable match in which there will be no comfort.—The soul is immortal, and the treasure in heaven is durable. "Riches and honour are with me, saith Jesus; yea, durable riches and righteousness." The world will not go a step with you beyond this present life, but the treasure in heaven will last for ever; as long as the soul lasts it will not waste; for it is an eternal weight of glory. The soul may go to it and take out of it eternally, it will never grow less.

Again, This treasure is suited not only to the nature, but also to the necessities of the soul, as meat is to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and rest to the weary.—The soul hath many dismal wants, which all the world cannot supply, but the treasure in heaven can. If your bodies be naked, you can procure cloth to cover them, but you cannot purchase a righteousness to cover the naked soul. But here is white raiment to clothe it. The fruits of the earth can feed your bodies, but your starving souls cannot be supported that way. But here is heavenly food for them. My flesh, saith Jesus, is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. Do you want a price for your redemption. Riches profit not in the day of death, and the fruit of the body cannot atone for the sin of the soul. But here is laid up the precious blood of Christ. Do you want a pardon? Here is a treasure of mercy. For your comfort, here are full breasts of consolation. Yea, here is complete happiness, and here are all things suited to the soul.

It is a satisfying treasure. I have all, says the apostle, and abound. All this world cannot satisfy a soul. The world can never fill the heart, but God can. You may as soon grasp your arms full of dreams, and hug your own shadow, as draw satisfaction out of the dry breasts of the world. Esau said to Jacob, I have enough, and Jacob said to him, Because God hath dealt graciously with me, I have enough. O! what a vast difference between these two enoughts. Nay, the whole world is a bed shorter than the soul can stretch itself upon. Had we Absalom's beauty, Samson's strength, Solomon's riches and wisdom, nay Adam's paradise with the forbidden tree, which still told him his happiness was not there, they would still leave our souls dissatisfied and longing for more, as pinched with want. But,

The treasures in heaven are satisfying in themselves. Even the treasures of grace here are so, where the light of assurance shines to let a man see how rich he is.—He values what he hath in hand and in hope more than ten thousand worlds. A good man shall be satisfied from himself. From himself as united to God, in opposition to the heart that backslides from God. They have a heaven within themselves. "For they know in themselves, that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

The treasures of glory are infinitely satisfactory. I shall be satisfied, says David, when I awake with thy likeness. The soul shall be made happy with the same happiness with which God himself is happy, which is the enjoyment of himself. Glorious with the same glory with which he is glorious. Satisfied from the same fountain from which he himself is satisfied, 2 Thess. 2:14. compared with Rev. 3:21.

As these treasures are satisfying in themselves, so they make worldly comforts satisfying. He that hath most of heaven, enjoys most of the earth, though others may possess more than he. "A little that a

righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked." These treasures make the saint's dish of green herbs go farther than the stalled ox of others, and put more pleasure in their cup. This treasure produces in the saints mean thoughts of the things of the world, Phil. 3:8. It is because men have such high thoughts of these things, that they cannot get enough of them. But people soon get enough of what they do not care much for. Nature is content with little, grace with less, but lusts, like the grave, never have enough.

They stamp a value upon the little which the saints have of worldly things, these are additions to the treasure. "All these things, saith Jesus, shall be added unto you; for our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of these things." That may be thankfully taken for an addition, which for the main could never satisfy. Hence the reason of the difference between the godly and the wicked in these things. This treasure makes up all the wants, and the man hath always what he needs that hath it. Who are they in the world that have most to spare, not the rich man that abounds with worldly goods, for he never hath more than he needs, nay, never so much. But the godly man, take from him all you can, he hath always enough behind.

5th and last place. The treasures are safe and sure, men may promise on the head of them for ever. They are safe and sure in themselves. Though none should offer violence to them, they will rust and corrupt of themselves. There is nothing on the earth but what has a principle of corruption in itself, and carries the seeds of death about it in its bosom. The aged world tends to a dissolution. Men are now of lower stature, less bones and strength than their forefathers, and of shorter lives. So is the strength of nature's womb decayed, that it seems she is waxing old, and weary of conceiving, Psalm 102:25, 26. So that treasures on earth are like summer fruit, that have a luscious sweetness, but they will not keep.

But the treasures in heaven are sure in themselves. Though gold will, grace will not rust. Though all the beauty in the world fades, as the leaves in harvest, yet the fields of glory are ever green. It is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. It is a crown of glory, that fadeth not away." Though this world wax old, the treasures in heaven do not, Luke 12:33. There is no principle of corruption in them. These riches never fail, they are durable; the weight of glory never grows less, it is eternal.

These treasures are not only safe and sure in themselves, but are so also to the owners. Though this world were so in itself, yet it is not so to us. Its riches are uncertain. But of heavenly treasures we can never be deprived. All earthly treasures may be taken from us. We may live and see ourselves stripped naked of all we have. A Cynic called riches the vomit of fortune; and if so, like the dog she often returns and takes it again. Job saw himself both rich and poor to a proverb in his day. They are liable to an insensible consumption, as by a moth, Matth. 6:19. Prov. 23:5. When men suffer their hearts to fly out at their eyes, like a ravenous bird upon them, they oft make themselves wings and fly away.

But the heavenly treasures cannot be taken from us, Luke 10:42. God doth but lend us the world, but makes an irrevocable gift of the treasure in heaven, Rom. 11:29. The devil took away by permission Job's worldly comforts and left him nothing, Job 2:7, 8. but he could not touch his treasure of grace, verse 9th.—Nor would he himself give it away, Job 27:5. Nor his treasure of glory, chap. 19:27–35. The waters of affliction may wash off the dust, but your land is still safe.

We ourselves will be taken from the treasures on earth. Death will part them and us. All we have here, can only do as servants in an inn, who, while we are there, wait on us, but go not away with us, but

remain to serve those that come after us. We must leave what we have, and always the more there is of it, the parting is the more heavy. A man may live more conveniently, but cannot die so easily in a palace as in a cottage. And when we leave them, we know not assuredly to whom they are to be left, whether to a wise man or a fool.

