

Matthew Henry on Matthew Chapter 9 & 10

CHAPTER 9

We have in this chapter remarkable instances of the power and pity of the Lord Jesus, sufficient to convince us that he is both able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, and as willing as he is able. His power and pity appear here in the good offices he did, I. To the bodies of people, in curing the palsy (v. 2-8); raising to life the ruler's daughter, and healing the bloody issue (v. 18-26); giving sight to two blind men (v. 27-31); casting the devil out of one possessed (v. 32-34); and healing all manner of sickness (v. 35). II. To the souls of people; in forgiving sins (v. 2); calling Matthew, and conversing freely with publicans and sinners (v. 9-13); considering the frame of his disciples, with reference to the duty of fasting (v. 14-17); preaching the gospel, and, in compassion to the multitude, providing preachers for them (v. 35-38). Thus did he prove himself to be, as undoubtedly he is, the skilful, faithful Physician, both of soul and body, who has sufficient remedies for all the maladies of both: for which we must, therefore, apply ourselves to him, and glorify him both with our bodies and with our spirits, which are his, in return to him for his kindness to both.

Verses 1-8

The first words of this chapter oblige us to look back to the close of that which precedes it, where we find the Gadarenes so resenting the loss of their swine, that they were disgusted with Christ's company, and besought him to *depart out of their coasts*. Now here it follows, *He entered into a ship, and passed over*. They bid him begone, and he took them at their word, and we never read that he came into their coasts again. Now here observe, 1. His justice—that he left them. Note, Christ will not tarry long where he is not welcome. In righteous judgment, he forsakes those places and persons that are weary of him, but abides with those that covet and court his stay. *If the unbeliever will depart from Christ, let him depart*; it is at his peril, 1 Co. 7:15. 2. His patience—that he did not leave some destroying judgment behind him, to punish them, as they deserved, for their contempt and contumacy. How easily, how justly, might he have sent them after their swine, who were already so much under the devil's power. The provocation, indeed, was very great: but he put it up, and passed it by; and, without any angry resentments or upbraidings, he *entered into a ship, and passed over*. This was the day of his patience; he came not to *destroy men's lives*, but to save them; not to kill, but to cure. Spiritual judgments agree more with the constitution of gospel times; yet some observe, that in those bloody wars which the Romans made upon the Jews, which began not many years after this, they first besieged the town of Gadara, where these Gadarenes dwelt. Note, Those that drive Christ from them, draw all miseries upon them. Woe unto us, if God depart from us.

He came *into his own city, Capernaum*, the principal place of his residence at present (Mk. 2:1), and therefore called *his own city*. He had himself testified, that a prophet is least honoured in *his own country and city*, yet thither he came; for he *sought not his own honour*; but, being in a state of humiliation, he was content to be despised of the people.

At Capernaum all the circumstances recorded in this chapter happened, and are, therefore, put together here, though, in the harmony of the evangelists, other events intervened. When the Gadarenes desired Christ to depart, they of Capernaum received him. If Christ be affronted by some, there are others in whom he will be glorious; if one will not, another will.

Now the first occurrence, after Christ's return to Capernaum, as recorded in these verses, was the cure of the man sick of the palsy. In which we may observe,

I. The *faith of his friends* in bringing him to Christ. His distemper was such, that he could not come to Christ himself, but as he was carried. Note, Even the halt and the lame may be brought to Christ, and they shall not be rejected by him. If we do as well as we can, he will accept of us. Christ had an eye to their faith. Little children cannot go to Christ themselves, but he will have an eye to the faith of those that bring them, and it shall not be in vain. *Jesus saw their faith*, the faith of the paralytic himself, as well as of them that brought him; Jesus saw the habit of faith, though his distemper, perhaps, impaired his intellect, and obstructed the actings of it. Now their faith was, 1. A strong faith; they firmly believed that Jesus Christ both could and would heal him; else they would not have brought the sick man to him so publicly, and through so much difficulty.

2. A humble faith; though the sick man was unable to stir a step, they would not ask Christ to make him a visit, but brought him to attend on Christ. It is fitter than we should wait on Christ, than he on us. 3. An active faith: in the belief of Christ's power and goodness, they brought the sick man to him, *lying on a bed*, which could not be done without a deal of pains. Note, A strong faith regards no obstacles in pressing after Christ.

II. The *favour of Christ*, in what he said to him; *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee*. This was a sovereign cordial to a sick man, and was enough to *make all his bed in his sickness*; and to make it easy to him. We read not of any thing said to Christ; probably the poor sick man could not speak for himself, and they that brought him chose rather to speak by actions than words; they set him before Christ; that was enough. Note, It is not in vain to present ourselves and our friends to Christ, as the objects of his pity. Misery cries as well as sin, and mercy is no less quick of hearing than justice. Here is, in what Christ said, 1. A kind compellation; *Son*. Note, Exhortations and consolations to the afflicted speak to them as to sons, for afflictions are fatherly discipline, Heb. 12:5. 2. A gracious encouragement; *"Be of good cheer. Have a good heart on it; cheer up thy spirits."* Probably the poor man, when let down among them all in his bed, was put out of countenance, was afraid of a rebuke for being brought in so rudely: but Christ does not stand upon ceremony; he bids him *be of good cheer*; all would be well, he should not be laid before Christ in vain. Christ bids him *be of good cheer*; and then cures him. He would have those to whom he deals his gifts, to be cheerful in seeking him, and in trusting in him; to be of good courage. 3. A good reason for that encouragement; *Thy sins are forgiven thee*. Now this may be considered, (1.) as an introduction to the cure of his bodily distemper; *"Thy sins are pardoned, and therefore thou shalt be healed."* Note, As sin is the cause of sickness, so the remission of sin is the comfort of recovery from

sickness; not but that sin may be pardoned, and yet the sickness not removed; not but that the sickness may be removed, and yet the sin not pardoned: but if we have the comfort of our reconciliation to God, with the comfort of our recovery from sickness, this makes it a mercy indeed to us, as to Hezekiah, Isa. 38:17. Or, (2.) As a reason of the command to *be of good cheer*, whether he were cured of his disease or not; "Though I should not heal thee, wilt thou not say thou hast not sought in vain, if I assure thee that *thy sins are pardoned*; and wilt thou not look upon that as a sufficient ground of comfort, though thou shouldst continue *sick of the palsy*?" Note, They who, through grace, have some evidence of the forgiveness of their sins, have reasons to be of good cheer, whatever outward troubles or afflictions they are under; see Isa. 33:24.

III. The *cavil of the scribes* at that which Christ said (v. 3); They *said within themselves*, in their hearts, *among themselves*, in their secret whisperings, *This man blasphemeth*. See how the greatest instance of heaven's power and grace is branded with the blackest note of hell's enmity; Christ's pardoning sin is termed blasphemy; nor had it been less, if he had not had commission from God for it. They, therefore, are guilty of blasphemy, that have no such commission, and yet pretend to pardon sin.

IV. The conviction which Christ gave them of the unreasonableness of this cavil, before he proceeded.

1. He *charged them with it*. Though they did but say it within themselves, he *knew their thoughts*. Note, Our Lord Jesus has the perfect knowledge of all that we say within ourselves. Thoughts are secret and sudden, yet naked and open before Christ, the eternal Word (Heb. 4:12, 13), and he *understands them afar off*, Ps. 139:2. He could say to them (which no mere man could), *Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?* Note, There is a great deal of evil in sinful thoughts, which is very offensive to the Lord Jesus. He being the Sovereign of the heart, sinful thoughts invade his right, and disturb his possession; therefore he takes notice of them, and is much displeased with them. In them lies the *root of bitterness*, Gen. 6:5. The sins that begin and end in the heart, and go no further, are as dangerous as any other.

2. He *argued them out of it*, v. 5, 6. Where observe,

(1.) How he *asserts* his authority in the *kingdom of grace*. He undertakes to make out, that the *Son of man*, the Mediator, has *power on earth to forgive sins*; for *therefore* the Father has *committed all judgment to the Son*, and has given him this authority, *because he is the Son of man*, Jn. 5:22, 27. If he has *power to give eternal life*, as he certainly has (Jn. 17:2), he must have power to forgive sin; for guilt is a bar that must be removed, or we can never get to heaven. What an encouragement is this to poor sinners to repent, that the power of pardoning sin is put into the hands of the *Son of man*, who is bone of our bone! And if he had this *power on earth*, much more now that he is exalted to the Father's right hand, to *give repentance and remission of sins*, and so to be both a *Prince and a Saviour*, Acts 5:31.

(2.) How he *proves* it, by his power in the kingdom of nature; his power to cure diseases. Is it not as easy to say, *Thy sins are forgiven thee*, as to say, *Arise and walk*? He that can cure the disease, whether *declaratively* as a Prophet, or *authoritatively* as God, can, in like manner, forgive the sin. Now, [1.] This is a general argument to prove that Christ had a divine mission. His miracles, especially his miraculous cures, confirm what he said of himself, that he was the Son of God; the *power* that appeared in his cures

proved him *sent of God*; and the *pity* that appeared in them proved him sent of God *to heal and save*. The God of truth would not set his seal to a lie. [2.] It had a particular cogency in this case. The palsy was but a symptom of the disease of sin; now he made it to appear, that he could effectually cure the original disease, by the immediate removal of that symptom; so close a connection was there between the sin and the sickness. He that had power to remove the punishment, no doubt, had power to remit the sin. The scribes stood much upon a legal righteousness, and placed their confidence in that, and made no great matter of the *forgiveness of sin*, the doctrine upon which Christ hereby designed to put honour, and to show that his great errand to the world was to *save his people from their sins*.

V. The immediate cure of the sick man. Christ turned from disputing with them, and spake healing to him. The most necessary arguings must not divert us from doing the good that our *hand finds to do*. He saith to *the sick of the palsy*, *Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine house*; and a healing, quickening, strengthening power accompanied this word (v. 7): *he arose and departed to his house*. Now, 1. Christ bid him *take up his bed*, to show that he was *perfectly cured*, and that not only he had no more occasion to be *carried* upon his bed, but that he had strength to *carry it*. 2. He sent him to *his house*, to be a blessing to his family, where he had been so long a burden; and did not take him along with him for a show, which those would do in such a case who seek the honour that comes from men.

VI. The impression which this made upon the multitude (v. 8); they *marvelled*, and *glorified God*. Note, All our wonder should help to enlarge our hearts in *glorifying God*, who alone does marvellous things. They glorified God for what he had done for this poor man. Note, Others' mercies should be our praises, and we should give him thanks for them, for we are members one of another. Though few of this multitude were so convinced, as to be brought to believe in Christ, and to follow him, yet they admired him, not as God, or the Son of God, but as a *man* to whom God *had given such power*. Note, God must be glorified in all the power that is *given to men* to do good. For all power is originally his; it is in him, as the Fountain, in men, as the cisterns.

Verses 9-13

In these verses we have an account of the grace and favour of Christ to poor publicans, particularly to Matthew. What he did to the bodies of people was to make way for a kind design upon their souls. Now observe here,

I. The call of Matthew, the penman of this gospel. Mark and Luke call him Levi; it was ordinary for the same person to have two names: perhaps Matthew was the name he was most known by as a publican, and, therefore, in his humility, he called himself by that name, rather than by the more honourable name of Levi. Some think Christ gave him the name of Matthew when he called him to be an apostle; as Simon, he surnamed Peter. Matthew signifies, *the gift of God*, Ministers are God's gifts to the church; their ministry, and their ability for it, are God's gifts to them. Now observe,

1. The posture that Christ's call found Matthew in. He was *sitting at the receipt of custom*, for he was a publican, Lu. 5:27. He was a custom-house officer at the port of Capernaum, or an exciseman, or collector of the land-tax. Now, (1.) He was in his

calling, as the rest of them whom Christ called, ch. 4:18. Note, As Satan chooses to come, with his temptations, to those that are idle, so Christ chooses to come, with his calls, to those that are employed. But, (2.) It was a calling of ill fame among serious people; because it was attended with so much corruption and temptation, and there were so few in that business that were honest men. Matthew himself owns what he was before his conversion, as does St. Paul (1 Tim. 1:13), that the grace of Christ in calling him might be the more magnified, and to show, that God has his remnant among all sorts of people. None can justify themselves in their unbelief, by their calling in the world; for there is no *sinful* calling, but some have been saved *out of it*, and no *lawful calling*, but some have been saved *in it*.

2. The preventing power of this call. We find not that Matthew looked after Christ, or had any inclination to follow him, though some of his kindred were already disciples of Christ, but Christ prevented him with the blessings of his goodness. He is found of those that seek him not. Christ *spoke first*; we have not chosen him, but he hath chosen us. He said, *Follow me*; and the same divine, almighty power accompanied this word to convert Matthew, which attended that word (v. 6), *Arise and walk*, to cure the man sick of the palsy. Note, A saving change is wrought in the soul by Christ as the *Author*, and his word as the *means*. His gospel is the *power of God unto salvation*, Rom. 1:16. The call was effectual, for he came at the call; *he arose, and followed him immediately*; neither denied, nor deferred his obedience. The power of divine grace soon answers and overcomes all objections. Neither his commission for his place, nor his gains by it, could detain him, when Christ called him. *He conferred not with flesh and blood*, Gal. 1:15, 16. He quitted his post, and his hopes of preferment in that way; and, though we find the disciples that were fishers occasionally fishing again afterwards, we never find Matthew at the receipt of custom again.

II. Christ's converse with publicans and sinners upon this occasion; Christ called Matthew, to introduce himself into an acquaintance with the people of that profession. *Jesus sat at meat in the house*, v. 10. The other evangelists tell us, that Matthew made a *great feast*, which the poor fishermen, when they were called, were not able to do. But when he comes to speak of this himself, he neither tells us that it was his own house, nor that it was a feast, but only that he *sat at meat in the house*; preserving the remembrance of Christ's favours to the publicans, rather than of the respect he had paid to Christ. Note, It well becomes us to speak sparingly of our own good deeds.

Now observe, 1. When Matthew invited Christ, he invited his disciples to *come along with him*. Note, They that welcome Christ, must welcome all that are his, for his sake, and let them have a room in their hearts. 2. He invited many publicans and sinners to *meet him*. This was the chief thing Matthew aimed at in this treat, that he might have an opportunity of bringing his old associates acquainted with Christ. He knew by experience what the grace of Christ could do, and would not despair concerning them. Note, They who are effectually brought to Christ themselves, cannot but be desirous that others also may be brought to him, and ambitious of contributing something towards it. True grace will not contentedly eat its morsels alone, but will invite others. When by the conversion of Matthew the fraternity was broken, presently his house was filled with publicans, and surely some of them will *follow him*, as he *followed Christ*. Thus did Andrew and Philip, Jn. 1:41, 45; 4:29. See Judges 14:9.

III. The displeasure of the Pharisees at this, v. 11. They cavilled at it; *why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?* Here observe, 1. That Christ was quarrelled with. It was not the least of his sufferings, that he *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself*. None was more quarrelled with by men, than he that came to take up the great quarrel between God and man. Thus he denied himself the honour due to an incarnate Deity, which was to be justified in what he spake, and to have all he said readily subscribed to: for though he never spoke or did anything amiss, every thing he said and did was found fault with. Thus he taught us to expect and prepare for reproach, and to bear it patiently. 2. They that quarrelled with him were the Pharisees; a proud generation of men, conceited of themselves, and censorious of others; of the same temper with those in the prophet's time, who said, *Stand by thyself, come not near me; I am holier than thou*: they were very strict in avoiding *sinners*, but not in avoiding *sin*; none greater zealots than they for the *form* of godliness, nor greater enemies to the *power* of it. They were for keeping up the traditions of the elders to a nicety, and so propagating the same spirit that they were themselves governed by. 3. They brought their cavil, not to Christ himself; they had not the courage to face him with it, but to his disciples. The disciples were in the same company, but the quarrel is with the Master: for they would not have done it, if he had not; and they thought it worse in him who was a prophet, than in them; his dignity, they thought, should set him at a greater distance from such company than others. Being offended at the Master, they quarrel with the disciples. Note, It concerns Christians to be able to vindicate and justify Christ, and his doctrines and laws, and to be *ready always to give an answer to those that ask them a reason of the hope that is in them*, 1 Pt. 3:15. While he is an Advocate for us in heaven, let us be advocates for him on earth, and make his reproach our own. 4. The complaint was his *eating with publicans and sinners*: to be intimate with wicked people is against the law of God (Ps. 119:115; 1:1); and perhaps by accusing Christ of this to his disciples, they hoped to tempt them from him, to put them out of conceit with him, and so to bring them over to themselves to be their disciples, who kept better company; for they *compassed sea and land to make proselytes*. To be intimate with publicans was against the *tradition of the elders*, and, therefore, they looked upon it as a heinous thing. They were angry with Christ for this, (1.) Because they *wished ill to him*, and sought occasion to misrepresent him. Note, It is an easy and very common thing to put the worst constructions upon the best words and actions. (2.) Because they *wished no good to publicans and sinners*, but envied Christ's favour to them, and were grieved to see them brought to repentance. Note, It may justly be suspected, that they have not the grace of God themselves, who grudge others a share in that grace, who are not pleased with it.