But though death takes the carnal man from, it carries the saint to, his treasure. The man whose treasure is in heaven, is his own heir. Remarkable is that word, Matth. 6:10. Lay up for yourselves. You may lay up on earth, but none can answer that question. Who shall reap the fruit of thy sweet care and toil? God made the Assyrian heir to the Philistines, Micah 1:15. But it is sure that the treasure in heaven is laid up for ourselves. He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever, with his treasure, even as in the world both the lusts and the lusters perish, Rev. 14:13.

Thus you see what a treasure it is which God offers you, if you will quit the world. Give over seeking your treasure on earth, and you will get treasure in heaven.

Objection. I am in no hazard of a treasure on earth. Answer. You are mistaken. You may have enough in heart though not in hand. The Spirit of God counts upon the former, and you must give up with it as well as the latter. What the heart dwells on, that is its possessions, and that you must part with.

And now are you for this blessed bargain or not? Hath the beauty of this treasure touched your hearts. If so, I have but two words of advice to you.

4. Make it your own by selling all, and buying the field where it is, Matth. 13:44. That is renouncing the world, and closing the gospel

bargain with Christ.

2. Dig for it, Prov. 2:4, 5. You were at pains and labour on the world's treasure. Will you not be at due pains about it. Man is a busy creature, he is always doing something. We call you not to more labour, but to other labours. The watch goes as fast when it goes wrong, as when right.

If you have no such heart as to part with the world for it, I declare to you, you shall have no part nor lot in it. This was our third doctrine. You shall as soon grasp heaven and earth at once, as get both. It is dear bought earth that is bought at the rate of the loss of heaven: thus death and life are set before you.

And now if there be any asking, how they may get their heart above the world, the answer from the doctrine is plain. Set the treasure in heaven in your view. This is the best way to sink the value of the world in your hearts.

SERMON VI

And come, take up the cross, and follow me. - MARK 10:21.
(Third Clause.)

YOU have heard what all that have a mind for heaven must throw away, namely, the world; what they shall get at the end to take up in its stead, the treasure in heaven. But in the mean time they must take up the cross. By this is meant all the troubles and afflictions with which the Lord is pleased to exercise his people in the world, so called in reference to the cross on which Christ suffered.

Doctrine.—All that have a mind for heaven, as they must lay down the world, so they must take up the cross.—Here I shall,

I. Shew why the Christian's troubles are called the cross.

II. What it is to take up the cross. Let us then,

I. Shew why the Christian's troubles are called the cross. The wicked's troubles are not a cross, but a curse; those of the godly are not curses, but crosses. This is a name of honour, a sweet cake in which the bitter pill should be pleasantly received. As the man himself, so his troubles get a new name, when he comes to Christ.

1. Because by them the Christian's state in the world, is made like Christ's while he was in it. "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." He met with the cross, and so must they, that they may be like him. If the head wore a cross, it were unbecoming the members to go without one. He was a man of sorrows, they must not be men of joys. Can the world that was a step-dame to him, be a natural mother to his?

2. Because the Christian's troubles go to the quick, as the cross did with Christ, in respect of which his former miseries were blunt. When God has a mind to let blood of the heart vein of a Christian by the lance of affliction, to cure him, he will make a deep wound. The troubles of the wicked often, but lightly, touch their sores, but when God rips his own people, he will go to the quick. God's killing arrows go deep enough into the heart of the wicked, but wounds for their cure, never. They want not their troubles. But says the Psalmist, "they are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men."

3. Because of the relation which they have to the cross of Christ. They are the cross set up again to Christ. In all their afflictions he was afflicted. They come very near him. He that toucheth you, saith he, toucheth the apple of his eye. The enemies set up the cross again for him in his members, after they had buried it with him, Acts 9:4. His members are on it now; "and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ; in their flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." This agrees to all their afflictions. O! is not the cross lovely, while he is on it with us.

Their troubles are Christ's cross to them as he has left it. Christ in person took up the cross, and when he took it up there was a curse in it. He took away the curse out of it, and then left it, and bids them take it up without it, for he hath extracted the venom out of it. Now the tree is left, but the curse on it is gone. The nails are left to his people, but the venom in which they were dipped is gone. Though bulls should compass you about, they now want the horns, wherewithal they pierced him. Though poverty, shame, and crosses of all sorts are laid before you, if you be Christ's, you have but the carcase of these things wanting the soul and life, which the threatening of the law breathed into them.

Again, Their afflictions grow out of the cross of Christ. That tree was watered with the blood of the Son of God, no wonder then that it be fruitful. All the fruits laid up for Christ's beloved, for time and eternity grow upon it. But perhaps you will not expect the Christian's bitter troubles among them, but mistake not. They must either be curses or blessings. If curses they are not crosses, Gal. 3:13. If blessings, where else will you find them. "For we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." They are the privileges of adoption, Heb. 12:7, 8. Benefits of the covenant, Psalm 89:31, 32.

The comforts of Christ's sheep, Psalm 23:4. Blessings which they thankfully acknowledge, Psalm 119:71. "therefore purchased by the blood of Christ, and promised to him in the covenant he made with the Father," Psalm 89:30. compare ver. 19–29. O how might we kiss our cross, looking thus on it. Farther to clear this, that we may learn not to be angry at our blessings. Consider, that grace grows on the cross of Christ as the root doubtless, but our cross is the branch on which it grows. "It is good for me, saith David, that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." See also Psalm 94:12, 13. Isa. 27:9. See what a cluster hangs on the cross, Rom. 5:3–5. Not a stone thrown at a child of God, but it is to him a precious stone. Every wind, however adverse it blows, speeds him to his harbour. Our cross also is the branch on which glory grows. "If we suffer we shall also reign with Christ. Our light afflictions which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

4. Because the Christian's cross is a cross indeed. But to whom? Not to his graces. Indeed troubles may be a cross to the hypocrite's seeming graces, on which they may breathe out their last, Matth. 13:6. His heap of chaff may bulk well till the wind rise, and his house on the sand may stand till the storms blow. Job's friends preached sound doctrine, though they erred in the application, chap. 4:4–6. Many a one's faith, patience, love, &c. are like Job's friends. In trouble they deal deceitfully as a brook. They are nothing, chap. 6:15–21.

But not one of the real graces ever yet died upon a cross. Nay, it is as cold water cast on the face of a fainting person, it is a comfort that revives them, not a cross to kill them. "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." The candle burns brightest in the dark, and the fire hottest in a frost. Many a wound ease and

prosperity have given to real grace, for the cure of which the cross hath been sent to them. But,

It is a cross to their corrupt will, that never goes right as long as it gets head. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." The flesh would soon wax wanton if it were not nailed to the cross. The bullock unaccustomed to the yoke of resignation must be tamed by the cross. And many a cross that unreasonable beast will take ere it be broken. The more that things go according to our will, it is the more fed, and the readier to kick against the Lord; but God in his providence crossing it, it is weakened, and made more pliable to the will of God. The soul becomes as a weaned child. It yields and returns to the Lord.

The cross is also a cross to the Christian's particular lusts, Hosea 2:6, 7. It will cross our hopes, and so check our pride, or draw away some earth from us that was drawing us away from God. When a lust is drawing away a Christian from God, he will send the cross as he did Abigail to meet David; the storm to meet Jonah when fleeing from the presence of the Lord. If we were not too much one with our lusts, our crosses would sit lighter upon us, seeing they cross nothing but our corruptions. We now proceed,

II. To shew what it is to take up the cross. It imports,

1. That we are to wait for our cross till God lay it down before us. We are not to make up, but take up our cross that is made to our hand. Hence it is called the cross of Christ, and in respect of the bearer his cross, Matth. 16:24, not that which he made to himself, but that which God made his. A man makes his cross when he goes out of his way to seek a cross. It should be brought to us, and laid down at our door. We are not called to go to it. If a man be diligent in his business, and yet poverty come on him, let him cheerfully take up

what God hath laid down to him; but if he be negligent, and thereby become poor, his cross is his sin, he can have little comfort in it, it is of his own making. Some say, we will not leave our kirks, stipends, and warm firesides, I pray we may be helped to take up that cross when God lays it down before us, and when it comes, to be able to answer that question satisfyingly, "Who hath required these things at your hand?" A cross of men's own making, may well feed their pride, it is not a fit mean for nourishing their graces, Colos. 2:18–21.

Again, A man makes his cross, when the cross has no existence but in his own foolish imagination. How often are people's minds made the devil's shop for making crosses to themselves, racking themselves with groundless suspicions and imaginations, and making mountains of mole-hills. Satan thus makes a forge of their mischievous tempers.

2. God will lay down the cross before every one that has a mind for heaven. In the world ye shall have tribulation, so that they shall have nothing to do but take it up.—He will lay it down before every one, to some of one sort, to others of another, Matth. 16:24. God had one Son without sin, but never a son without the cross. For what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not.

Question, But when does the Lord lay down the cross before us? Answer, When there is no lawful way to escape it, that is, when we must either suffer or sin, Heb. 10:35. When the devil desired our Saviour to cast himself down from a pinnacle of the temple, this was a cross of the devil's own making, because the stairs were at hand, and he had no lawful call to work a miracle. When God hath left no way to escape, the cross is bound on by the holy hand of providence.

3. We must notice the cross which the Lord lays down, otherwise we cannot take it up. It is a dreadful sign of a very desperate case when

men say, "They have stricken me, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." This is gross stupidity. Many are like a blind man, that receives blows, but never sees the hand from whence they come. God is braying them with want, poverty, losses, and crosses of many sorts, yet they never have power to look to the Lord's hand in these things, or once to smite on their thigh, and say, What have I done; shew why thou contendest with me, Jer. 5:3. They have many plagues of darkness upon earth, but never once inquire into the cause.

4. We must not tread on the cross, and step over it, but take it up; we are ready to have courage against God, though but little for him. That sullen manliness, and Roman courage with which some bear their crosses, is rather a despite against God, than a taking up of the cross. When heaven is our party, it is time to stoop, and not make our faces like flint, lest God be provoked to dash us in pieces.

5. We must not fall a fainting at the sight of it. The exhortation is, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord; nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." In this state we cannot take up the cross. O how ready are we to faint at the sight of the cross, and to say, my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord. To be sinking under discouragement by the cross is not the way to bear it; nay, it is next step to going out of God's way to avoid the cross, Heb. 12:12, 13.

6. We must not go about the cross when it lies from side to side in our way. Some people will shift the cross by going off that part of the way where it lies, in hopes to come into it again when they are past that place. But take heed, it is easy going off, but it is not so easy coming on the way of duty again. There are pits on every hand, quagmires of sin and sorrows also, in which you may stick so fast as never to get out again, 1 Tim. 6:9.

7. We must not stand still till it be rolled out of the way. To follow Christ in the summer of prosperity, and in the winter of adversity to forsake his company, till the weather clear again is a sign self-love is stronger than our love to Christ. Such persons are time-servers, and not servants to Christ. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Though a Red sea be before us, we must go forward, Exod. 14:15, 16.

8. We should take up no more than what God hath laid down, not what the devil and our own corruptions add to it. God laid down barrenness to Rachel, and she laid death on her cross, Gen. 30:1. How often do we hang weights of our own on the cross, and then complain we cannot lift it. We are for the most part in the dark about crosses, and then mole-hills appear mountains. But when the Lord clears the soul to let it see the naked cross, it appears much less. Paul's troubles were none of the least, but he sees them to be light and momentary. Lightness itself is swift as a hart, 2 Cor. 4:17.

4. We are to make no choice but take up even the hardest trials which God lays before us; as the cross was a most painful death. We must be ready not only to run with footmen, but contend with horses. "I am ready, said Paul, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Neither a choice of commands, nor crosses becomes a Christian. The shoulder must not refuse the hardest piece of service. We are apt to think that we could bear any trial but the one that God hath laid upon us, but this only discovers our own ignorance, and imperfect resignation.

10. We must take up the cross willingly. God can lay it on whether we will or not; but he will have us to take it up willingly, though not wilfully. "My brethren, says the apostle James, count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations." When you fall by the providence of

God, not when you cast yourselves into them. We must not be like the refractory bullock, that will not receive the yoke; but as the camel that falls down on his knees, till his master lay on his burden. So Eli, 1 Samuel 3:18. Acts 9:6. Lament. 3:30.