IV. The defence that Christ made for himself and his disciples, in justification of their converse with publicans and sinners. The disciples, it should seem, being yet weak, had to seek for an answer to the Pharisees' cavil, and, therefore, bring it to Christ, and he heard it (v. 12), or perhaps overheard them whispering it to his disciples. Let him alone to vindicate himself and to plead his own cause, to answer for himself and for us too. Two things he urges in his defence,

1. The necessity and exigence of the case of the publicans, which called aloud for his help, and therefore justified him in conversing with them for their good. It was the extreme necessity of poor, lost sinners, that brought Christ from the pure regions above,

to these impure ones; and the same was it, that brought him into this company which was thought impure. Now,

(1.) He proves the necessity of the case of the publicans: *they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick*. The publicans are sick, and they need one to help and heal them, which the Pharisees think they do not. Note,

[1.] Sin is the sickness of the soul; sinners are spiritually sick. Original corruptions are the diseases of the soul, actual transgressions are its wounds, or the eruptions of the disease. It is deforming, weakening, disquieting, wasting, killing, but, blessed be God, not incurable. [2.] Jesus Christ is the great Physician of souls. His curing of bodily diseases signified this, that he arose with *healing under his wings*. He is a skilful, faithful, compassionate Physician, and it is his office and business to heal the sick. Wise and good men should be as physicians to all about them; Christ was so. *Hunc affectum versus omnes habet sapiens, quem versus aegros suos medicus—A wise man cherishes towards all around him the feelings of a physician for his patient*. Seneca *De Const.* [3.] Sin-sick souls have need of this Physician, for their disease is dangerous; nature will not help itself; no man can help us; such need have we of Christ, that we are undone, eternally undone, without him. Sensible sinners see their need, and apply themselves to him accordingly. [4.] There are multitudes who fancy themselves to be sound and whole, who think they have *no need of Christ*, but that they can shift for themselves well enough without him, as Laodicea, Rev. 3:17. Thus the Pharisees desired not the knowledge of Christ's word and ways, not because they had no need of him, but because they thought they had none. See Jn. 9:40, 41.

(2.) He proves, that their necessity did sufficiently justify his conduct, in conversing familiarly with them, and that he ought not to be blamed for it; for that necessity made it *an act of charity*, which ought always to be preferred before the formalities of a religious profession, in which *beneficence* and *munificence* are far better than *magnificence*, as much as substance is better than shows or shadows. Those duties, which are of moral and natural obligation, are to take place even of those divine laws which are positive and ritual, much more of those impositions of men, and traditions of the elders, which make God's law stricter than he has made it. This he proves (v. 13) by a passage quoted out of Hos. 6:6, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*. That morose separation from the society of publicans, which the Pharisees enjoined, was *less than sacrifice*; but Christ's conversing with them was more than an act of common mercy, and therefore to be preferred before it. If to do well ourselves is better than sacrifice, as Samuel shows (1 Sa. 15:22, 23), much more to do good to others. Christ's conversing with sinners is here called mercy: to promote the conversion of souls is the greatest act of mercy imaginable; it is *saving a soul from death*, Jam. 5:20. Observe how Christ quotes this, *Go ye and learn what that meaneth*. Note, It is not enough to be acquainted with the letter of scripture, but we must learn to understand the meaning of it. And they have best learned the meaning of the scriptures, that have learned how to apply them as a reproof to their own faults, and a rule for their own practice. This scripture which Christ quoted, served not only to vindicate him, but, [1.] To show wherein true religion consists; not in external observances: not *in meats and drinks* and shows of sanctity, not in little particular opinions and doubtful disputations, but in doing all the good we can to the bodies and souls of others; in righteousness and peace; in *visiting the fatherless and widows*. [2.] To condemn the

Pharisaical hypocrisy of those who place religion in rituals, more than in morals, ch. 23:23. They espouse those forms of godliness which may be made consistent with, and perhaps subservient to, their pride, covetousness, ambition, and malice, while they hate that power of it which is mortifying to those lusts.

2. He urges the nature and end of his own commission. He must keep to his orders, and prosecute that for which he was appointed to be the great Teacher; now, says he, "*I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*, and therefore must converse with publicans." Observe, (1.) What his errand was; it was to *call to repentance*. This was his first text (ch. 4:17), and it was the tendency of all his sermons. Note, The gospel call is a call to repentance; a call to us to change our mind and to change our way. (2.) With whom his errand lay; not with *the righteous*, but with *sinners*. That is, [1.] If the children of men had not been *sinners*, there had been no occasion for Christ's coming among them. He is the Saviour, not of man as *man*, but of man as *fallen*. Had the first Adam continued in his original *righteousness*, we had not needed a second Adam. [2.] Therefore his *greatest business* lies with the *greatest sinners*; the more dangerous the sick man's case is, the more occasion there is for the physician's help. Christ came into the world to *save sinners*, but especially *the chief* (1 Tim. 1:15); to call not those so much, who, though sinners, are comparatively righteous, but the worst of sinners. [3.] The more sensible any sinners are of their sinfulness, the more welcome will Christ and his gospel be to them; and every one chooses to go where his company is desired, not to those who would rather have his room. Christ came not with an expectation of succeeding among *the righteous*, those who conceit themselves so, and therefore will sooner be sick of their Saviour, than sick of their sins, but among the convinced humble *sinners*; to them Christ will come, for to them he will be welcome.

Verses 14-17

The objections which were made against Christ and his disciples gave occasion to some of the most profitable of his discourses; thus are the interests of truth often served, even by the opposition it meets with from gainsayers, and thus the wisdom of Christ brings good out of evil. This is the third instance of it in this chapter; his discourse of his power to forgive sin, and his readiness to receive sinners, was occasioned by the cavils of the scribes and Pharisees; so here, from a reflection upon the conduct of his family, arose a discourse concerning his tenderness for it. Observe,

I. The objection which the disciples of John made against Christ's disciples, for not fasting so often as they did; which they are charged with, as another instance of the looseness of their profession, besides that of eating with publicans and sinners; and it is therefore suggested to them, that they should change that profession for another more strict. It appears by the other evangelists (Mk. 2:18 and Lu. 5:33) that the disciples of the Pharisees joined with them, and we have reason to suspect that they instigated them, making use of John's disciples as their spokesmen, because they, being more in favour with Christ and his disciples, could do it more plausibly. Note, It is no new thing for bad men to set good men together by the ears; if the people of God differ in their sentiments, designing men will take that occasion to sow discord, and to incense them one against another, and alienate them one from another, and so make an easy prey of them. If the

disciples of John and of Jesus clash, we have reason to suspect the Pharisees have been at work underhand, blowing the coals. Now the complaint is, *Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but thy disciples fast not?* It is pity the duties of religion, which ought to be the confirmations of holy love, should be made the occasions of strife and contention; but they often are so, as here; where we may observe,

1. How they boasted of their own fasting. *We and the Pharisees fast often.* Fasting has in all ages of the church been consecrated, upon special occasions, to the service of religion; the Pharisees were much in it; many of them kept two fast-days in a week, and yet the generality of them were hypocrites and bad men. Note, False and formal professors often excel others in outward acts of devotion, and even of mortification. The disciples of John *fasted often*, partly in compliance with their master's practice, for he came *neither eating nor drinking* (ch. 11:18); and people are apt to imitate their leaders, though not always from the same inward principle; partly in compliance with their master's doctrine of repentance. Note, The severer part of religion is often most *minged* by those that are yet under the discipline of the Spirit, as a *Spirit of bondage*, whereas, though these are good in their place, we must pass through them to that life of delight in God and dependence on him, to which these should lead. Now they come to Christ to tell him that they *fasted often*, at least they thought it often. Note, *Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness*, Prov. 20:6. There is a proneness in professors to brag of their own performance in religion, especially if there by any thing extraordinary in them; nay, and not only to boast of them before men, but to plead them before God, and confide in them as a righteousness.

2. How they blamed Christ's disciples for not fasting so often as they did. *Thy disciples fast not.* They could not but know, that Christ had instructed his disciples to keep their fasts private, and to manage themselves so as that they might not *appear unto men to fast*; and, therefore, it was very uncharitable in them to conclude they did *not fast*, because they did not proclaim their fasts. Note, We must not judge of people's religion by that which falls under the eye and observation of the world. But suppose it was so, that Christ's disciples did not *fast* so often or so long as they did, why truly, they would therefore have it thought, that they had more religion in them than Christ's disciples had. Note, It is common for vain professors to make themselves a standard in religion, by which to try and measure persons and things, as if all who differed from them were so far in the wrong; as if all that did less than they, did too little, and all that did more than they, did too much, which is a plain evidence of their want of humility and charity.

3. How they brought this complaint to Christ. Note, If Christ's disciples, either by omission or commission, give offence, Christ himself will be sure to hear of it, and be reflected upon for it. *O, Jesus, are these thy Christians?* Therefore, as we tender the honour of Christ, we are concerned to conduct ourselves well. Observe, The quarrel with Christ was brought to the disciples (v. 11), the quarrel with the disciples was brought to Christ (v. 14), this is the way of sowing discord and killing love, to set people against ministers, ministers against people, and one friend against another.

II. The apology which Christ made for his disciples in this matter. Christ might have upbraided John's disciples with the former part of their question, *Why do ye fast often?* "Nay, you know best why you do it; but the truth is, many abound in external instances of devotion, that scarcely do themselves know why and wherefore." But he only vindicates

the practice of his disciples; why they had nothing to say for themselves, he had something ready to say for them. Note, As it is wisdom's honour to be justified of all her children, so it is her children's happiness to be all justified of wisdom. What we do according to the precept and pattern of Christ, he will be sure to bear us out in, and we may with confidence leave it to him to clear up our integrity.

But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.—Herbert

Two things Christ pleads in defence of their *not fasting*.

1. That it was not a season proper for that duty (v. 15): *Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?* Observe, Christ's answer is so framed, as that it might sufficiently justify the practice of his own disciples, and yet not condemn the institution of John, or the practice of his disciples. When the Pharisees fomented this dispute, they hoped Christ would cast blame, either on his own disciples, or on John's, but he did neither. Note, When at any time we are unjustly censured, our care must be only to clear ourselves, not to recriminate, or throw dirt upon others; and such a variety may there be of circumstances, as may justify us in our practice, without condemning those that practise otherwise.

Now his argument is taken from the common usage of joy and rejoicing during the continuance of marriage solemnities; when all instances of melancholy and sorrow are looked upon as improper and absurd, as it was at Samson's wedding, Judges 14:17. Now,

(1.) The disciples of Christ were the *children of the bride-chamber*, invited to the wedding-feast, and welcome there; the disciples of the Pharisees were not so, but *children of the bond-woman* (Gal. 4:25, 31), continuing under a dispensation of darkness and terror. Note, The faithful followers of Christ, who have the Spirit of adoption, have a continual feast, while they who have the spirit of bondage and fear, cannot rejoice for joy, as other people, Hos. 9:1. (2.) The disciples of Christ had *the bridegroom with them*, which the disciples of John had not; their master was now cast into prison, and lay there in continual danger of his life, and therefore it was seasonable for them to *fast often*.

Such a day would come upon the disciples of Christ, when the bridegroom should be taken from them, when they should be deprived of his bodily presence, and *then should they fast*. The thoughts of parting grieved them when he was going, Jn. 16:6. Tribulation and affliction befel them when he was gone, and gave them occasion of *mourning* and *praying*, that is, of religious fasting. Note, [1.] Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom of his Church, and his disciples are the *children of the bride-chamber*. Christ speaks of himself to John's disciples under this similitude, because that John had used it, when he called himself a friend of the bridegroom, Jn. 3:29. And if they would by this hint call to mind what their master then said, they would answer themselves. [2.] The condition of those who are the children of the bride-chamber is liable to many changes and alterations in this world; they sing of mercy and judgment. [3.] It is merry or melancholy with the children of the bride-chamber, according as they have more or less of the bridegroom's presence. When he is with them, the candle of God shines upon their head, and all is well; but when he is withdrawn, though but for a small moment, *they are troubled*, and walk heavily; the presence and nearness of the sun makes day and summer, his absence and distance, night and winter. Christ is all in all to the church's joy. [4.] Every duty is to be done in its proper season. See Eccles. 7:14; Jam. 5:13. There is a time to mourn and a time to laugh, to each of which we should accommodate ourselves, and bring forth fruit

in due season. In fasts, regard is to be had to the methods of God's grace towards us; when he *mourns to us*, we must *lament*; and also to the dispensations of his providence concerning us; there are times when *the Lord God calls to weeping and mourning*; regard is likewise to be had to any special work before us, ch. 17:21; Acts 13:2.

2. That they had not strength sufficient for that duty. This is set forth in two similitudes, one of putting *new cloth into an old garment*, which does but pull the old to pieces (v. 16); the other of putting *new wine into old bottles*, which does but burst the bottles, v. 17.

Christ's disciples were not able to bear these severe exercises so well as those of John and of the Pharisees, which the learned Dr. Whitby gives this reason for: There were among the Jews not only sects of the Pharisees and Essenes, who led an austere life, but also *schools of the prophets*, who frequently lived in mountains and deserts, and were many of them Nazarites; they had also private academies to train men up in a strict discipline; and possibly from these many of John's disciples might come, and many of the Pharisees; whereas Christ's disciples, being taken immediately from their callings, had not been used to such religious austerities, and were unfit for them, and would by them be rather unfitted for their other work. Note, (1.) Some duties of religion are harder and more difficult than others, like *new cloth* and *new wine*, which require most intenseness of mind, and are most displeasing to flesh and blood; such are religious fasting and the duties that attend it. (2.) The best of Christ's disciples pass through a state of infancy; all the trees in Christ's garden are not of a growth, nor all his scholars in the same form; there are *babes in Christ* and grown men. (3.) In the enjoining of religious exercises, the weakness and infirmity of young Christians ought to be considered: as the food provided for them must be such as is proper for their age (1 Co. 3:2; Heb. 5:12), so must the work be that is cut out for them. Christ would not speak to his disciples that which they could not then bear, Jn. 16:12. Young beginners in religion must not be put upon the hardest duties at first, lest they be discouraged. Such as was God's care of his Israel, when he brought them out of Egypt, not to lead them by the way of the Philistines (Ex. 13:17, 18), and such as was Jacob's care of his children and cattle, not to overdrive them (Gen. 33:13), such is Christ's care of the little ones of his family, and the lambs of his flock: he gently leads them. For want of this care, many times, *the bottles break*, and *the wine is spilled*; the profession of many miscarries and comes to nothing, through indiscretion at first. Note, There may be *over*—doing even in *well*—doing, a being *righteous over-much*; and such an *over*—doing as may prove an *undoing* through the subtlety of Satan.