Lastly, We bear it cheerfully. We are not to take it up, to fall down with it, and sink under it. Believers took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. There are riches in the cross, and the believer will discern them. They will have respect unto the recompense of reward.— Goodness is in it, and he will see it, Isa. 39:8. It is no strange thing to the Christian, 1 Pet. 4:12, 13. There is strange satisfaction and sweetness in the cross to them that find them out. There is a sweetness in a man's seeing himself on his trials for heaven, standing candidate for glory; in passing these mountains where they see the marks of Christ's footsteps before them; in seeing how a good God crosses their corrupt inclinations, and prevents their folly; in seeing the thieves on the cross, and God starving their lusts so as they may not be ungovernable; and to see that paradise that is within this hedge of thorns.

In this way it must be borne till the Lord take it down. It is his work to take off the cross, ours to take it up. Let patience have her perfect work. It is sad to see persons when brought into afflictions, to be driven out of themselves, to be running away in a rage, with God's arrows sticking fast in them. In your patience possess your souls.

Inference 1. Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial. Nothing more unreasonable, and yet more common than to be surprised with a cross. We often look at the meeting with it, as if we had forgotten that article of our indentures. If public trials come upon the land or church, be not surprised, or when private crosses do befall you. It has been, must, and will be the lot of all that have a mind for heaven.

There is a cup of bitterness designed for Christ mystical, of which every one of his must drink their share.

2. They that cast out with the cross, do in effect cast out with heaven. Though it be a rough way, it is the highway to it. It is the fire with which God tries what metal is fit to be made a vessel of honour, and it is a most dreadful token to be cast here as dross, Jer. 6:29, 30. Think on that you that are not made better, but rather worse under your afflictions. If you could think in every cross, now God hath me on my trials for eternity, you would take heed that you forced not out a sentence against yourselves, Phil. 3:18, 19.

3. Lay your account with it, and be looking for it. A man forewarned is half armed. Job stood like an adamant wall against the bitter blasts. Why? "For, said he, the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. Why should we think to sleep to heaven in a bed of roses, when others have gone before us through thorns and briars? If you have given yourself to Christ, you must shew your faith by your works. If there be life in a tree, it will abide a winter blast.

Lastly, Take kindly with the cross of Christ. It is a kindly name to the Christian, and all his afflictions public or private bear it. Let your back bow to it, and your heart not rise against it. Be not angry if you be marked among his sheep, with the fire-mark of a fiery trial. It may well consume dross, it will not consume gold. Do not murmur against the Lord, he knows well enough how to guide the world, and what is best for every one. Say not, "There is no sorrow like my sorrow. Every heart knows its own bitterness." But ordinarily the slaughter ox hath been best fed; and they for whom the Lord had the greatest kindness have drunk deepest of the bitter cup. You may observe that those have been laid lowest, who have been most

eminent for piety, for gifts, for manifestations of the Lord's kindness, and great benefits; witness Job, Heman, Paul, Jacob, David.

I come now to the last duty, Follow me, taking up the cross, as the words run in the Greek, or having taken up the cross.

Doctrine.—All that have a mind for heaven, must follow Christ, with that cross which he lays before them. They must be like Simon the Cyrenian, who did bear the cross after Jesus. I will shew,

I. In what respects they must follow Christ. In these two.

1. They must follow him in profession. So he would have this man to follow him, to profess himself one of his disciples, and go with him as the rest of his disciples did. A profession is indispensably necessary.—Jesus will not allow any of his to say, What, take ye me for a saint? Those that are his, "have his Father's name written in their foreheads, and these are they, even the hundred forty and four thousand, which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. They confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, as well as believe with the heart, that God hath raised him from the dead. For with the heart, man believed unto righteousness; and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation." If there be fire on the hearth, smoke will come out at the chimney. He is the high priest of our profession; and that profession is to be made with the mouth, even when the cross is on the back. This profession we must hold fast. This Jesus Christ himself did when before Pontius Pilate, he witnessed a good confession.

Now there are two things which fall under the Christian profession.

1. Holiness of life. It is a holy profession, and a profession of holiness. Hence Christians are called, holy brethren, partakers of the

heavenly calling. The light of their good works must not only burn but shine. "They must be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation; among whom they are to shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."—They are to hold it forth as towers on the coast side on which lights are erected to direct sailors in the night. No lover of holiness but will profess himself such.

2. The truths of Christ. Errors and heresies fall under the black mark, and are arranged by the apostle along with the other works of the flesh, Gal. 5:19–21. It is an awful judgment, when God sends men, strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. God is the God of truth. Lies of all sorts are from the devil. We must adhere to the known truths of God, and his ordinances in their purity on all hazards. "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom and instruction, and understanding." We must testify against all corruptions of word and ordinances; and when error, superstition, or idolatry threaten us, we must be ready to take up our cross and follow Christ. Some complain the ordinances are already corrupted among us, not knowing whereof they affirm. That there are corruptions in our management of all God's ordinances, we acknowledge, and so must they for themselves; and if we both acknowledge not this, neither will they nor we see heaven. If they would follow their principle the length it would lead them, they should have no communion amongst themselves; nay, nor one of them with himself, unless they think that they are in greater hazard from the corruptions of others, than from their own. Where our additions to Christ's institutions, or what are those institutions of this church with which she hath mixed his institutions. Take heed this absurd mistake be not cured by ordinances corrupted indeed. Our contempt of Christ's ordinances is the highway to it, Deut. 28:64. Isa. 8:6, 7. But come what will, "let us earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints. For

whosoever, saith Jesus, shall be ashamed of me and my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

We must follow Christ in practice. "He that saith, he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk, even as he walked." Christ hath presented to us the copy of a holy life, we must write after it, if ever we would see heaven. I have given you, says he, an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. No less example of imitation doth the Christian propose to himself. "For every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." His conversation is the compass by which we must steer our course, if ever we reach the shore of Immanuel's land. I will not launch forth into this extensive field, but content myself with directing your attention to four parts of it.

I. We must follow him in his humility. In this he was most exemplary. From the highest pitch of glory, he descended as low as he could, Phil. 2:7, 8. He washed the disciples' feet. He was the very pattern of self-denial, meekness and lowliness. Good reason had he to say, "learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart." Alas! how few followers. By this you must correct your pride. Pride makes men like the devil, and most unlike Christ. He emptied himself of his glory, and can you be his followers, that fill and swell yourselves with an opinion of yourselves? How low did he stoop, and yet alas! how unwilling are many of us to yield?

Your passion. O fiery professors are you the followers of the meek and humble Jesus? You cannot abide to be controled, "but he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself." The Samaritans would not receive him, the disciples "would have had

him to cause fire come down from heaven to consume them," but he shewed it was not his Spirit that moved them to it.

Correct also your selfishness. Self-seeking professors look very unlike self-denying Jesus. I seek not, said he, mine own glory. It was prophesied of him, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets." This was fully accomplished in him, John 7:3, 4. But alas, the religion of many is nothing but a Babel tower to exalt themselves upon, that they may be seen of men. How do they haunt for applause, and when that empty wind fills the sail, how quickly will they make way.

2. In his contempt of the world. The profits of it were of no account with him. He had not where to lay his head. The pleasures of it, he despised. He often wept, sighed, never was seen to laugh, very seldom to rejoice, and that not from the smiles of the world, which he never regarded nor sought.

By this learn to correct the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. These are the gods which many worship. Their eyes are windows at which sinful objects enter into the soul, and at which the heart goes out after the world. The flesh often consumes all the vigour of the spirits, and men walk as if they were nothing but flesh. The vain pride of life, in honour, ambition, and pomp, carry away men as a stream.

3. In his patience under the cross. His cross was infinitely heavy, but he endured all with untainted patience, not the least murmuring was ever heard from him. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." He would not revenge the injuries done to him, so much as by words. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again, when he

suffered he threatened not." His soul was wrapt up in an absolute resignation to the will of God. Not my will, said he, but thine be done.

By this learn to correct your murmurings and uneasy bearing of the cross. Did he as a sheep not open his mouth, and shall we "with the wicked, roar like a wild bull in a net." Look to Jesus and be ashamed, that the cross feels so hard upon your shoulders, Heb. 12:1, 2.

Lastly, Let us follow him in heavenliness of conversation. His whole life was an uninterrupted course of walking with God. Often he sent away his disciples from him, spending whole nights in secret. His discourse was already heavenly. Whatever occurred he was ready to spiritualize it. So that on earth he lived in heaven. By this learn to correct your carnality.—We are ready too much, and too frequently to mind earthly things. How unlike Christ while heavenly things are so little minded; meditation and converse about them are very rare. But we must follow him, if ever we see heaven. He will be imitated as a pattern by all those who experience the efficacy of his blood. And surely many of us must turn over a new leaf if we fall on this way.

But I will shut up this with some improvement. You have now heard much of the way you must take, if ever you see heaven. What are you resolved upon? Are you resolved for heaven or not? I think I may take you all up in five classes.

1. I fear there are some of you, that have never yet thought seriously upon the matter, now how can they be resolved? you that are young, have you thought upon the question yet? Have you ever been made to stand still and seriously inquire what was necessary for your eternal welfare? You that are older, when was the time that you gave this question a serious consideration? When was it that it kept you longer out of your bed than usual; that it disturbed your rest or

raised you sooner to pursue the subject? Alas for many of our regular hearers that kept nothing of what they hear in their hearts, Ezek. 32:31–33. The day is coming "they will lift up their eyes in hell being in torments."

2. Some have thought on it, but they are not yet come to a conclusion. When there is much halting between two opinions in the vitals of religion, no wonder it be so in less matters. Heaven is very desirable, but sin is sweet. Treasure in heaven is good, but treasure on earth is good also. You wot not what to do. Conscience says, go forward; corruption says, nay, stand still a while yet. "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." I believe there are some now in hell that were once as far forward as you. I think you should not take so long to advise on whether you will enter or not; for when the door is once shut, in vain will you plead for admission, Prov. 1:24–33.

Perhaps there are some that in effect have resolved against it; saying, there is no hope, no: for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go. These are sullen desperate sinners, who are black hot in the fire of despair without noise. They have had their convictions, they have attempted reformation, but it would not do. Corruption has broken out on them, as the breaking forth of waters; hence they have given over hope, and dropped their endeavours, and stand to be carried whatever way the stream of their lusts leads them. O wretched generation, there is but one step between you and everlasting destruction. Brimstone is scattered upon your habitation, there wants but fire to make it consume you, Job 18:15.

4. Some that are resolved for heaven if they can obtain it at their own offer. Like this man in the text, heaven would be crowded if sinners could get liberty to blot out and interline words in the covenant here

and there. If people could but retain a right eye, a right hand, a Delilah, Zoar a little one. But it will not do. All or nothing.

5. I hope there are some resolved upon it, cost what it will. They are peremptory. Well you must sell all, take up your cross, and follow Christ. I would have you then to resolve to follow Christ with the cross on your back.

1. Resolve to take up and follow Christ with your ordinary cross. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Every day has the evil thereof, whatever may be left of former days. Evil to increase the heap, and men may bring forward of the following day.—Asaph was plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning. You must not expect one day fair to an end while here. Whether God lay down this cross by his immediate hand, or otherwise, you must take it up. What a vain thing is it to expect dry cheeks in the valley of tears; or that in such a place the clouds will not return after the rain. Daily sinning brings daily crosses. The thieves will never be brought off the cross till their life be extinguished.

2. Your holyday cross. The roll that was spread before Jeremiah, "was written within and without, and there was written therein, lamentations, and mourning, and woe." It is the same word that is used to signify the solemnities in which the Jews were gathered about the temple by the appointment of God. It signifies a stated time of meeting. Here is a solemnity of another nature, a solemn rendezvous of enemies against the church of God, for which God hath set his times, it is not every day. On this you must resolve also. The church of God amongst us, hath had a day of feasting of considerable length; it is like we may see a solemn day of terror on the back of it. Many a bitter storm hath blown out against the church,

and it cannot be thought but the clouds will return after the rain, Rev. 8:9.