Verses 18-26

We have here two passages of history put together; that of the raising of Jairus's daughter to life, and that of the curing of the woman that had *the bloody issue*, as he was going to Jairus's house, which is introduced in a parenthesis, in the midst of the other; for Christ's miracles were thick sown, and interwoven; *the work of him that sent him* was his daily work. He was called to do these good works from speaking the things foregoing, in answer to the cavils of the Pharisees, v. 18: *While he spake these things*; and we may suppose it is a pleasing interruption given to that unpleasant work of disputation, which, though sometimes needful, a good man will gladly leave, to go about a work of devotion

or charity. Here is,

I. The ruler's address to Christ, v. 18. *A certain ruler*, a ruler of the synagogue, *came and worshipped him*. *Have any of the rulers believed on him?* Yes, here was one, a church ruler, whose faith condemned the unbelief of the rest of the rulers. This ruler had a little daughter, of twelve years old, just dead, and this breach made upon his family comforts was the occasion of his coming to Christ. Note, In trouble we should visit God: the death of our relations should drive us to Christ, who is our life; it is well if any thing will do it. When affliction is in our families, we must not sit down astonished, but, as

Job, fall down and worship. Now observe,

1. His humility in this address to Christ. He came with his errand to Christ himself, and did not send his servant. Note, It is no disparagement to the greatest rulers, personally to attend on the Lord Jesus. He *worshipped him*, bowed the knee to him, and gave him all imaginable respect. Note, They that would receive mercy from Christ must give honour to Christ.

2. His faith in this address; *"My daughter is even now dead,"* and though any other physician would now come too late (nothing more absurd than *post mortem medicina—medicine after death*), yet Christ comes not too late; he is a Physician after death, for he is *the resurrection and the life*; *"O come then, and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live."* This was quite above the power of nature (*a privatione ad habitum non datur regressus—life once lost cannot be restored*), yet within the power of Christ, who has *life in himself, and quickeneth whom he will*. Now Christ works in an ordinary, *by nature and not against it*, and, therefore, we cannot in faith bring him such a request as this; while there is life, there is hope, and room for prayer; but when our friends are dead, the case is determined; *we shall go to them, but they shall not return to us*. But while Christ was here upon earth working miracles, such a confidence as this was not only allowable but very commendable.

II. The readiness of Christ to comply with his address, v. 19. *Jesus* immediately *arose*, left his company, *and followed him*; he was not only willing to grant him what he desired, in raising his daughter to life, but to gratify him so far as to come to his house to do it. Surely *he never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain*. He denied to go along with the nobleman, who said, *Sir, come down, ere my child die* (Jn. 4:48–50), yet he went along with the ruler of the synagogue, who said, *Sir, come down, and my child shall live*.

The variety of methods which Christ took in working his miracles is perhaps to be attributed to the different frame and temper of mind which they were in who applied to him, which he *who searcheth the heart* perfectly knew, and accommodated himself to. He knows what is in man, and what course to take with him. And observe, when *Jesus followed him, so did his disciples*, whom he had chosen for his constant companions; it was not for state, or that he might come with observation, that he took his attendants with him, but that they might be the witnesses of his miracles, who were hereafter to be the preachers of his doctrine.

III. The healing of the poor woman's bloody issue. I call her a poor woman, not only because her case was piteous, but because, she had *spent it all upon physicians*, for the cure of her distemper, and was never the better; which was a double aggravation of the misery of her condition, that she had been full, but was now empty; and that she had impoverished herself for the recovery of her health, and yet had not her health neither.

This woman was diseased with a constant issue of blood twelve years (v. 20); a disease, which was not only weakening and wasting, and under which the body must needs languish; but which also rendered her ceremonially unclean, and shut her out from the courts of the Lord's house; but it did not cut her off from approaching to Christ. She applied herself to Christ, and received mercy from him, by the way, as he followed the ruler, whose daughter was dead, to whom it would be a great encouragement, and a help to keep up his faith in the power of Christ. So graciously does Christ consider the frame, and consult the case, of weak believers. Observe,

1. The woman's great faith in Christ, and in his power. Her disease was of such a nature, that her modesty would not suffer her to speak openly to Christ for a cure, as others did, but by a peculiar impulse of the Spirit of faith, she believed him to have such an overflowing fulness of healing virtue, that the very touch of his garment would be her cure. This, perhaps, had something of fancy mixed with faith; for she had no precedent for this way of application to Christ, unless, as some think, she had an eye to the raising of the dead man by the touch of Elisha's bones, 2 Ki. 13:21. But what weakness of understanding there was in it, Christ was pleased to overlook, and to accept the sincerity and strength of her faith; for he eateth the honey-comb with the honey, Cant. 4:11. She believed she should be healed if she did but touch the very hem of his garment, the very extremity of it. Note, There is virtue in every thing that belongs to Christ. The holy oil with which the high priest was anointed, ran down to the skirts of his garments, Ps. 133:2. Such a fulness of grace is there in Christ, that from it we may all receive, Jn. 1:16.

2. Christ's great favour to this woman. He did not suspend (as he might have done) his healing influences, but suffered this bashful patient to steal a cure unknown to any one else, though she could not think to do it unknown to him. And now she was well content to be gone, for she had what she came for, but Christ was not willing to let her go so; he will not only have his power magnified in her cure, but his grace magnified in her comfort and commendation: the triumphs of her faith must be to her praise and honour.

He turned about to see for her (v. 22), and soon discovered her. Note, It is great encouragement to humble Christians, that they who hide themselves from men are known to Christ, who sees in secret their applications to heaven when most private. Now here, (1.) He puts gladness into her heart, by that word, *Daughter, be of good comfort*. She feared being chidden for coming clandestinely, but she is encouraged. [1.] He calls her *daughter*, for he spoke to her with the tenderness of a father, as he did to the man sick of the palsy (v. 2), whom he called *son*. Note, Christ has comforts ready for the daughters of Zion, that are of a sorrowful spirit, as Hannah was, 1 Sa. 1:15. Believing women are Christ's daughters, and he will own them as such. [2.] He bids her *be of good comfort*: she has reason to be so, if Christ own her for a daughter. Note, The saints' consolation is founded in their adoption. His bidding her *be comforted*, brought comfort with it, as his saying, *Be ye whole*, brought health with it. Note, It is the will of Christ that his people should be comforted, and it is his prerogative to command comfort to troubled spirits. He creates the fruit of the lips, peace, Isa. 57:19.

(2.) He puts honour upon her faith. That grace of all others gives most honour to Christ, and therefore he puts most honour upon it; *Thy faith has made thee whole*. Thus by faith she obtained a good report. And as of all graces Christ puts the greatest honour upon faith, so of all believers he puts the greatest honour upon those that are most

humble; as here on this woman, who had more faith than she thought she had. She had reason to *be of good comfort*, not only because she was *made whole*, but because her *faith had made her whole*; that is, [1.] She was spiritually healed; that cure was wrought in her which is the proper fruit and effect of faith, the pardon of sin and the work of grace.

Note, We may then be abundantly comforted in our temporal mercies when they are accompanied with those spiritual blessings that resemble them; our food and raiment will be comfortable, when by faith we are fed with *the bread of life*, and *clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ*; our rest and sleep will be comfortable, when by faith we repose in God, and dwell at ease in him; our health and prosperity will be comfortable, when by faith our souls prosper, and are in health. See Isa. 38:16, 17. [2.] Her bodily cure was the fruit of faith, of her faith, and that made it a happy, comfortable cure indeed.

They out of whom the devils were cast, were helped by Christ's sovereign power; some by the faith of others (as v. 2); but it is *thy faith that has made thee whole*. Note, Temporal mercies are then comforts indeed to us, when they are received by faith. If, when in pursuit of mercy, we prayed for it in faith, with an eye to the promise, and in dependence upon that, if we desired it for the sake of God's glory, and with a resignation to God's will, and have our hearts enlarged by it in faith, love, and obedience, we may then say, it was received by faith.

IV. The posture in which he found the ruler's house, v. 23.—He *saw the people and the minstrels*, or musicians, *making a noise*. The house was in a hurry: such work does death make, when it comes into a family; and, perhaps, the necessary cares that arise at such a time, when our dead is to be decently buried out of our sight, give some useful diversion to that grief which is apt to prevail and play the tyrant. The people in the neighbourhood came together to condole on account of the loss, to comfort the parents, to prepare for, and attend on, the funeral, which the Jews were not wont to defer long. The musicians were among them, according to the custom of the Gentiles, with their doleful, melancholy tunes, to increase the grief, and stir up the lamentations of those that attended on this occasion; as (they say) is usual among the Irish, with their *Ahonor, Honor*. Thus they indulged a passion that is apt enough of itself to grow intemperate, and affected to *sorrow as those that had no hope*. See how religion provides cordials, where irreligion administers corrosives. Heathenism aggravates that grief which Christianity studies to assuage. Or perhaps these musicians endeavoured on the other hand to divert the grief and exhilarate the family; but, *as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart*. Observe, The parents, who were immediately touched with the affliction, were silent, while *the people and minstrels*, whose lamentations were forced, made such a noise. Note, The loudest grief is not always the greatest; rivers are most noisy where they run shallow. *Ille dolet vere, qui sine teste dolet—That grief is most sincere, which shuns observation*. But notice is taken of this, to show that the girl was really dead, in the undoubted apprehension of all about her.

V. The rebuke that Christ gave to this hurry and noise, v. 24. He said, *Give place*. Note, Sometimes, when *the sorrow of the world* prevails, it is difficult for Christ and his comforts to enter. They that harden themselves in sorrow, and, like Rachel, *refuse to be comforted*, should think they hear Christ saying to their disquieting thoughts, *Give place*: "Make room for him who is *the Consolation of Israel*, and brings with him *strong consolations*, strong enough to overcome the confusion and tyranny of these worldly

griefs, if he may but be admitted into the soul.” He gives a good reason why they should not thus disquiet themselves and one another; *The maid is not dead but sleepeth*. 1. This was eminently true of this maid, that was immediately to be raised to life; she was really dead, but not so to Christ, who knew within himself what he would do, and could do, and who had determined to make her death but as a sleep. There is little more difference between sleep and death, but in continuance; whatever other difference there is, it is but a dream. This death must be but of short continuance, and therefore is but a sleep, like one night’s rest. He that quickens the dead, may well call the things which be not as though they were, Rom. 4:17. 2. It is in a sense true of all that die, chiefly of them *that die in the Lord*. Note, (1.) Death is a sleep. All nations and languages, for the softening of that which is so dreadful, and withal so unavoidable, and the reconciling of themselves to it, have agreed to call it so. It is said, even of the wicked kings, that they *slept with their fathers*; and of those that shall arise to everlasting contempt, that they *sleep in the dust*, Dan. 12:2. It is not the sleep of the soul; its activity ceases not; but the sleep of the body, which lies down in the grave, still and silent, regardless and disregarded, wrapt up in darkness and obscurity. Sleep is a short death, and death a long sleep. But *the death of the righteous* is in a special manner to be looked upon as a sleep, Isa. 57:2. They sleep in Jesus (1 Th. 4:14); they not only rest from the toils and labours of the day, but *rest in hope* of a joyful waking again in the morning of the resurrection, when they shall wake refreshed, wake to a new life, wake to be richly dressed and crowned, and *wake to sleep no more*. (2.) The consideration of this should moderate our grief at the death of our dear relations: "say not, They *are* lost; no, they are but *gone before*: say not, They are *slain*; no, they are but *fallen asleep*; and the apostle speaks of it as an absurd thing to imagine that *they that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished* (1 Co. 15:18); *give place*, therefore, to those comforts which the covenant of grace ministers, fetched from the future *state, and the glory to be revealed*.”

Now could it be thought that such a comfortable word as this, from the mouth of our Lord Jesus, should be ridiculed as it was? *They laughed him to scorn*. These people lived in Capernaum, knew Christ’s character, that he never spake a rash or foolish word; they knew how many mighty works he had done; so that if they did not understand what he meant by this, they might at least have been silent in expectation of the issue. Note, The words and works of Christ which cannot be understood, yet are not therefore to be despised. We must adore the mystery of divine sayings, even when they seem to contradict what we think ourselves most confident of. Yet even this tended to the confirmation of the miracle: for it seems she was so apparently dead, that it was thought a very ridiculous thing to say otherwise.

VI. The raising of the damsel to life by the power of Christ, v. 25. *The people were put forth*. Note, Scorners that laugh at what they see and hear that is above their capacity, are not proper witnesses of the wonderful works of Christ, the glory of which lies not in pomp, but in power. The widow’s son at Nain, and Lazarus, were raised from the dead openly, but this damsel privately; for Capernaum, that had slighted the lesser miracles of restoring health, was unworthy to see the greater, of restoring life; these *pearls were not to be cast before* those that would *trample them under their feet*.

Christ went in and *took her by the hand*, as it were to awake her, and to help her up, prosecuting his own metaphor of her being asleep. The high priest, that typified Christ,

was not to come near the dead (Lev. 21:10, 11), but Christ *touch*ed the dead. The Levitical priesthood leaves the dead in their uncleanness, and therefore keeps at a distance from them, because it cannot remedy them; but Christ, having power to raise the dead, is above the infection, and therefore is not shy of touching them. He *took her by the hand, and the maid arose*. So easily, so effectually was the miracle wrought; not by prayer, as Elijah did (1 Ki. 17:21), and Elisha (2 Ki. 4:33), but by a touch. They did it as servants, he as a Son, as a God, *to whom belong the issues from death*. Note, Jesus Christ is the Lord of souls, he commands them forth, and commands them back, when and as he pleases. Dead souls are not raised to spiritual life, unless Christ *take them by the hand*: it is done in the *day of his power*. He helps us up, or we lie still.

VII. The general notice that was taken of this miracle, though it was wrought privately; v. 26. *The fame thereof went abroad into all that land*: it was the common subject of discourse. Note, Christ's works are more talked of than considered and improved. And doubtless, they that heard only the report of Christ's miracles, were accountable for that as well as they that were eye-witnesses of them. Though we at this distance have not seen Christ's miracles, yet having an authentic history of them, we are bound, upon the credit of that, to receive his doctrine; and blessed *are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*, Jn. 20:29.

Verses 27-34

In these verses we have an account of two more miracles wrought together by our Saviour.

I. The giving of sight to two blind men, v. 27–31. Christ is the Fountain of light as well as life; and as, by raising the dead, he showed himself to be the same that at first *breathed into man the breath of life*, so, by giving sight to the blind, he showed himself to be the same that at first *commanded the light to shine out of darkness*. Observe,

1. The importunate address of the blind men to Christ. He was returning from the ruler's house to his own lodgings, and these *blind men followed him*, as beggars do, with their incessant cries, v. 27. He that cured diseases so easily, so effectually, and, withal, at so cheap a rate, shall have patients enough. As for other things, so he is famed for an Oculist. Observe,

(1.) The title which these blind men gave to Christ; *Thou Son of David, have mercy on us*. The promise made to David, that of his loins the Messiah should come, was well known, and the Messiah was therefore commonly called *the Son of David*. At this time there was a general expectation of his appearing; these blind men know, and own, and proclaim it in the streets of Capernaum, that he is come, and that this is he; which aggravates the folly and sin of the chief priests and Pharisees who denied and opposed him. They could not see him and his miracles, but *faith comes by hearing*. Note, They who, by the providence of God, are deprived of bodily sight, may yet, by the grace of God, have *the eyes of their understanding so enlightened*, as to discern those great things of God, *which are hid from the wise and prudent*.

(2.) Their petition, *Have mercy on us*. It was foretold that the *Son of David* should be *merciful* (Ps. 72:12, 13), and in him *shines the tender mercy of our God*, Lu. 1:78. Note, Whatever our necessities and burthens are, we need no more for supply and support, than

a share in the *mercy of our Lord Jesus*. Whether he heal us or no, if he *have mercy on us*, we have enough; as to the particular instances and methods of mercy, we may safely and wisely refer ourselves to the wisdom of Christ. They did not each of them say for himself, *Have mercy on me*, but both for one another, *Have mercy on us*. Note, It becomes those that are under the same affliction, to concur in the same prayers for relief.

Fellow-sufferers should be joint-petitioners. In Christ there is enough for all.