1. Consider, we have had the Lord's talents among our hands these twenty years, and it is reasonable to think God will put it to the trial what we have made of them. Can it be but there will come a time in which we will be put to trial, what we have made of all the sermons and communions that we have enjoyed. Now the cross is God's trying piece, Matth. 7:24–27.

2. There are many who have followed Christ on plain ground very closely, that have shined in holiness of life in the time of outward peace in the church. They have given as it were but half evidence of their love to Christ, and that also the easiest half; they must even give fuller evidence of it, by cleaving to him in a time of tribulation. It will bring more glory to God.

3. There are many that have the root of the matter in them, that need to have it awaked with a storm.—Many sleeping Jonahs in our ship. Much filth and blood gathered by ease to be taken away by the Spirit of judgment, James 4:4. When the trees of God's vineyard begin to sit up, he will open them at the root, and let in the winter storm.

4. There are many professors among us, that have more sail than ballast; their heads are too light for their hearts. If there be any thing in them at all, and God have a kindness for them, he will lay some weight upon them to bring them to a consistency, that will make weight more, and bulk less in their own eyes.

5. There are many that have taken up a profession that have nothing of Christ but the name. They are among God's wheat, but are none of it; others are the worse of them, they must be cut up with God's axe

as cumberers of the ground; and when there are fewer professors, they will likely be better.

6. The appetite for the word with many is lost, and it is unfruitful. The edge is off our spirits. The preaching of the gospel is not much regarded. Many make silent sabbaths to themselves: and so little comfort have people in their ministers, and ministers in their people, that it looks very like a parting.

Lastly, Enemies have a cup to fill up, they have filled it well already; but it is like they have more yet to do, to prepare them for an overthrow. Turn your face then heavenwards, and be resolved to cleave to Christ, and all will be well. The cross will never ruin the church. The more they were oppressed the more they grew. God makes the devil's lackeys run his errands, and what they mean for evil turns to good. She shall not lose one living member. Dross may be consumed, but gold cannot; but it is refined in the fire. Let the sieve be as large as it will, not one good grain shall be lost.

But as for those that will not take up the cross and follow Christ, God will lay his curse as another sort of weight upon them. Following him under the cross, is the right way of bearing it.

SERMON VII

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

WE have here the lamentable issue of the conference. The man is offended, and leaves the Saviour, rejecting his words. We have,

His departure. He went away, not as Christ bade him to sell all, but to sit down on his possessions, to hug his beloved idol, never to come back again. Here he left Christ, rejected his company instead of following him, left the treasure in heaven which he would not purchase as Christ offered it.

He went away sad and grieved. Sad, with a sad, cloudy, dejected countenance; grieved at the heart, as the words may be distinguished. The first of these words is rendered, lowring, Matth. 16:3. He was morally serious in his desire of life; hence real grief in the heart for the disappointment, and the appearance of it in his countenance. The cause of his sadness was that saying, verse 21. That was the thing which affected him. The word rendered sad, signifies a mixture of sorrow and hatred. He loved the treasure in heaven, but he hated the cross. He loved heaven, but he hated the parting with the world as hell, as that word also imports. Hence deep sorrow, on being deprived of that which he did so much desire.

Now what made him so sad at that saying? What reason had he to be displeased at it? He had great possessions. But what of that? So had Abraham, Moses, Job, and others; and they were put to the same trial; and yet they did cleave stedfastly to the Lord. But alas! this man's possessions had a much surer hold of him, than he had of them. This way of expressing it teaches, that it is hard for them that have possessions to part with them.

Doctrine I. It is difficult to have much of the world, and not to be ruined by it. This is a strange For, in the text. He was a man that had great possessions, and God has not many of that sort. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh,

not many mighty, not many noble, are called." To confirm this, consider,

1. That plain testimony given to this truth, by truth itself on this occasion, in the three verses which follow the text. In these the ground of the reasoning is, that it is a most difficult thing to have riches, and not to trust in them; difficult to have the staff in the hand, and not to lean upon it.

2. They that have much of the world, have many snares, 1 Tim. 6:17. Satan hath many handles by which to hold them, which he hath not for others. "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt." While the lusts of others by want have fuel drawn from them, they have much fuel added to theirs, Prov. 30:8, 9. The more of the world that men have, they have the stronger temptations. We have that within that inclines us to court the world even when it frowns; how difficult must it then be to be kept from drowning in the embraces of a smiling world?

3. Very few rich men are found good men, 1 Cor. 1:26. O how few have the art of carrying a full cup even! Of frowning on the world when it smiles on them. Most part of such have their portion in this life. Many have been injured by the world's smiles, but it is difficult to find those that have been made better by them. The sweetness of temporal things, usually makes spiritual things tasteless. The full soul loatheth an honey-comb.

Use 1. Hence we may fairly account for that, why the meaner sort of people make up the greatest part of Christ's followers in the world. Why there are so few that have great possessions to be seen among them.—Be not stumbled at it, for that very thing which makes them most capable to be useful to God, if they had grace to guide it, suits

so with their corruptions, that it makes them greater enemies to God and his way than others. The unicorn's horn is a precious thing, and if it were in the hand of a skilful artificer he could do good with it; but while it is in the beast's head it is dangerous and hurtful. What can be expected of that man that hath no grace, much opportunity to be vile, many snares and temptations. Such persons are to be pitied, seeing they have no restraint neither from within nor without. God in mercy keeps much of the world out of the hands of the most part of those for whom he hath a kindness; because it is so difficult to manage it, and not be ruined by it. "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." If the world were such a desirable thing as men's corruptions say it is, would the children ordinarily have so little, and the dogs get so much of it? No surely.

2. To those that are rich we would give that charge, "that you be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." Rich people may be good though it but seldom falls out so. Be upon your guard. Poverty is a snare to many this day, that is like to ruin them eternally. Riches are no less a snare whatever they be more. Be not puffed up with them, trust not in them. If you have more snares than others, you had need of more grace, and to be more watchful.