(3.) Their importunity in this request; they *followed him, crying*. It seems, he did not take notice of them at first, for he would try their faith, which he knew to be strong; would quicken their prayers, and make his cures the more valued, when they did not always come at the first word; and would teach us to *continue instant in prayer, always to pray, and not to faint*: and, though the answer do not come presently, yet to wait for it, and to follow providence, even in those steps and outgoings of it which seem to neglect or contradict our prayers. Christ would not heal them publicly in the streets, for this was a cure he would have kept private (v. 30), but *when he came into the house, they followed him thither, and came to him*. Note, Christ's doors are always open to believing and importunate petitioners; it seemed rude in them to rush into the house after him, when he desired to retire; but, such is the tenderness of our Lord Jesus, that they were not more bold than welcome.

2. The confession of faith, which Christ drew from them upon this occasion. When they came to him for mercy, he asked them, *Believe ye that I am able to do this?* Note, Faith is the great condition of Christ's favours. They who would receive the *mercy* of Christ, must firmly believe the *power* of Christ. What we would have him do for us, we must be fully assured that he is *able to do*. They followed Christ, and followed him crying, but the great question is, *Do ye believe?* Nature may work fervency, but it is only grace that can work faith; spiritual blessings are obtained only by faith. They had intimated their faith in the office of Christ as *Son of David*, and in his mercy; but Christ demands likewise a profession of faith in his power. *Believe ye that I am able to do this;* to bestow this favour; to give sight to the blind, as well as to cure the palsy and raise the dead? Note, It is good to be particular in the exercise of faith, to apply the general assurances of God's power and good will, and the general promises, to our particular exigencies. *All shall work for good*, and if all, then this. *"Believe ye that I am able, not only to prevail with God for it, as a prophet, but that I am able to do it by my own power?"* This will amount to their belief of his being not only *the Son of David*, but *the Son of God*; for it is God's prerogative to *open the eyes of the blind* (Ps. 146:8); he makes *the seeing eye*, Ex. 4:11. *Job was eyes to the blind* (Job 29:15); was to them instead of eyes, but he could not *give eyes* to the blind. Still it is put to us, *Believe we that Christ is able to do for us*, by the power of his merit and intercession in heaven, of his Spirit and grace in the heart, and of his providence and dominion in the world? To believe the power of Christ is not only to assure ourselves of it, but to commit ourselves to it, and encourage ourselves in it.

To this question they give an immediate answer, without hesitation: they said, *Yea, Lord*. Though he had kept them in suspense awhile, and had not helped them at first, they honestly imputed that to his wisdom, not to his weakness, and were still confident of his ability. Note, The treasures of mercy that are laid up in the power of Christ, are *laid out and wrought for those that trust in him*, Ps. 31:19.

3. The cure that Christ wrought on them; *he touched their eyes*, v. 29. This he did to encourage their faith, which, by his delay, he had tried, and to show that he gives sight to blind souls by the operations of his grace accompanying the word, *anointing the eyes with eye-salve*: and he put the cure upon their faith, *According to your faith be it unto you*. When they begged for a cure, he enquired into their faith (v. 28), *Believe ye that I am able?* He did not enquire into their wealth, whether they were able to pay him for a cure; nor into their reputation, should he get credit by curing them; but into their faith; and now they had professed their faith he referred the matter to that: "I know you do believe, and the power you believe in shall be exerted for you; *According to your faith be it unto you.*" This speaks, (1.) His knowledge of the sincerity of their faith, and his acceptance and approbation of it. Note, It is a great comfort to true believers, that Jesus Christ knows their faith, and is well pleased with it. Though it be weak, though others do not discern it, though they themselves are ready to question it, it is known to him. (2.) His insisting upon their faith as necessary; "If you believe, take what you come for." Note, They who apply themselves to Jesus Christ, shall be dealt with *according to their faith*; not according to their *fancies*, nor according to their *profession*, but *according to their faith*; that is, unbelievers cannot expect to find any favour with God, but true believers may be sure to find all that favour which is offered in the gospel; and our comforts ebb or flow, according as our faith is stronger or weaker; we are not straitened in Christ, let us not then be straitened in ourselves.

4. The charge he gave them to keep it private (v. 30), *See that no man know it*. He gave them this charge, (1.) To set us an example of that humility and lowliness of mind, which he would have us to learn of him. Note, In the good we do, we must not seek our own praise, but only the glory of God. It must be more our care and endeavour to be useful, than to be known and observed to be so, Prov. 20:6; 25:27. Thus Christ seconded the rule he had given, *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth*. (2.) Some think that Christ, in keeping it private, showed his displeasure against the people of Capernaum, who had seen so many miracles, and yet believed not. Note, The silencing of those who should proclaim the works of Christ is a judgment to any place or people: and it is just in Christ to deny the means of conviction to those that are obstinate in their infidelity; and to shroud the light from those that shut their eyes against it. (3.) He did it in discretion, for his own preservation; because the more he was proclaimed, the more jealous would the rulers of the Jews be of his growing interest among the people. (4.) Dr.

Whitby gives another reason, which is very considerable, why Christ sometimes concealed his miracles, and afterwards forbid the publishing of his transfiguration; because he would not indulge that pernicious conceit which obtained among the Jews, that their Messiah should be a temporal prince, and so give occasion to the people to attempt the setting up of his kingdom, by tumults and seditions, as they offered to do, Jn.

6:15. But when, after his resurrection (which was the full proof of his mission), his spiritual kingdom was set up, then that danger was over, and they must be published to all nations. And he observes, that the miracles which Christ wrought among the Gentiles and the Gadarenes, were ordered to be published, because with them there was not that danger.

But honour is like the shadow, which, as it flees from those that follow it, so it follows those that flee from it (v. 31); *They spread abroad his fame*. This was more an

act of zeal, than of prudence; and though it may be excused as honestly meant for the honour of Christ, yet it cannot be justified, being done against a particular charge. Whenever we profess to direct our intention to the glory of God, we must see to it that the action be according to the will of God.

II. The healing of a *dumb man*, that was *possessed with a devil*. And here observe,

1. His case, which was very sad. He was under the power of the devil in this particular instance, that he was disabled from speaking, v. 32. See the calamitous state of this world, and how various the afflictions of the afflicted are! We have no sooner dismissed *two blind men*, but we meet with a *dumb man*. How thankful should we be to God for our sight and speech! See the malice of Satan against mankind, and in how many ways he shows it. This man's dumbness was the effect of his being *possessed with a devil*; but it was better he should be unable to say any thing, than be forced to say, as those demoniacs did (ch. 8:29), *What have we to do with thee?* Of the two, better a dumb devil than a blaspheming one. When the devil gets possession of a soul, it is made silent as to any thing that is good; dumb in prayers and praises, which the devil is a sworn enemy to. This poor creature *they brought to Christ*, who entertained not only those that came of themselves in their own faith, but those that were *brought to him* by their friends in the faith of others. Though *the just shall live eternally by his faith*, yet temporal mercies may be bestowed on us with an eye to their faith who are intercessors on our behalf. They brought him in just as *the blind man went out*. See how unwearied Christ was in doing good; how closely one good work followed another! Treasures of mercy, wondrous mercy, are hid in him; which may be continually communicated, but can never be exhausted.

2. His cure, which was very sudden (v. 33), *When the devil was cast out, the dumb spake*. Note, Christ's cures strike at the root, and remove the effect by taking away the cause; they open the lips, by breaking Satan's power in the soul. In sanctification he heals the waters by casting salt into the spring. When Christ, by his grace, *casts the devil out* of a soul, presently *the dumb speaks*. When Paul was converted, *behold, he prays*; then *the dumb spake*.

3. The consequences of this cure.

(1.) *The multitudes marvelled*; and well they might; though *few believed, many wondered*. The admiration of the common people is sooner raised than any other affection. It was foretold, that the new song, the New-Testament song, should be sung for *marvellous works*, Ps. 98:1. They said, *It was never so seen in Israel*, and therefore never so seen any where; for no people experienced such wonders of mercy as Israel did. There had been those in Israel that were famous for working miracles, but Christ excelled them all. The miracles Moses wrought had reference to Israel as a people, but Christ's were brought home to particular persons.

(2.) *The Pharisees blasphemed*, v. 34. When they could not gainsay the convincing evidence of these miracles, they fathered them upon the devil, as if they had been wrought by compact and collusion: *he casteth out devils* (say they) *by the prince of the devils*—a suggestion horrid beyond expression; we shall hear more of it afterwards, and Christ's answer to it (ch. 12:25); only observe here, how *evil men and seducers wax worse and worse* (2 Tim. 3:13), and it is both their sin and their punishment. Their quarrels with Christ for taking upon him to *forgive sin* (v. 3), for *conversing with*

publicans and sinners, (v. 11), for *not fasting* (v. 14), though spiteful enough, yet had some colour of piety, purity, and devotion in them; but this (which they are left to, to punish them for those) breathes nothing but malice and falsehood, and hellish enmity in the highest degree; it is diabolism all over, and was therefore justly pronounced unpardonable. Because the people marvelled, they must say something to diminish the miracle, and this was all they could say.

Verses 35-38

Here is, I. A conclusion of the foregoing account of Christ's preaching and miracles (v. 35); *He went about all the cities teaching and healing*. This is the same we had before, 4:23. There it ushers in the more particular record of Christ's preaching (ch. 5, 6 and 7) and of his cures (ch. 8 and 9), and here it is elegantly repeated in the close of these instances, as the *quod erat demonstrandum*—*the point to be proved*; as if the evangelist should say, "Now I hope I have made it out, by an induction of particulars, that Christ preached and healed; for you have had the heads of his sermons, and some few instances of his cures, which were wrought to confirm his doctrine: and *these were written that you might believe.*" Some think that this was a second perambulation in Galilee, like the former; he visited again those whom he had before preached to. Though the Pharisees cavilled at him and opposed him, he went on with his work; he *preached the gospel of the kingdom*. He told them of a kingdom of grace and glory, now to be set up under the government of a Mediator: this was gospel indeed, *good news, glad tidings of great joy*.

Observe how Christ in his preaching had respect,

1. To the private towns. He visited not only the great and wealthy cities, but the poor, obscure villages; there he preached, there he healed. The souls of those that are meanest in the world are as precious to Christ, and should be to us, as the souls of those that make the greatest figure. *Rich and poor meet together* in him, citizens and boors: his *righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages* must be *rehearsed*, Jdg. 5:11.

2. To the public worship. He taught *in their synagogues*, (1.) That he might bear a testimony to solemn assemblies, even then when there were corruptions in them. We *must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is*. (2.) That he might have an opportunity of preaching there, where people were gathered together, with an expectation to hear. Thus, even where the gospel church was founded, and Christian meetings erected, the apostles often *preached in the synagogues of the Jews*. It is the wisdom of the prudent, to make the best of that which is.

II. A preface, or introduction, to the account in the following chapter, of his sending forth his apostles. *He took notice of the multitude* (v. 36); not only of the crowds that *followed him*, but of the vast numbers of people with whom (as he passed along) he observed the country to be replenished; he noticed what nests of souls the towns and cities were, and how thick of inhabitants; what abundance of people there were in every synagogue, and what places of concourse the openings of the gates were: so very populous was that nation now grown; and it was the effect of God's blessing on Abraham. Seeing this,

1. He pities them, and was concerned for them (v. 36); *He was moved with compassion on them*; not upon a temporal account, as he pities the blind, and lame, and

sick; but upon a spiritual account; he was concerned to see them ignorant and careless, and ready to perish for lack of vision. Note, Jesus Christ is a very compassionate friend to precious souls; here his bowels do in a special manner yearn. It was pity to souls that brought him from heaven to earth, and there to the cross. Misery is the object of mercy; and the miseries of sinful, self-destroying souls, are the greatest miseries: Christ pities those most that pity themselves least; so should we. The most Christian compassion is compassion to souls; it is most Christ-like.

See what moved this pity. (1.) *They fainted*; they were destitute, vexed, wearied. *They strayed*, so some; were loosed one from another; *The staff of bands was broken*, Zec.

11:14. They wanted help for their souls, and had none at hand that was good for any thing. The scribes and Pharisees filled them with vain notions, burthened them with the traditions of the elders, deluded them into many mistakes, while they were not instructed in their duty, nor acquainted with the extent and spiritual nature of the divine law; therefore *they fainted*; for what spiritual health, and life, and vigour can there be in those souls, that are fed with husks and ashes, instead of *the bread of life*? Precious souls *faint* when duty is to be done, temptations to be resisted, afflictions to be borne, being not nourished up with the word of truth. (2.) *They were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd*. That expression is borrowed from 1 Ki. 22:17, and it sets forth the sad condition of those that are destitute of faithful guides to go before them in the things of God. No creature is more apt to go astray than a sheep, and when gone astray more helpless, shiftless, and exposed, or more unapt to find the way home again: sinful souls *are as lost sheep*; they need the care of shepherds to bring them back. The teachers the Jews then had pretended to be *shepherds*, yet Christ says they had not *shepherds*, for they were worse than none; idle shepherds that led them away, instead of leading them back, and fleeced the flock, instead of feeding it: such shepherds as were described, Jer. 23:1, etc. Eze. 34:2, etc. Note, The case of those people is very pitiable, who either have no ministers at all, or those that are as bad as none; that seek their own things, not *the things of Christ* and souls.

2. He excited his disciples to pray for them. His pity put him upon devising means for the good of these people. It appears (Lu. 6:12, 13) that upon this occasion, before he sent out his apostles, he did himself spend a great deal of time in prayer. Note, Those we pity we should pray for. Having spoken to God for them he turns to his disciples, and tells them,

(1.) How the case stood; *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few*. People desired good preaching, but there were few good preachers. There was a great deal of work to be done, and a great deal of good likely to be done, but there wanted hands to do it. [1.] It was an encouragement, that *the harvest* was so *plenteous*. It was not strange, that there were multitudes that needed instruction, but it was what does not often happen, that they who needed it, desired it, and were forward to receive it. They that were ill taught were desirous to be better taught; people's expectations were raised, and there was such a moving of affections, as promised well. Note, It is a blessed thing, to see people in love with good preaching. The valleys are then covered over with corn, and there are hopes it may be well gathered in. That is a gale of opportunity, that calls for a double care and diligence in the improvement of it; a harvest-day should be a busy day. [2.] It was a pity when it was so that *the labourers* should be so *few*; that the corn should

shed and spoil, and rot upon the ground for want of reapers; loiterers many, but *labourers* very few. Note, It is ill with the church, when good work stands still, or goes slowly on, for want of good workmen; when it is so, the *labourers* that there are have need to be very busy.

(2.) What was their duty in this case (v. 38); *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest.*

Note, The melancholy aspect of the times and the deplorable state of precious souls, should much excite and quicken prayer. When things look discouraging, we should pray more, and then we should complain and fear less. And we should adapt our prayers to the present exigencies of the church; such an understanding we ought to have of the times, as to know, not only what Israel ought to do, but what Israel ought to pray for. Note, [1.] God is *the Lord of the harvest; my Father is the Husbandman*, Jn. 15:1. It is *the vineyard of the Lord of hosts*, Isa. 5:7. It is for him and to him, and to his service and honour, that *the harvest* is gathered in. *Ye are God's husbandry* (1 Co. 3:9); *his threshing, and the corn of his floor*, Isa. 21:10. He orders every thing concerning *the harvest* as he pleases; when and where *the labourers* shall work, and how long; and it is very comfortable to those who wish well to *the harvest-work*, that God himself presides in it, who will be sure to order all for the best. [2.] Ministers are and should be *labourers* in God's *harvest*; the ministry is a *work* and must be attended to accordingly; it is *harvest-work*, which is needful work; work that requires every thing to be done in its season, and diligence to do it thoroughly; but it is pleasant work; they *reap in joy*, and the joy of the preachers of the gospel is likened to the *joy of harvest* (Isa. 9:2, 3); and *he that reapeth receiveth wages; the hire of the labourers* that reap down God's field, shall not be *kept back*, as theirs was, Jam. 5:4. [3.] It is God's work to *send forth labourers*; Christ makes ministers (Eph. 4:11); the office is of his appointing, the qualifications of his working, the call of his giving. They will not be owned nor paid as *labourers*, that run without their errand, unqualified, uncalled. *How shall they preach except they be sent?* [4.] All that love Christ and souls, should show it by their earnest prayers to God, especially when *the harvest is plenteous, that he would send forth* more skillful, faithful, wise, and industrious *labourers into his harvest*; that he would raise up such as he will own in the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints; would give them a spirit for the work, call them to it, and succeed them in it; *that he would give them wisdom to win souls; that he would thrust forth labourers*, so some; intimating unwillingness to go forth, because of their own weakness and the people's badness, and opposition from men, that endeavour to thrust them out of *the harvest*; but we should pray that all contradiction from within and from without, may be conquered and got over. Christ puts his friends upon praying this, just before he sends apostles forth to labour in *the harvest*. Note, It is a good sign God is about to bestow some special mercy upon a people, when he stirs up those that have an interest at the throne of grace, to pray for it, Ps. 10:17. Further observe, that Christ said this to his disciples, who were to be employed as *labourers*. They must pray, First, That God *would send them forth. Here am I, send me*, Isa. 6:8. Note, Commissions, given in answer to prayer, are most likely to be successful; Paul is a chosen vessel, for *behold he prays*, Acts 9:11, 15. Secondly, That he would send others forth. Note, Not the people only, but those who are themselves ministers, should pray for the increase of ministers. Though self-interest makes those that seek their own things desirous to be placed alone (the fewer ministers the more preferments), yet those that *seek the things of Christ*, desire

more workmen, that more work may be done, though they be eclipsed by it.

CHAPTER 10

This chapter is an ordination sermon, which our Lord Jesus preached, when he advanced his twelve disciples to the degree and dignity of apostles. In the close of the foregoing chapter, he had stirred up them and others to pray that God would send forth labourers, and here we have an immediate answer to that prayer: while they are yet speaking he hears and performs. What we pray for, according to Christ's direction, shall be given, Now here we have, I. The general commission that was given them (v. 1). II. The names of the persons to whom this commission was given (v. 2-4). III. The instructions that were given them, which are very full and particular; 1. Concerning the services they were to do; their preaching; their working miracles; to whom they must apply themselves; how they must behave themselves; and in what method they must proceed (v. 5-15). 2. Concerning the sufferings they were to undergo. They are told what they should suffer, and from whom; counsels are given them what course to take when persecuted, and encouragements to bear up cheerfully under their sufferings (v. 16-42). These things, though primarily intended for direction to the apostles, are of use to all Christ's ministers, with whom, by his word, Christ, and will be always to end the world.

Verses 1-4

Here we are told, I. Who they were that Christ ordained to be his apostles or ambassadors; they were his disciples, v. 1. He had called them some time before to be disciples, his immediate followers and constant attendants, and he then told them that they should be made fishers of men, which promise he now performed. Note, Christ commonly confers honours and graces by degrees; the light of both, like that of the morning, *shines more and more*. All this while Christ had kept these twelve,

1. In a state of probation. Though he knows what is in man, though he knew from the first what was in them (Jn. 6:70), yet he took this method to give an example to his church. Note, The ministry being a great trust, it is fit that men should be tried for a time, before they are entrusted with it. Let them *first be proved*, 1 Tim. 3:10. Therefore, hands must not be laid suddenly on any man, but let him first be observed as a candidate and probationer, a propositant (that is the term the French churches use), because some men's sins go before, others follow, 1 Tim. 5:22.

2. In a state of preparation. All this while he had been fitting them for this great work. Note, Those whom Christ intends for, and calls to, any work, he first prepares and qualifies, in some measure, for it. He prepared them, (1.) By *taking them to be with him*. Note, The best preparative for the work of the ministry, is an acquaintance and communion with Jesus Christ. They that would *serve Christ*, must first be *with him* (Jn. 12:26). Paul had Christ revealed, not only *to him*, but *in him*, before he went to preach him among the Gentiles, Gal. 1:16. By the lively acts of faith, and the frequent exercise of prayer and meditation, that fellowship with Christ must be maintained and kept up, which is a requisite qualification for the work of the ministry. (2.) By *teaching them*; they

were with him as scholars or pupils, and he taught them privately, besides the benefit they derived from his public preaching; he opened the scriptures to them, and opened their understandings to understand the scriptures: to them it was given to *know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*, and to them they were *made plain*. Note, They that design to be teachers must first be learners; they must receive, that they may give; they must be *able to teach others*, 2 Tim. 2:2. Gospel truths must be first committed to them, before they be commissioned to be gospel ministers. To give men *authority* to teach others, that have not an *ability*, is but a mockery to God and the church; it is *sending a message by the hand of a fool*, Prov. 26:6. Christ *taught his disciples* before he sent them forth (ch. 5:2), and afterwards, when he enlarged their commission, he gave them more ample instructions, Acts 1:3.

II. What the commission was that he gave them.

1. He *called them to him*, v. 1. He had called them to come *after* him before; now he calls them to come *to* him, admits them to a greater familiarity, and will not have them to keep at such a distance as they had hitherto observed. They that *humble themselves* shall thus be *exalted*. The priests under the law were said to *draw near* and *approach* unto God, nearer than the people; the same may be said of gospel ministers; they are called to draw near to Christ, which, as it is an honour, so should strike an awe upon them, remembering that Christ will be sanctified in those that *come nigh unto him*. It is observable, that when the disciples were to be *instructed*, they *came unto* him of their own accord, ch. 5:1. But now they were to be *ordained*, he *called them*. Note, It well becomes the disciples of Christ to be more forward to learn than to teach. In the sense of our own ignorance, we must seek opportunities to be taught; and in the same sense we must *wait for a call*, a clear call, ere we take upon us to *teach others*; for *no man ought to take this honour to himself*.

2. He *gave them power, exousian, authority* in his name, to command men to obedience, and for the confirmation of that authority, to command devils too into a subjection. Note, All rightful authority is derived from Jesus Christ. All power is given to him without limitation, and the subordinate powers that be are ordained of him. Some of his honour he put on his ministers, as Moses put some of his on Joshua. Note, It is an undeniable proof of the fulness of power which Christ used as Mediator, that he could impart his power to those he employed, and enable them to work the same miracles that he wrought in his name. He gave them *power over unclean spirits*, and over *all manner of sickness*. Note, The design of the gospel was to *conquer the devil* and to *cure the world*. These preachers were sent out destitute of all external advantages to recommend them; they had no wealth, nor learning, nor titles of honour, and they made a very mean figure; it was therefore requisite that they should have some extraordinary power to advance them above the scribes.

(1.) He gave them power *against unclean spirits, to cast them out*. Note, The power that is committed to the ministers of Christ, is directly levelled against the devil and his kingdom. The devil, as an *unclean spirit*, is working both in doctrinal errors (Rev. 16:13), and in practical debauchery (2 Pt. 2:10); and in both these, ministers have a charge against him. Christ gave them power to cast him out of the bodies of people; but that was to signify the destruction of his *spiritual kingdom*, and all the works of the devil; for which purpose the *Son of God* was *manifested*.

(2.) He gave them power to *heal all manner of sickness*. He authorized them to work miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine, to prove that it was of God; and they were to work useful miracles for the illustration of it, to prove that it is not only faithful, but well *worthy of all acception*; that the design of the gospel is to heal and save. Moses's miracles were many of them for destruction; those Mahomet pretended to, were for ostentation; but the miracles Christ wrought, and appointed his apostles to work, were all for edification, and evince him to be, not only the great Teacher and Ruler, but the great Redeemer, of the world. Observe what an emphasis is laid upon the extent of their power to *all manner of sickness*, and *all manner of disease*, without the exception even of those that are reckoned incurable, and the reproach of physicians. Note, In the grace of the gospel there is a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady. There is no spiritual disease so malignant, so inveterate, but there is a sufficiency of power in Christ, for the cure of it. Let none therefore say there is no hope, or that the breach is wide as the sea, that cannot be healed.

III. The number and names of those that were commissioned; they are made apostles, that is, messengers. An angel, and an apostle, both signify the same thing—one *sent on an errand*, an ambassador. All faithful ministers are sent of Christ, but they that were first, and immediately, sent by him, are eminently called *apostles*, the prime ministers of state in his kingdom. Yet this was but the infancy of their office; it was when Christ *ascended on high* that he *gave some apostles*, Eph. 4:11. Christ himself is called an apostle (Heb. 3:1), for he was *sent by the Father*, and so sent them, Jn. 20:21. The prophets were called God's messengers.

1. Their number was twelve, referring to the number of the tribes of Israel, and the sons of Jacob that were the patriarchs of those tribes. The gospel church must be the Israel of God; the Jews must be first invited into it; the apostles must be spiritual fathers, to beget a seed to Christ. Israel after the flesh is to be rejected for their infidelity; these twelve, therefore, are appointed to be the fathers of another Israel. These twelve, by their doctrine, were to judge the twelve tribes of Israel, Lu. 22:30. These were the twelve stars that made up the church's crown (Rev. 12:1): the twelve foundations of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12, 14), typified by the twelve precious stones in Aaron's breast-plate, the twelve loaves on the table of show-bread, the twelve wells of water at Elim. This was that famous jury (and to make it a grand jury, Paul was added to it) that was impanelled to enquire between the King of kings, and the body of mankind; and, in this chapter, they have their charge given them, by him to whom *all judgment was committed*.

2. Their names are here left upon record, and it is their honour; yet in this they had more reason to rejoice, that their names were *written in heaven* (Lu. 10:20), while the high and mighty names of the great ones of the earth are *buried in the dust*. Observe,

(1.) There are some of these twelve apostles, of whom we know no more, from the scripture, than their names; as Bartholomew, and Simon the Canaanite; and yet they were faithful servants to Christ and his church. Note, all the good ministers of Christ are not alike famous, nor their actions alike celebrated.

(2.) They are names by couples; for at first they were sent forth *two and two*, because *two are better than one*; they would be serviceable to each other, and the more serviceable jointly to Christ and souls; what one forgot the other would remember, and *out of the mouth of two witnesses every word would be established*. Three couple of them

were brethren; Peter and Andrew, James and John, and the other James and Lebbeus. Note, Friendship and fellowship ought to be kept up among relations, and to be made serviceable to religion. It is an excellent thing, when brethren by nature are brethren by grace, and those two bonds strengthen each other.

(3.) Peter is named first, because he was first called; or because he was the most forward among them, and upon all occasions made himself the mouth of the rest, and because he was to be the apostle of the circumcision; but that gave him no power over the rest of the apostles, nor is there the least mark of any supremacy that was given to him, or ever claimed by him, in this sacred college.

(4.) Matthew, the penman of this gospel, is here joined with Thomas (v. 3), but in two things there is a variation from the accounts of Mark and Luke, Mk. 3:18; Lu. 6:15. There, Matthew is put first; in that order it appears he was ordained before Thomas; but here, in his own catalogue, Thomas is put first. Note, It well becomes the disciples of Christ in honour to prefer one another. There, he is only called Matthew, here Matthew the publican, the toll-gatherer or collector of the customs, who was called from that infamous employment to be an apostle. Note, It is good for those who are advanced to honour with Christ, to look *unto the rock whence they were hewn*; often to remember what they were before Christ called them, that thereby they may be kept humble, and divine grace may be the more glorified. Matthew the apostle was Matthew the publican.

(5.) Simon is called the Canaanite, or rather the Canite, from Cana of Galilee, where probably he was born; or Simon the Zealot, which some make to be the signification of *Kananite s*.

(6.) Judas Iscariot is always named last, and with that black brand upon his name, *who also betrayed him*; which intimates that from the first, Christ knew what a wretch he was, that he had a devil, and would prove a traitor; yet Christ took him among the apostles, that it might not be a surprise and discouragement to his church, if, at any time, the vilest scandals should break out in the best societies. Such spots there have been in our feasts of charity; tares among the wheat, wolves among the sheep; but there is a day of discovery and separation coming, where hypocrites shall be unmasked and discarded. Neither the apostleship, nor the rest of the apostles, were ever the worse for Judas's being one of the twelve, while his wickedness was concealed and did not break out.

Verses 5-15

We have here the instructions that Christ gave to his disciples, when he gave them their commission. Whether this charge was given them in a continued discourse, or the several articles of it hinted to them at several times, is not material; in this he *commanded them*. Jacob's blessing his sons, is called his *commanding* them, and with these commands Christ commanded a blessing. Observe,

I. The people to whom he sent them. These ambassadors are directed what places to go to.

1. Not to the Gentiles nor the Samaritans. They must not *go into the way of the Gentiles*, nor into any road out of the land of Israel, whatever temptations they might have. The Gentiles must not have the gospel brought them, till the Jews have first refused it. As to the Samaritans, who were the posterity of the mongrel people that the king of

Assyria planted about Samaria, their country lay between Judea and Galilee, so that they could not avoid *going into the way* of the Samaritans, but they must *not enter into any of their cities*. Christ had declined manifesting himself to the Gentiles or Samaritans, and therefore the apostles must not preach to them. If the gospel be hid from any place, Christ thereby hides himself from that place. This restraint was upon them only in their first mission, afterwards they were appointed to *go into all the world*, and teach *all nations*.

2. But *to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. To them Christ appropriated his own ministry (ch. 15:24), for he was a *minister of the circumcision* (Rom. 15:8): and, therefore, to them the apostles, who were but his attendants and agents, must be confined. The first offer of salvation must be made to the Jews, Acts 3:26. Note, Christ had a particular and very tender concern for the *house of Israel*; they were *beloved for the fathers' sakes*, Rom. 11:28. He looked with compassion upon them as *lost sheep*, whom he, as a shepherd, was to gather out of the by-paths of sin and error, into which they were gone astray, and in which, if not brought back, they would wander endlessly; see Jer. 2:6. The Gentiles also had been as lost sheep, 1 Pt. 2:25. Christ gives this description of those to whom they were sent, to quicken them to diligence in their work, they were sent to the house of Israel (of which number they themselves lately were), whom they could not but pity, and be desirous to help.

II. The preaching work which he appointed them. He did not send them forth without an errand; no, *As ye go, preach*, v. 7. They were to be itinerant preachers: wherever they come they must proclaim the beginning of the gospel, saying, *The kingdom of heaven is at hand*. Not that they must say nothing else, but this must be their text; on this subject they must enlarge: let people know, that the kingdom of the Messiah, who is the Lord from heaven, is now to be set up according to the scriptures; from whence it follows, that men must *repent* of their sins and forsake them, that they might be admitted to the privileges of that kingdom. It is said (Mk. 6:12), *they went out, and preached that men should repent*; which was the proper use and application of this doctrine, concerning the approach of the *kingdom of heaven*. They must, therefore, expect to hear more of this long-looked-for Messiah shortly, and must be ready to receive his doctrine, to believe in him, and to submit to his yoke. The preaching of this was like the morning light, to give notice of the approach of the rising sun. How unlike was this to the preaching of Jonah, which proclaimed ruin at hand! Jonah 3:4. This proclaims salvation at hand, *nigh them that fear God; mercy and truth meet together* (Ps. 85:9, 10), that is, *the kingdom of heaven at hand*: not so much the personal presence of the king; that must not be doated upon; but a spiritual kingdom which is to be set up, when his bodily presence is removed, in the hearts of men.

Now this was the same that John the Baptist and Christ had preached before. Note, People need to have good truths pressed again and again upon them, and if they be preached and heard with new affections, they are as if they were fresh to us. Christ, in the gospel, is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, Heb. 13:8. Afterwards, indeed, when the Spirit was poured out, and the Christian church was formed, this *kingdom of heaven came*, which was now spoken of as *at hand*; but the *kingdom of heaven* must still be the subject of our preaching: now it is come, we must tell people it is come to them, and must lay before them the precepts and privileges of it; and there is a kingdom of glory yet to come, which we must speak of as at hand, and quicken people to diligence from the

consideration of that.