3. To those that are pinched with the world, be content with such things as you have, do not hasten to be rich. Why should men be so desirous of that which it is so difficult to have, and not be ruined with it? Can you guide your little so well, that you must needs have more? The bait is indeed pleasant, but O how difficult to touch it, and not be caught with the hook! And in such a time as this it is most unsuitable; the more we have to lose, it will be the harder to part with it, Jer. 45:4, 5. This brings me to,

Doctrine II. That the cross will greatly lessen the number of those that are in Christ's company in time of ease. The cross is a great discoverer of unsound professors. To confirm this, I will tell you four things which the cross hath done.

1. It hath checked that briskness of Spirit in religion, which many have had till it came, Matth. 8:19, 20. Mark 10:17–22. There are many very forward while they meet with no opposition, that shrink back at the appearance of the cross; like the flowers that open when the sun shines; but shut and are contracted at night, and in cloudy days.

2. It has extracted the sap out of religion to many, Matth. 13:20, 21. They have had some delight in it, but when the waters of trying afflictions for it come to be mixed therewith it proves altogether bitter. Even as the Jews with Christ, Mal. 3:1–3. Isa. 8:21. The cross so embitters some spirits that they lose all heart and hand to religion, raging under it as a wild bull in a net.

3. It has fed and nourished the spiritual lusts of many, that are like salamanders which can live well in the fire. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity it profiteth me nothing." It is not the bearing of the cross simply that proves a saint, but the following of Christ with the cross on our backs. Papists worship the cross, and Protestants may put it in Christ's room, 2 Cor. 11:12–15.

4. It has had many apostates, who have quit Christ's side, and joined themselves to the devil's party, and turned persecutors of the way in which they walked before. Many fearful examples of this, trying times have given. The best meat corrupted, smells most abominably; apostates are like incarnate devils; as in these that sin against the Holy Ghost. None come to such heights as they do.

Reasons of the point.—1. Because the religion of many is a building reared up in a hasty manner, so cannot abide the storm. They count not the cost, Luke 14:25–33. Want of deliberation in taking on a profession makes it quickly go when that meets them that they were not thinking of. They stumble when they come to the cross.

2. Because they want a root of grace they cannot be fixed, Matth. 13:21. There is a root which establisheth against falling away, as when a tree takes with the ground. "A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved." A house built on sand is in hazard by a storm. Lamps without oil will not do for a dark night. Many pools dry up in drought.

3. Because the cross strikes at the very pillar that supported them. When Samson removed the pillars the house could not but fall. Many pretend faith in Christ, who are nevertheless borne up by the world, and when that goes they cannot stand, as we see in the text. It is Christ and the world together that give the man the ease; now when they part, he is as a bird which hath one wing clipped and so cannot fly.

Use 1. Be not then desirous of days of trial. It is to be regretted that some who wish well to Zion, their hearts are not trembling for the ark, but rather showing a kind of fondness of trials for the discovery of the unfaithfulness of others, and their own zeal for God. At leisure, ye know not what spirits ye are of. Many that have as little doubted their standing have deceived both themselves and others. Often has it been seen that they that have said most have done least.

2. Be not offended when in a day of trial you see men thronging away from Christ as fast as to him now. The gold is not the worse that the dross is consumed in the fire. The falls of some are like that of an oak, making many fall with it. But know that all is not gold that

glitters now. No doubt many will leave Christ, that now look not like it.

Lastly, Be preparing for a trying time. Winter will inquire what summer hath done. It is good to foresee the cross, and make ready for it, and to hear for the time to come.

Labour to get the foundation surely laid. Dig deep and build on the rock. A small stock of grace will go farther than great gifts. Make the covenant secure, the marriage-covenant betwixt Christ and your souls. And try it now by what communication is betwixt him and your souls. It will be sad if you never know the pipe laid short of the fountain till the cross come.—Again, Innure yourself to sit loose to the world, and all you have therein. They are as a leg that must be cut off at last. It is best to be deadening the same now. It will go the easier.

Finally, Study to carry your ordinary cross properly. Try to run with the footmen; that will help you to contend with horses. Consider carefully the directions given to us, 1 Peter 3:14–17.

Doctrine III. A person may take his farewell of Christ and holiness, with a grieved heart, and dejected countenance. Some go merrily away from the ways of God, as a wanton beast when it is turned loose. But all go not so. But if they be sorry for it, may you say, why do they go away? And if they will not stay, why are they sorry? So it is, however, as we see from this example: one sighing, and going backward, Lam. 1:8. We have another instance in Orpah, Ruth 1:15. "She lifted up her voice with her mother-in-law, and wept when she left her, and the God of Israel at once." On this passage we may observe, 1. That Orpah had as fair a pretence for what Ruth met with as she had. And that was, she became David's grandmother, and so one of the mothers of our Lord, Matth. 1:5, 6.—Now it would seem

that Orpah was the eldest son's wife, Ruth 1:2, 4. Compare Gen. 29:6. And indeed God's choice we find has often gone that way, as in the cases of Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob.

2. Orpah was once as fair set on the way to leave her father's house and her people, and go to the land of Judah, as Ruth was, verse 7, 8; and doubtless it was with an eye to embrace the Jewish religion, ver. 15, 17. Now the land of Judah was the holy land, where God manifested himself, Psalm 76:1, 2. Hence it is called the presence of the Lord, Jonah 1:3. As the visible church, Gen. 4:16.

3. She was once so fond of this happy change, that she could not endure to hear of giving it up. The very mentioning of it brought tears from her eyes, verse 9. She was very peremptory that nothing should hold her back. We will not leave thee, but go to thy people. As a certain scribe said to Jesus, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest, so she was disposed to say to her mother-in-law. But,

4. When Orpah more narrowly considers what she was likely to meet with in this new way on which she was entering of changing her God, her resolution quickly breaks, and she goes back. And that was the reason why Naomi desired them to return, namely, that they might not put their hand to the plough, unless they were fitted to ride out every storm.