III. The power he gave them to work miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine, v. 8. When he sent them to preach the same doctrine that he had preached, he empowered them to confirm it, by the same divine seals, which could never be set to a lie. This is not necessary now the kingdom of God is come; to call for miracles now is to lay again the foundation when the building is reared. The point being settled, and the doctrine of Christ sufficiently attested, by the miracles which Christ and his apostles wrought, it is tempting God to ask for more signs. They are directed here,

1. To use their power in doing good: not "Go and remove mountains," or "fetch fire from heaven," but, *Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers*. They are sent abroad as public blessings, to intimate to the world, that love and goodness were the spirit and genius of that gospel which they came to preach, and of that kingdom which they were employed to set up. By this it would appear, that they were the servants of that God who is good and does good, and whose mercy is *over all his works*; and that the intention of the doctrine they preached, was to heal sick souls, and to *raise* those that were *dead in sin*; and therefore, perhaps, that of *raising the dead* is mentioned; for though we read not of their raising any to life before the *resurrection of Christ*, yet they were instrumental to raise many to *spiritual life*.

2. In *doing good freely*; *Freely ye have received, freely give*. Those that had power to heal all diseases, had an opportunity to enrich themselves; who would not purchase such easy certain cures at any rate? Therefore they are cautioned not to make a gain of the power they had to work miracles: they must cure *gratis*, further to exemplify the nature and complexion of the gospel kingdom, which is made up, not only of grace, but of free grace. *Gratia gratis data* (Rom. 3:24), *freely by his grace*, Buy medicines *without money, and without price*, Isa. 55:1. And the reason is, because *freely you have received*. Their power to heal the sick cost them nothing, and, therefore, they must not make any secular advantage to themselves of it. Simon Magus would not have offered money for the gifts of the Holy Ghost, if he had not hoped to get money by them; Acts 8:18. Note, The consideration of Christ's freeness in doing good to us, should make us free in doing good to others.

IV. The provision that must be made for them in this expedition; it is a thing to be considered in sending an ambassador, who must bear the charge of the embassy. As to that,

1. They must make no provision for it themselves, v. 9, 10. *Provide neither gold nor silver*. As, on the one hand, they shall not raise estates by their work, so, on the other hand, they shall not spend what little they have of their own upon it. This was confined to the present mission, and Christ would teach them, (1.) To act *under the conduct of human prudence*. They were now to make but a short excursion, and were soon to return to their Master, and to their head-quarters again, and, therefore, why should they burthen themselves with that which they would have no occasion for? (2.) To act in *dependence upon Divine Providence*. They must be taught to live, without *taking thought for life*, ch. 6:25, etc. Note, They who go upon Christ's errand, have, of all people, most reason to trust him for *food convenient*. Doubtless he will not be wanting to those that are working for him. Those whom he employs, as they are taken under special protection, so they are entitled to special provisions. Christ's hired servants shall have *bread enough and to*

spare; while we abide faithful to God and our duty, and are in care to do our work well, we may cast all our other care upon God; Jehovah-jireh, let the Lord provide for us and ours as he thinks fit.

2. They might expect that those to whom they were sent would *provide for them* what was necessary, v. 10. The *workman is worthy of his meat*. They must not expect to be fed by miracles, as Elijah was: but they might depend upon God to incline the hearts of those they went among, to be kind to them, and provide for them. Though they who *serve at the altar* may not expect to grow rich by the altar, yet they may expect to live, and to live comfortably upon it, 1 Co. 9:13, 14. It is fit they should have their maintenance from their work. Ministers are, and must be, workmen, labourers, and they that are so are *worthy of their meat*, so as not to be forced to any other labour for the earning of it. Christ would have his disciples, as not to distrust their God, so not to distrust their countrymen, so far as to doubt of a comfortable subsistence among them. If you preach to them, and endeavour to do good among them, surely they will give you meat and drink enough for your necessities: and if they do, never desire dainties; God will pay you your wages hereafter, and it will be running on in the mean time.

V. The proceedings they were to observe in dealing with any place, v. 11–15. They went abroad they knew not whither, uninvited, unexpected, knowing none, and known of none; the land of their nativity was to them a strange land; what rule must they go by? what course must they take? Christ would not send them out without full instructions, and here they are.

1. They are here directed how to conduct themselves toward those that were *strangers to them*; How to do,

(1.) In *strange towns and cities*: when you come to a town, *enquire who in it is worthy*. [1.] It is supposed that there were some such in every place, as were better disposed than others to receive the gospel, and the preachers of it; though it was a time of general corruption and apostasy. Note, In the worst of times and places, we may charitably hope that there are some who distinguish themselves, and are better than their neighbours; some who swim against the stream, and are as wheat among the chaff. There were saints in Nero's household. Enquire who is worthy, who there are that have some fear of God before their eyes, and have made a good improvement of the light and knowledge they have. The best are far from meriting the favour of a gospel offer; but some would be more likely than others to give the apostles and their message a favourable entertainment, and would not trample these pearls under their feet. Note, Previous dispositions to that which is good, are both directions and encouragements to ministers, in dealing with people. There is most hope of the word being profitable to those who are already so well inclined, as that it is acceptable to them; and there is here and there one such. [2.] They must enquire out such; not enquire for the best inns; public houses were no proper places for them that neither took money with them (v. 9), nor expected to receive any (v. 8); but they must look out for accommodations in private houses, with those that would entertain them well, and expect no other recompence for it but a prophet's reward, an apostle's reward, their praying and preaching. Note, They that entertain the gospel, must neither grudge the expense of it, nor promise themselves to get by it in this world. They must enquire, not who is rich, but who is worthy; not who is the best gentleman, but who is the best man. Note, Christ's disciples, wherever they come,

should ask for the good people of the place, and be acquainted with them; when we took God for our God, we took his people for our people, and like will rejoice in its like. Paul in all his travels found out the brethren, if there were any, Acts 28:14. It is implied, that if they did enquire who was worthy, they might discover them. They that were better than their neighbours would be taken notice of, and any one could tell them, there lives an honest, sober, good man; for this is a character which, like the ointment of the right hand, betrays itself and fills the house with its odours. Every body knew where the seer's house was, 1 Sa. 9:18. [3.] In the house of those they found worthy, they must continue; which intimates that they were to make so short a stay at each town, that they needed not change their lodging, but whatever house providence brought them to at first, there they must continue till they left that town. They are justly suspected, as having no good design, that are often changing their quarters. Note, It becomes the disciples of Christ to make the best of that which is, to abide by it, and not be for shifting upon every dislike or inconvenience.

(2.) In strange houses. When they had found the house of one they thought worthy, they must at their entrance salute it. "In those common civilities, be beforehand with people, in token of your humility. Think it not a disparagement, to invite yourselves into a house, nor stand upon the *punctilio* of being invited. Salute the family, [1.] To draw on further discourse, and so to introduce your message." (From matters of common conversation, we may insensibly pass into that communication which is good to the use of edifying.) [2.] "To try whether you are welcome or not; you will take notice whether the salutation be received with shyness and coldness, or with a ready return. He that will not receive your salutation kindly, will not receive your message kindly; for he that is unskilful and unfaithful in a little, will also be in much, Lu. 16:10. [3.] To insinuate yourselves into their good opinion. *Salute the family*, that they may see that though you are serious, you are not morose." Note, Religion teaches us to be courteous and civil, and obliging to all with whom we have to do. Though the apostles went out backed with the authority of the Son of God himself, yet their instructions were, when they came into a house, not to *command it*, but to *salute it*; for *love's sake rather to beseech*, is the evangelical way, Philemon 8, 9. Souls are first drawn to Christ with the *CORDS of a man*, and kept to him by the *BANDS of love*, Hos. 11:4. When Peter made the first offer of the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile, Peter was first saluted; see Acts 10:25, for the Gentiles courted that which the Jews were courted to.

When they had saluted the family after a godly sort, they must by the return, judge concerning the family, and proceed accordingly. Note, The eye of God is upon us, to observe what entertainment we give to good people and good ministers; if *the house be worthy, let your peace come and rest upon it; if not, let it return to you*, v. 13. It seems then, that after they had enquired for the *most worthy* (v. 11), it was possible they might light upon those that were unworthy. Note, Though it is wisdom to hearken to, yet it is folly to rely upon, common report and opinion; we ought to use a judgment of discretion, and to see with our own eyes. *The wisdom of the prudent is himself to understand his own way*. Now this rule is intended,

First, For satisfaction to the apostles. The common salutation was, *Peace be unto you*; this, as they used it, was turned into gospel; it was the *peace of God*, the peace of the kingdom of heaven, that they wished. Now lest they should make a scruple of

pronouncing this blessing upon all promiscuously, because many were utterly unworthy of it, this is to clear them of that scruple; Christ tells them that this gospel prayer (for so it was now become) should be put up for all, as the gospel proffer was made to all indefinitely, and that they should leave it to God who knows the heart, and every man's true character, to determine the issue of it. If the house be worthy, it will reap the benefit of your blessing; if now, there is no harm done, you will not lose the benefit of it; *it shall return to you*, as David's prayers for his ungrateful enemies did, Ps. 35:13. Note, It becomes us to judge charitably *of all*, to pray heartily *for all*, and to conduct ourselves courteously *to all*, for that is our part, and then to leave it with God to determine what effect it shall have upon them, for that is his part.

Secondly, For direction to them. "If, upon your salutation, it appear that they are indeed worthy, let them have more of your company, and so *let your peace come upon them*; preach the gospel to them, peace by Jesus Christ; but if otherwise, if they carry it rudely to you, and shut their doors against you, *let your peace*, as much as in you lies, *return to you*. Retract what you have said, and turn your backs upon them; by slighting this, they have made themselves unworthy of the rest of your favours, and cut themselves short of them." Note, Great blessings are often lost by a neglect seemingly small and inconsiderable, when men are in their probation and upon their behaviour. Thus Esau lost his birthright (Gen. 25:34), and Saul his kingdom, 1 Sa. 13:13, 14.

2. They are here directed how to carry it towards those that were refusers of them. The case is put (v. 14) of those that *would not receive them, nor hear their words*. The apostles might think, that now they had such a doctrine to preach, and such a power to work miracles for the confirmation of it, no doubt but they should be universally entertained and made welcome: they are, therefore, told before, that there would be those that would slight them, and put contempt on them and their message. Note, The best and most powerful preachers of the gospel must expect to meet with some, that will not so much as give them the hearing, nor show them any token of respect. Many turn *a deaf ear*, even to the *joyful sound*, and will not *hearken to the voice of the charmers, charm they never so wisely*. Observe, "They will not *receive you*, and they will not *hear your words*." Note, Contempt of the gospel, and contempt of gospel ministers, commonly go together, and they will either of them be construed into a contempt of Christ, and will be reckoned for accordingly.

Now in this case we have here,

(1.) The directions given to the apostles what to do. They must *depart out of that house or city*. Note, The gospel will not tarry long with those that put it away from them. At their departure they must *shake off the dust of their feet*, [1.] In detestation of their wickedness; it was so abominable, that it did even pollute the ground they went upon, which must therefore be *shaken off* as a filthy thing. The apostles must have no fellowship nor communion with them; must not so much as carry away the dust of their city with them. *The work of them that turn aside shall not cleave to me*, Ps. 101:3. The prophet was not to *eat or drink* in Bethel, 1 Ki. 13:9. [2.] As a denunciation of wrath against them. It was to signify, that they were base and vile as dust, and that God would *shake them off*. The dust of the apostles' feet, which they left behind them, would witness against them, and be brought in as evidence, that the gospel had been preached to them,

Mk. 6:11. Compare Jam. 5:3. See this practised, Acts 13:51, 18:6. Note, They who *despise* God and his gospel shall be *lightly esteemed*.
 (2.) The *doom passed* upon such *wilful recusants*, v. 15. It shall be *more tolerable, in the day of judgment, for the land of Sodom*, as wicked a place as it was. Note, [1.] There is a day of judgment coming, when all those that refused the gospel will certainly be called to account for it; however they now make a jest of it. They that would not hear the doctrine that would save them, shall be made to hear the sentence that will ruin them. Their judgment is respited till *that day*. [2.] There are different degrees of punishment in that day. All the pains of hell will be *intolerable*; but some will be more so than others. Some sinners sink deeper into hell than others, and are beaten with more stripes. [3.] The condemnation of those that reject the gospel, will in that day be severer and heavier than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom is said to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7. But that *vengeance* will come with an aggravation upon those that despise the great salvation. Sodom and Gomorrah were exceedingly wicked (Gen. 13:13), and that which filled up the measure of their iniquity was, that they *received not* the angels that were sent to them, but abused them (Gen. 19:4, 5), and *hearkened not to their words*, v. 14. And yet it will be more tolerable for them than for those who receive not Christ's ministers and hearken not to their words. God's wrath against them will be more flaming, and their own reflections upon themselves more cutting. *Son, remember I* will sound most dreadfully in the ears of such as had a fair offer made them of *eternal life*, and chose death rather. The iniquity of Israel, when God sent them his servants the prophets, is represented as, upon that account, more heinous than the iniquity of Sodom (Eze. 16:48, 49), much more now he sent them his Son, the great Prophet.

Verses 16-42

All these verses relate to the sufferings of Christ's ministers in their work, which they are here taught to expect, and prepare for; they are directed also how to bear them, and how to go on with their work in the midst of them. This part of the sermon looks further than to their present mission; for we find not that they met with any great hardships or persecutions while Christ was with them, nor were they well able to bear them; but they are here forewarned of the troubles they should meet with, when after Christ's resurrection, their commission should be *enlarged*, and the kingdom of heaven, which was not *at hand*, should be actually set up; they dreamed of nothing then, but outward pomp and power; but Christ tells them, they must expect greater sufferings than they were yet called to; that they should then be made prisoners, when they expected to be made princes. It is good to be told what troubles we may hereafter meet with, that we may provide accordingly, and may not boast, as if we had put off the harness, when we are yet but girding it on.

We have here intermixed, I. Predictions of trouble: and, II. Prescriptions of counsel and comfort, with reference to it.

I. We have here predictions of trouble; which the disciples should meet with in their work: Christ foresaw *their* sufferings as well as his own, and yet will have them go on, as he went on himself; and he foretold them, not only that the troubles might not be a

surprise to them, and so a shock to their faith, but that, being the accomplishment of a prediction, they might be a confirmation to their faith.

He tells them what they should suffer, and from whom.

1. *What they should suffer*: hard things to be sure; for, *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves*, v. 16. And what may a flock of poor, helpless, unguarded sheep expect, in the midst of a herd of ravenous wolves, but to be worried and torn? Note, Wicked men are like wolves, in whose nature it is to devour and destroy. God's people, and especially his ministers, are like sheep among them, of a contrary nature and disposition, exposed to them, and commonly an easy prey to them. It looked unkind in Christ to expose them to so much danger, who had left all to follow him; but he knew that the glory reserved for his sheep, when in the great day they shall be set on his right hand, would be a recompence sufficient for sufferings as well as services. They are as *sheep among wolves*, that is frightful; but Christ sends them forth, that is comfortable; for he that sends them forth will protect them, and bear them out. But that they might know the worst, he tells them particularly what they must expect.

(1.) They must expect to be hated, v. 22. *Ye shall be hated for my name's sake*: that is the root of all the rest, and a bitter root it is. Note, Those whom Christ loves, the world hates; as whom the court blesses the country curses. *If the world hated Christ without a cause* (Jn. 15:25), no marvel if it hated those that bore his image and served his interests. We hate what is nauseous, and they *are counted as the offscouring of all things*, 1 Co. 4:13. We hate what is noxious, and they are counted *the troublers of the land* (1 Ki. 18:17), and the tormentors of their neighbours, Rev. 11:10. It is grievous to be *hated*, and to be the object of so much ill-will, but it is *for thy name's sake*; which, as it speaks the true reason of the hatred, whatever is pretended, so it speaks comfort to them who are thus hated; it is for a good cause, and they have a good friend that shares with them in it, and takes it to himself.