5. Naomi herself, her people, her God, were dear to Orpah; but a husband was yet dearer to her than them all. She would rather have her own gods with a husband, than the God of Israel without one. Therefore finally she parts with all, and goes back to her gods with a grieved heart and wet cheeks, verse 14, 15. She cannot go with them, and yet is very sorry to part with them. O! if there had been but an husband you could have promised me in that land of Judah; if I could have but lived there, as I may live at home, I should never have

preferred my people to yours, or my gods to your God. But back to her gods she goes however, and so lost all the glorious advantages which she might have reaped from such a change.

Reasons of the point.—1. Because, though sin be bitter to them, yet the want of it is more bitter. They have not much ease in the enjoyment of their lusts, but they can have none without them. "They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." God plants a hedge of thorns and briars about some people's lusts, that if they will be at them, their flesh shall be torn in the way. Well, but the beast will rather break through that, than endure raging hunger within. As long as the sweet of sin masters the sour of it, the sinner will drink it up though it make them shrink. Therefore God always puts more and more bitterness in it, to his elect, till bitterness be predominant, Eccles. 7:26.

2. Christ is sweet to the man, but his lusts are sweeter; hence if he could get both he would part with none of them; but seeing he cannot do this, he parts with Christ indeed, but with a grieved heart, as in the text. What a hankering had Orpah, how unwilling to leave Naomi. Christ will never get a soul truly home to himself, till he effectually outbid all others, Prov. chap. 7 compared with chap. 8 particularly verses 18–21. People may say what they will of their sweet Saviour, but as long as their sweet lusts are sweeter, they will, like Esau, part with the inheritance for present gratification. The blessing was sweet to Esau after the mess of pottage was digested, Gen. 27:38. But when the two were in a balance, and he behoved to part with one of them, they weighed down the blessing by far, Gen. 25:30. Hebrew, Let me taste I pray of that red, That red; that, that. But verse 32. Hebrew, But for what is that to me a birth-right.

3. Because their light is strong, but their lusts are stronger. The first lets them see Christ, and that holiness is desirable, and puts them forward, the latter draws them back. Thus they are tossed betwixt the two, though they must needs yield to the stronger as in the cases of Balaam and Pilate. Thus they part with Christ as Phaltiel with Michal, 2 Sam. 3:15, 16. The love of his life was strong, but the love of his lusts was stronger. The consciences of many encounter much resistance before they can get back to their lusts. "They are of those that rebel against the light, they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof." Lusts rise against light, and drive the man out of the paths of it. They abide not in the paths thereof, leaving conscience overcome; they know not, or acknowledge not, the laws of light, therefore they rebel against it.

4. They do not find what they expected in Christ. This is plain from the text. And disposes men to go away drooping. The disciples were almost carried off their feet with this. "But we trusted, said they, that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done." This quickly overturned that man, Matth. 8:19–21. When a man is so sick that he looks for nothing but death, he gives away all for life, thinking if he had health, he could be content to beg his bread with it; but when he gets it he finds that will not do, he must have wealth again. So when people feel remorse of conscience, they would give any thing for ease, but when they have it, they often return to their old ways. The mixed multitude of Egyptians who gladly joined with Israel at first, Exod. 12:38.—When instead of a Canaan they find a wilderness; they soon remembered their former enjoyments, and longed to return to them, Numb. 11:4, 5. The newness of the gospel makes a great commotion among the hypocrite's affections, then O how sweet is religion, prayers, sermons, and communions! But all the time there is no spring of grace in the heart which would last, and

be a well of water springing up to everlasting life. Now it is not possible but his commotion must subside when once the novelty is gone, and then they thirst again after their lusts as much as ever. And Christ, and ordinances, and all turn tasteless to them; as a tale that they have heard over and over again. They find not God in his ordinances, and what they found is gone; hence they are as twice dead, and plucked up by the root.

Lastly, They desire to be at heaven, but they have no heart for the rugged way to it as in the text. The desire of the slothful man killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour. He hath a mouth to wish for it, but no hands to labour for it. As a man that would be over a water, but it is so large he dare not venture to take it. They want that other spirit, Numb. 14:24 that would steel their foreheads with resoluteness against all difficulties. They love the gold but cannot dig for it; and leave it with a grieved heart.

Inference 1. It is very natural for backsliders and apostates to return to their lusts with more greediness than ever. It is plain they do, 2 Peter 2:20–22. compare Matth. 12:44, 45. For they are then like swine that have been kept clean a while, or as beasts freed from their confinement. But there is more in it, they have left Christ and holiness with a grieved heart, and they stand in need of something to comfort them more than others that never saw any beauty in religion, and they must do their best to draw that out of their lusts.—They have need of floods of lusts, because they have conscience to drown in them which others have not.

2. A warm side to religion is not enough, if people have not a warm heart to it. The warm side may burn in hell for ever. What is that but that people love Christ well, but love their lusts better. "He that

loveth father or mother, saith Jesus, more than me, is not worthy of me;" therefore he loves me in some measure. Take heed to this,

You that think you keep a good heart to God, though you make not much noise about religion; that is, though there is nothing indeed of it in your life, and you never knew what it was to sacrifice a lust to his pleasure. The heart of the wicked is little worth.

You also that mean well, and always would fain be religious, and amend your lives, but yet you never do it. Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. You are not so desirous of Christ as of your lusts yet; and what does he regard these your meanings? You have a hankering after Christ and religion, and what of that? So had this man. Why are you almost, and not altogether Christians?

Again, you also that sooth yourselves with this, that while you are living in sin, without endeavouring to mortify your lusts; your outbreakings in them are against your will, and you wish you could help it, but never seriously apply yourselves to help it. It is not against your will, it is but against your conscience; and if you hold on a while, it may come to that, your conscience may be quite dead, and seared as with a hot iron, and may travel with equal pace with that will of yours that loves idols, and after them will go, and will not come to Christ for life.

Lastly, this writes death to them that have had their convictions, and have been endeavouring amendment, but found it would not do; and therefore they have given it over, and they are sorry for it that it would not do with them. Still they hope all may be well. I would have you to review that, your solemn farewell given to Christ. The best that can be made of it is, that you were sad at that saying, and went

away grieved, and bade him farewell, and so parted with him, but with the tear in your eye. Amen.

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