(2.) They must expect to be apprehended and arraigned as malefactors. Their restless malice is resistless malice, and they will not only attempt, but will prevail, to *deliver you up to the councils* (v. 17, 18), to the bench of aldermen or justices, that take care of the public peace. Note, A deal of mischief is often done to good men, under colour of law and justice. In *the place of judgment there is wickedness*, persecuting wickedness, Eccl. 3:16. They must look for trouble, not only from inferior magistrates in the councils, but from governors and kings, the supreme magistrates. To be brought before them, under such black representations as were commonly made of Christ's disciples, was dreadful and dangerous; for *the wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion*. We find this often fulfilled in the *acts of the apostles*.

(3.) They must expect to be put to death (v. 21); *They shall deliver them to death*, to death in state, with pomp and solemnity, when it shows itself most as *the king of terrors*. The malice of the enemies rages so high as to inflict this; it is *the blood of the saints* that they thirst after: the faith and patience of the saints stand so firm as to expect this; *Neither count I my life dear to myself*: the wisdom of Christ permits it, knowing how to make the blood of the martyrs *the seal of the truth*, and *the seed of the church*. By this noble army's not loving *their lives to the death*, Satan has been vanquished, and the kingdom of Christ and its interests greatly advanced, Rev. 11:11. They were put to death as criminals, so the enemies meant it, but really as sacrifices (Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6); as

burnt offerings, sacrifices of acknowledgement to the honour of God, and in his truth and cause.

(4.) They must expect, in the midst of these sufferings, to be branded with the most odious and ignominious names and characters that could be. Persecutors would be ashamed in this world, if they did not first dress up those in bear-skins whom they thus bait, and represent them in such colours as may serve to justify such cruelties. The blackest of all the ill characters they give them is here stated; they call them Beelzebub, the name of the prince of the devils, v. 25. They represent them as ringleaders of the interest of the kingdom of darkness, and since every one thinks he hates the devil, thus they endeavour to make them odious to all mankind. See, and be amazed to see, how this world is imposed upon: [1.] Satan's sworn enemies are represented as his friends; the apostles, who pulled down the devil's kingdom, were called devils. Thus *men laid to their charge*, not only *things which they knew not*, but *things which they abhorred*, and were directly contrary to, and the reverse of. [2.] Satan's sworn servants would be thought to be his enemies, and they never more effectually do his work, than when they pretend to be fighting against him. Many times they who themselves are nearest akin to the devil, are most apt to father others upon him; and those that paint him on others' clothes have him reigning in their own hearts. It is well there is a day coming, when (as it follows here, v. 26) that which is hid will be brought to light.

(5.) These sufferings are here represented by a sword and division, v. 34, 35. *Think not that I am come to send peace*, temporal peace and outward prosperity; they thought Christ came to give all his followers wealth and power in the world; "no," says Christ, "I did not come with a view to give them *peace*; *peace* in heaven they may be sure of, but not *peace* on earth." Christ came to give us *peace* with God, *peace* in our consciences, *peace* with our brethren, but *in the world ye shall have tribulation*. Note, They mistake the design of the gospel, who think their profession of it will secure them from, for it will certainly expose them to, trouble in this world. If all the world would receive Christ, there would then follow a universal *peace*, but while there are and will be so many that reject him (and those not only *the children of this world*, but *the seed of the serpent*), the children of God, that are called out of the world, must expect to feel the fruits of their enmity.

[1.] Look not for *peace*, but a sword, Christ came to give *the sword of the word*, with which his disciples fight against the world, and *conquering* work this sword has made (Rev. 6:4; 19:21), and *the sword of persecution*, with which the world fights against the disciples, being *cut to the heart with the sword of the word* (Acts 7:54), and tormented by the testimony of Christ's witnesses (Rev. 11:10), and *cruel* work this sword made. Christ sent that gospel, which gives occasion for the drawing of this sword, and so may be said to send this sword; he orders his church into a suffering state for the trial and praise of his people's graces, and *the filling up of the measure of their enemies' sins*.

[2.] Look not for *peace*, but division (v. 35), *I am come to set men at variance*. This effect of the preaching of the gospel is not the fault of the gospel, but of those who do not receive it. When some *believe the things that are spoken*, and others *believe them not*, the faith of those that believe condemns those that believe not, and, therefore, they have an enmity against them that believe. Note, the most violent and implacable feuds have ever been those that have arisen from difference in religion; no enmity like that of the

persecutors, no resolution like that of the persecuted. Thus Christ tells his disciples what they should suffer, and these were hard sayings; if they could bear these, they could bear any thing. Note, Christ has dealt fairly and faithfully with us, in telling us the worst we can meet with in his service; and he would have us deal so with ourselves, in sitting down and counting the cost.

2. They are here told from whom, and by whom, they should suffer these hard things. Surely hell itself must be let loose, and devils, those desperate and despairing spirits, that *have no part nor lot in the great salvation*, must become incarnate, ere such spiteful enemies could be found to a doctrine, the substance of which was *good will toward men*, and *the reconciling of the world to God*; no, would you think it? all this mischief arises to the preachers of the gospel, from those to whom they came to preach salvation. Thus *the blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul* (Prov. 29:10), and therefore heaven is so much opposed on earth, because earth is so much under the power of hell, Eph. 2:2.

These hard things Christ's disciples must suffer,

(1.) From men (v. 17). "*Beware of men*; you will have need to stand upon your guard, even against those who are of the same nature with you"—such is the depravity and degeneracy of that nature (*homo homini lupus,—man is a wolf to man*), crafty and politic as men, but cruel and barbarous as beasts, and wholly divested of the thing called humanity. Note, Persecuting rage and enmity turn men into brutes, into devils. Paul at Ephesus fought with beasts in the shape of men, 1 Co. 15:32. It is a sad pass that the world is come to, when the best friends it has, have need to *beware of men*. It aggravates the troubles of Christ's suffering servants, that they arise from those who *are bone of their bone*, made of the same blood. Persecutors are, in this respect, worse than beasts, that they prey upon those of their own kind: *Saevis inter se convenit ursis—Even savage bears agree among themselves*. It is very grievous to have *men rise up against us* (Ps. 124), from whom we might expect protection and sympathy; *men*, and no more: mere *men*; *men*, and not saints; *natural men* (1 Co. 2:14); *men of this world*, Ps. 17:14. Saints are more than *men*, and are *redeemed from among men*, and therefore are *hated by them*. The nature of man, if it be not sanctified, is the worst nature in the world next to that of devils. *They are men*, and therefore subordinate, dependent, dying creatures; *they are men*, but *they are but men* (Ps. 9:20), and *who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?* Isa. 51:12. *Beware of the men*, so Dr. Hammond; those you are acquainted with, the men of the Jewish sanhedrim, which disallowed Christ, 1 Pt. 2:4.

(2.) From professing men, men that *have a form of godliness*, and make a show of religion. *They will scourge you in their synagogues*, their places of meeting for the worship of God, and for the exercise of their church-discipline: so that they looked upon the scourging of Christ's ministers to be a branch of their religion. Paul was *five times scourged in the synagogues*, 2 Co. 11:24. The Jews, under colour of zeal for Moses, were the most bitter persecutors of Christ and Christianity, and placed those outrages to the score of their religion. Note, Christ's disciples have suffered much from conscientious persecutors, that *scourge them in their synagogues*, cast them out and kill them, and *think they do God good service* (Jn. 16:2), and say, *Let the Lord be glorified*, Isa. 66:5; Zec. 11:4, 5. But the synagogue will be so far from consecrating the persecution, that the persecution, doubtless, profanes and desecrates the synagogue.

(3.) From great men, and men in authority. The Jews did not only scourge them, which was the utmost their remaining power extended to, but when they could go no further themselves, they delivered them up to the Roman powers, as they did Christ, Jn. 18:30. *Ye shall be brought before governors and kings* (v. 18), who, having more power, are in a capacity of doing the more mischief. *Governors and kings* receive their power from Christ (Prov. 8:15), and should be his servants, and his church's protectors and nursing-fathers, but they often use their power against him, and are rebels to Christ, and oppressors of his church. *The kings of the earth* set themselves against his kingdom, Ps. 2:1, 2; Acts 4:25, 26. Note, It has often been the lot of good men to have great men for their enemies.

(4.) From all men (v. 22). *Ye shall be hated of all men*, of all wicked men, and these are the generality of men, *for the whole world lies in wickedness*. So few are there that love, and own, and countenance Christ's righteous cause, that we may say, the friends of it are *hated of all men*; *they are all gone astray*, and, therefore, *eat up my people*, Ps. 14:3. As far as the apostasy from God goes, so far the enmity against the saints goes; sometimes it appears more general than at other times, but there is something of this poison lurking in the hearts of all *the children of disobedience*. *The world hates you*, for it *wonders after the beast*, Rev. 13:3. *Every man is a liar*, and therefore a hater of truth.

(5.) From those of their own kindred. *The brother shall deliver up the brother to death*, v. 21. *A man shall be*, upon this account, *at variance with his own father*; nay, and those of the weaker and tenderer sex too shall become persecutors and persecuted; *the persecuting daughter will be against the believing mother*, where natural affection and filial duty, one would think, should prevent or soon extinguish the quarrel; and then, no marvel *if the daughter-in-law be against the mother-in-law*; where, too often, the coldness of love seeks occasion of contention, v. 35. In general, *a man's foes shall be they of his own household* (v. 36). They who should be his friends will be incensed against him for embracing Christianity, and especially for adhering to it when it comes to be persecuted, and will join with his persecutors against him. Note, The strongest bonds of relative love and duty have often been broken through, by an enmity against Christ and his doctrine. Such has been the power of prejudice against the true religion, and zeal for a false one, that all other regards, the most natural and sacred, the most engaging and endearing, have been sacrificed to these Molochs. They who *rage against the Lord, and his anointed ones, break even these bonds in sunder, and cast away even these cords from them*, Ps. 2:2, 3. Christ's spouse suffers hard things from the anger of *her own mother's children*, Cant. 1:6. Sufferings from such are more grievous; nothing cuts more than this, *It was thou, a man, mine equal* (Ps. 55:12, 13); and the enmity of such is commonly most implacable; *a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city*, Prov. 18:19. The martyrologies, both ancient and modern, are full of instances of this. Upon the whole matter, it appears, that *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution; and through many tribulations we must expect to enter into the kingdom of God*.

II. With these predictions of trouble, we have here prescriptions of counsels and comforts for a time of trial. He sends them out exposed to danger indeed, and expecting it, but well armed with instructions and encouragements, sufficient to bear them up, and bear them out, in all these trials. Let us gather up what he says,

1. By way of counsel and direction in several things.

(1.) *Be ye wise as serpents*, v. 16. "You may be so" (so some take it, only as a permission); "you may be as wary as you please, provided you be harmless as doves." But it is rather to be taken as a precept, recommending to us that wisdom of the prudent, which is to understand his way, as useful at all times, but especially in suffering times. "Therefore, because you are exposed, as sheep among wolves; *be ye wise as serpents*; not wise as foxes, whose cunning is to deceive others; but as *serpents*, whose policy is only to defend themselves, and to shift for their own safety." The disciples of Christ are hated and persecuted as *serpents*, and their ruin is sought, and, therefore, they need the *serpent's* wisdom. Note, It is the will of Christ that his people and ministers, being so much exposed to troubles in this world, as they usually are, should not needlessly expose themselves, but use all fair and lawful means for their own preservation. Christ gave us an example of this wisdom, ch. 21:24, 25; 22:17, 18, 19; Jn. 7:6, 7; besides the many escapes he made out of the hands of his enemies, till his hour was come. See an instance of Paul's wisdom, Acts 23:6, 7. In the cause of Christ we must sit loose to life and all its comforts, but must not be prodigal of them. It is the wisdom of the *serpent* to secure his head, that it may not be broken, to *stop his ear to the voice of the charmer* (Ps. 58:4, 5), and to *take shelter in the clefts of the rocks*; and herein we may *be wise as serpents*. We must *be wise*, not to pull trouble upon our own heads; *wise* to keep silence in an evil time, and not to give offence, if we can help it.

(2.) *Be ye harmless as doves*. "Be mild, and meek, and dispassionate; not only do nobody any hurt, but bear nobody any ill will; be without gall, *as doves* are; this must always go along with the former." They are *sent forth among wolves*, therefore must *be as wise as serpents*, but they are *sent forth as sheep*, therefore must *be harmless as doves*. We must *be wise*, not to wrong ourselves, but rather so than wrong any one else; must use the harmlessness of the *dove* to bear twenty injuries, rather than the subtlety of the *serpent* to offer or to return one. Note, It must be the continual care of all Christ's disciples, to be innocent and inoffensive in word and deed, especially in consideration of the enemies they are in the midst of. We have need of a *dove-like* spirit, when we are beset with birds of prey, that we may neither provoke them nor be provoked by them: David coveted *the wings of a dove*, on which to fly away and be at rest, rather than the wings of a hawk. *The Spirit descended on Christ as a dove*, and all believers partake of *the Spirit of Christ*, a *dove-like* spirit, made for love, not for war.

(3.) *Beware of men*, v. 17. "Be always upon your guard, and avoid dangerous company; take heed what you say and do, and presume not too far upon any man's fidelity; be jealous of the most plausible pretensions; *trust not in a friend*, no, not *in the wife of thy bosom*," Micah 7:5. Note, It becomes those who are gracious to be cautious, for we are taught to *cease from man*. Such a wretched world do we live in, that we know not whom to trust. Ever since our Master was betrayed with a kiss, by one of his own disciples, we have need to *beware of men, of false brethren*.

(4.) *Take no thought how or what ye shall speak*, v. 19. "When you are brought before magistrates, conduct yourselves decently, but afflict not yourselves with care how you shall come off. A prudent thought there must be, but not an anxious, perplexing, disquieting thought; let this *care be cast upon God*, as well as that—*what you shall eat and what you shall drink*. Do not study to make fine speeches, *ad captandam*

*benevolentiam—to ingratiate yourselves; affect not quaint expressions, flourishes of wit, and laboured periods, which only serve to gild a bad cause; the gold of a good one needs it not. It argues a diffidence of your cause, to be solicitous in this matter, as if it were not sufficient to speak for itself. You know upon what grounds you go, and then *verbaque praevisam rem non invita sequentur—suitable expressions will readily occur.*” Never any spoke better before governors and kings than those three champions, who took *no thought before, what they should speak: O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter*, Dan. 3:16. See Ps. 119:46. Note, The disciples of Christ must be more thoughtful how to *do well* than how to *speak well*; how to *keep* their integrity than how to *vindicate* it. *Non magna loquimur, sed vivimus—Our lives, not boasting words*, form the best apology.*

(5.) *When they persecute you in this city, flee to another*, v. 23. "Thus reject them who reject you and your doctrine, and try whether others will not receive you and it. Thus shift for your own safety." Note, In case of imminent peril, the disciples of Christ may and must secure themselves by flight, when God, in his providence, opens to *them a door of escape*. He that flies may fight again. It is no inglorious thing for Christ's soldiers to quit their ground, provided they do not quit their colours: they may go out of the way of *danger*, though they must not go out of the way of *duty*. Observe Christ's care of his disciples, in providing places of retreat and shelter for them; ordering it so, that persecution rages not in all places at the same time; but *when one city* is made too hot for them, *another* is reserved for a cooler shade, and *a little sanctuary*; a favour to be used and not to be slighted; yet always with this proviso, that no sinful, unlawful means be used to make the escape; for then it is not a door of God's opening. We have many examples to this rule in the history both of Christ and his apostles, in the application of all which to particular cases *wisdom* and integrity are *profitable to direct*.

(6.) *Fear them not* (v. 26), because *they can but kill the body* (v. 28). Note, it is the duty and interest of Christ's disciples, not to fear the greatest of their adversaries. They who truly fear God, need not fear man; and they who are afraid of the least sin, need not be afraid of the greatest trouble. *The fear of man brings a snare*, a perplexing snare, that disturbs our peace; an entangling snare, by which we are drawn into sin; and, therefore, it must be carefully watched, and striven, and prayed against. Be the times never so difficult, enemies never so outrageous, and events never so threatening, yet need we not fear, *yet will we not fear, though the earth be removed*, while we have so good a God, so good a cause, and so *good a hope through grace*.

Yes, this is soon said; but when it comes to the trial, racks and tortures, dungeons and galleys, axes and gibbets, fire and faggot, are terrible things, enough to make the stoutest heart to tremble, and to start back, especially when it is plain, that they may be avoided by a few declining steps; and therefore, to fortify us against this temptation, we have here,

[1.] A good reason against this fear, taken from the limited power of the enemies; they *kill the body*, that is the utmost their rage can extend to; hitherto they can go, if God permit them, but no further; *they are not able to kill the soul*, nor to do it any hurt, and the soul is the man. By this it appears, that the soul does not (as some dream) fall asleep at death, nor is deprived of thought and perception; for then the killing of the body would be the killing of the soul too. The soul is killed when it is separated from God and his

love, which is its life, and is made a vessel of his wrath; now this is out of the reach of their power. *Tribulation, distress, and persecution* may separate us from all the world, but cannot part between us and God, cannot make us either not to love him, or not to be loved by him, Rom. 8:35, 37. If, therefore, we were more concerned about our souls, as our jewels, we should be less afraid of men, whose power cannot rob us of them; they can but *kill the body*, which would quickly die of itself, *not the soul*, which will enjoy itself and its God in spite of them. They can but crush the cabinet: a heathen set the tyrant at defiance with this, *Tunde capsam Anaxarchi, Anaxarchum nom laedis—you may abuse the case of Anaxarchus, you cannot injure Anaxarchus himself*. The pearl of price is untouched. Seneca undertakes to make it out, that you cannot hurt a wise and good man, because death itself is no real evil to him. *Si maximum illud ultra quod nihil habent iratae leges, aut saevissimi domini minantur, in quo imperium suum fortuna consumit, aequo placidoque animo accipimus, et scimus mortem malum non esse ob hoc, ne injuriam quidem—If with calmness and composure we meet that last extremity, beyond which injured laws and merciless tyrants have nothing to inflict, and in which fortune terminates her dominion, we know that death is not an evil, because it does not occasion the slightest injury*. Seneca *De Constantid*.

[2.] A good remedy against it, and that is, to fear God. *Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*. Note, First, *Hell* is the destruction both of *soul and body*; not of the *being* of either, but the *well*—being of both; it is the ruin of the whole man; if the soul be lost, the body is lost too. They sinned together; the body was the soul's tempter to sin, and its tool in sin, and they must eternally suffer together. Secondly, This destruction comes from the power of God: *he is able to destroy*; it is a destruction from his *glorious power* (2 Th. 1:9); *he will in it make his power known*; not only his authority to sentence, but his ability to execute the sentence, Rom. 9:22. Thirdly, *God is therefore to be feared*, even by the best saints in this world. *Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men to stand in awe of him. If according to his fear so is his wrath, then according to his wrath so should his fear be*, especially because *none knows the power of his anger*, Ps. 90:11. When Adam, in innocency, was awed by a threatening, let none of Christ's disciples think that they need not the restraint of a holy fear. *Happy is the man that fears always*. The *God of Abraham*, who was then dead, is called the *Fear of Isaac*, who was yet alive, Gen. 31:42, 53. Fourthly, The fear of God, and of his power reigning in the soul, will be a sovereign antidote against the fear of man. It is better to fall under the frowns of all the world, than under God's frowns, and therefore, as it is most right in itself, so it is most safe for us, *to obey God rather than men*, Acts 4:19. They who *are afraid of a man that shall die, forget the Lord their Maker*, Isa. 51:12, 13; Neh. 4:14.

(7.) *What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light* (v. 27); "whatever hazards you run, go on with your work, publishing and proclaiming the everlasting gospel to all the world; that is your business, mind that. The design of the enemies is not merely to destroy *you*, but to suppress *that*, and, therefore, whatever be the consequence, publish *that*." *What I tell you, that speak ye*. Note, That which the apostles have delivered to us is the same that *they received from Jesus Christ*, Heb. 2:3. They spake what he told them—*that, all that, and nothing but that*. Those ambassadors received their instructions in private, *in darkness*, in the ear, in corners, in parables. *Many things Christ spake openly, and nothing in secret* varying from what he preached in public, Jn. 18:20. But the

particular instructions which he gave his disciples after his resurrection, concerning *the things pertaining to the kingdom of God*, were whispered in the ear (Acts 1:3), for then *he never showed himself openly*. But they must deliver their embassy publicly, *in the light*, and *upon the house-tops*; for the doctrine of the gospel is what all are concerned in (Prov. 1:20, 21; 8:2, 3), therefore *he that hath ears to hear, let him hear*. The first indication of the reception of the Gentiles into the church, was *upon a house-top*, Acts 10:9. Note, There is no part of Christ's gospel that needs, upon any account, to be concealed; *the whole counsel of God must be revealed*, Acts 20:27. In never so mixed a multitude let it be plainly and fully delivered.

2. By way of comfort and encouragement. Here is very much said to that purpose, and all little enough, considering the many hardships they were to grapple with, throughout the course of their ministry, and their present weakness, which was such, as that, without some powerful support, they could scarcely bear even the prospect of such usage; Christ therefore shows them why they should be of good cheer.

(1.) Here is one word peculiar to their present mission, v. 23. *Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come*. They were to preach that *the kingdom of the Son of man*, the Messiah, was *at hand*; they were to pray, *Thy kingdom come*: now they should *not have gone over all the cities of Israel*, thus praying and thus preaching, before that kingdom should come, in the exaltation of Christ, and the pouring out of the Spirit. It was a comfort, [1.] That what they said should be made good: they said *the Son of man* is coming, and *behold, he comes*. *Christ will confirm the word of his messengers*, Isa. 44:26. [2.] That it should be made good quickly. Note, It is matter of comfort to Christ's labourers, that their working time will be short, and soon over; the hireling has his day; the work and warfare will in a little time be accomplished. [3.] That then they should be advanced to a higher station. *When the Son of man comes, they shall be endued with greater power from on high*; now they were sent forth as agents and envoys, but in a little time their commission should be enlarged, and they should be sent forth as plenipotentiaries into all the world.

(2.) Here are many words that relate to their work in general, and the troubles they were to meet with in it; and *they are good words and comfortable words*.

[1.] That their sufferings were *for a testimony against them and the Gentiles*, v. 18. When the Jewish consistories transfer you to the Roman governors, that they may have you put to death, your being hurried thus from one judgment-seat to another, will help to make your testimony the more public, and will give you an opportunity of bringing the gospel to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews; nay, you will testify to them, and against them, by the very troubles you undergo. Note, God's people, and especially God's ministers, are his witnesses (Isa. 43:10), not only in their *doing* work, but in their *suffering* work. Hence they are called martyrs—*witnesses* for Christ, that his truths are of undoubted certainty and value; and, being witnesses for him, they are witnesses against those who oppose him and his gospel. The sufferings of the martyrs, as they witness to the truth of the gospel they profess, so they are testimonies of the enmity of their persecutors, and both ways they are a testimony against them, and will be produced in evidence in the great day, when *the saints shall judge the world*; and the reason of the sentence will be, *Inasmuch as ye did it unto these, ye did it unto me*. Now if their sufferings be a testimony, how cheerfully should they be borne! for the testimony is not

finished till those come, Rev. 11:7. If they be Christ's witnesses, they shall be sure to have their charges borne.

[2.] That upon all occasions they should have God's special presence with them, and the immediate assistance of his Holy Spirit, particularly when they should be called out to bear their testimony *before governors and kings; it shall be given you* (said Christ) *in that same hour what ye shall speak*. Christ's disciples were chosen *from among the foolish of the world*, unlearned and ignorant men, and, therefore, might justly distrust their own abilities, especially when they were called before great men. When Moses was sent to Pharaoh, he complained, *I am not eloquent*, Ex. 4:10. When Jeremiah was set over the kingdoms, he objected, *I am but a child*, Jer. 1:6, 10. Now, in answer to this suggestion, First, they are here promised that *it should be given them*, nor some time before, but *in that same hour, what they should speak*. They shall speak *extempore*, and yet shall speak as much to the purpose, as if it had been never so well studied. Note, When God calls us out to speak for him, we may depend upon him to teach us what to say; even then, when we labour under the greatest disadvantages and discouragements. Secondly, They are here assured, that the blessed Spirit should draw up their plea for them. *It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father, which speaketh in you*, v. 20. They were not left to themselves upon such an occasion, but God undertook for them; his Spirit of wisdom spoke *in* them, as sometimes his providence wonderfully spoke *for* them, and by both together they were manifested in the consciences even of their persecutors. God gave them an ability, not only to speak to the purpose, but what they did say, to say it with holy zeal. The same Spirit that assisted them in the pulpit, assisted them at the bar. They cannot but come off well, who have such an advocate; to whom God says, as he did to Moses (Ex. 4:12), *Go, and I will be with thy mouth, and with thy heart*.

[3.] That *he that endures to the end shall be saved*, v. 22. Here it is very comfortable to consider, First, that there will be an *end* of these troubles; they may last long, but will not last always. Christ comforted himself with this, and so may his followers; *The things concerning me have an end*, Lu. 22:37. *Dabit Deus his quoque finem—These also will God bring to a termination*. Note, A believing prospect of the period of our troubles, will be of great use to support us under them. *The weary will be at rest, when the wicked cease from troubling*, Job 3:17. God will give an expected *end*, Jer. 29:11. The troubles may seem tedious, *like the days of a hireling*, but, blessed be God, they are not everlasting. Secondly, That while they continue, they may be *endured*; as they are not *eternal*, so they are not *intolerable*; they may be borne, and borne *to the end*, because the sufferers shall be borne up under them, in everlasting arms: *The strength shall be according to the day*, 1 Co. 10:13. Thirdly, Salvation will be the eternal recompence of all those *that endure to the end*. The weather stormy, and the way foul, but the pleasure of home will make amends for all. A believing regard to the crown of glory has been in all ages the cordial and support of suffering saints, 2 Co. 4:16; 17, 18; Heb. 10:34. This is not only an encouragement to us to *endure*, but an engagement to *endure to the end*. They who *endure but awhile, and in time of temptation fall away*, have run in vain, and lose all that they have attained; but they who persevere, are sure of the prize, and they only. *Be faithful unto death, and then thou shalt have the crown of life*.

[4.] That whatever hard usage the disciples of Christ meet with, it is no more than

what their Master met with before (v. 24, 25). *The disciple is not above his master.* We find this given them as a reason, why they should not hesitate to perform the meanest duties, no, not washing one another's feet. Jn. 13:16. Here it is given as a reason, why they should not stumble at the hardest sufferings. They are reminded of this saying, Jn. 15:20. It is a proverbial expression, *The servant is not better than his master,* and, therefore, let him not expect to fare *better.* Note, First, Jesus Christ is our *Master,* our teaching *Master,* and we are his disciples, to learn of him; our ruling *master,* and we are his servants to obey him: He is *Master* of the house, *oikodespotes,* has a despotic power in the church, which is his family. Secondly, Jesus Christ our Lord and Master met with very hard usage from the world; they called him Beelzebub, the god of flies, the name of the chief of the devils, with whom they said he was in league. It is hard to say which is here more to be wondered at, the wickedness of men who thus abused Christ, or the patience of Christ, who suffered himself to be thus abused; that he who was the God of glory should be stigmatized as the god of flies; the King of Israel, as the god of Ekron; the Prince of light and life, as the prince of the powers of death and darkness; that Satan's greatest Enemy and Destroyer should be run down as his confederate, and yet *endure such contradiction of sinners.* Thirdly, The consideration of the ill treatment which Christ met with in the world, should engage us to expect and prepare for the like, and to bear it patiently. Let us not think it strange, if they who hated him hate his followers, for his sake; nor think it hard if they who are shortly to be made *like him in glory,* be now made *like him in sufferings.* Christ began in the *bitter cup,* let us be willing to pledge him; his bearing the cross made it easy for us.

[5.] That *there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed,* v. 26. We understand this, First, Of the revealing of the gospel to all the world. "Do you *publish* it (v. 27), for it shall be published. The truths which are now, as mysteries, hid from the children of men, shall all be made known, to all nations, in their own language," Acts 2:11. *The ends of the earth must see this salvation.* Note, It is a great encouragement to those who are doing Christ's work, that it is a work which shall certainly be done. It is a plough which God will speed. Or, Secondly, Of the clearing up of the innocency of Christ's suffering servants, that are called Beelzebub; their true character is now invidiously disguised with false colours, but however their innocency and excellency are now *covered,* they *shall be revealed;* sometimes it is in a great measure done in this world, when the righteousness of the saints is made, by subsequent events, to *shine forth as the light:* however it will be done at the great day, when their glory shall be manifested to all the world, angels and men, to whom they are now *made spectacles,* 1 Co. 4:9. All their reproach shall be rolled away, and their graces and services, that are now *covered, shall be revealed,* 1 Co. 4:5. Note, It is matter of comfort to the people of God, under all the calumnies and censures of men, that there will be a resurrection of *names* as well as of *bodies,* at the last day, when *the righteous shall shine forth as the sun.* Let Christ's ministers faithfully reveal his truths, and then leave it to him, in due time, to reveal their integrity.

[6.] That the providence of God is in a special manner conversant about the saints, in their suffering, v. 29–31. It is good to have recourse to our first principles, and particularly to the doctrine of God's universal providence, extending itself to all the creatures, and all their actions, even the smallest and most minute. The light of nature teaches us this, and it is comfortable to all men, but especially to all good men, who can

in faith call this God their Father, and for whom he has a tender concern. See here,

First, The general extent of providence to all the creatures, even the least, and least considerable, to the *sparrows*, v. 29. These little animals are of so small account, that one of them is not valued; there must go two to be worth *a farthing* (nay, you shall have five for a halfpenny, Lu. 12:6), and yet they are not shut out of the divine care; *One of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father*: That is, 1. They do not light on *the ground* for food, to pick up a grain of corn, but *your heavenly Father*, by his providence, laid it ready for them. In the parallel place, Lu. 12:6, it is thus expressed, *Not one of them is forgotten before God*, forgotten to be provided for; *he feedeth them*, ch. 6:26. Now he that feeds the sparrows, will not starve the saints. 2. They do *not fall to the ground* by death, either a natural or a violent death, without the notice of God: though they are so small a part of the creation, yet even their death comes within the notice of the divine providence; much more does the death of his disciples. Observe, The birds that soar above, when they die, *fall to the ground*; death brings the highest to the earth. Some think that Christ here alludes to the *two sparrows* that were used in cleansing the leper (Lev. 14:4-6); the two birds in the margin are called *sparrows*; of these one was killed, and so *fell to the ground*, the other was let go. Now it seemed a casual thing which of the two was killed; the persons employed took which they pleased, but God's providence designed, and determined which. Now this God, who has such an eye to the sparrows, because they are his creatures, much more will have an eye to you, who are his children. If a sparrow die not *without your Father*, surely a man does not,—a Christian,—a minister,—my friend, my child. A bird falls not into the fowler's net, nor by the fowler's shot, and so comes not to be sold in the market, but according to the direction of providence; your enemies, like subtle fowlers, *lay snares for you*, and *privily shoot at you*, but they cannot take you, they cannot hit you, unless God give them leave. Therefore be not afraid of death, for your enemies have no power against you, but what is *given them from above*. God can break their bows and snares (Ps. 38:12-15; 64:4, 7), and make our souls to *escape as a bird* (Ps. 124:7); *Fear ye not, therefore*, v. 31. Note, There is enough in the doctrine of God's providence to silence all the fears of God's people: *Ye are of more value than many sparrows*. All men are so, for the other creatures were made for man, and *put under his feet* (Ps. 8:6-8); much more the disciples of Jesus Christ, who are the excellent ones of the earth, however contemned, as if not worth one sparrow.

Secondly, The particular cognizance which providence takes of the disciples of Christ, especially in their sufferings (v. 30), *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered*. This is a proverbial expression, denoting the account which God takes and keeps of all the concerns of his people, even of those that are most minute, and least regarded. This is not to be made a matter of curious enquiry, but of encouragement to live in a continual dependence upon God's providential care, which extends itself to all occurrences, yet without disparagement to the infinite glory, or disturbance to the infinite rest, of the Eternal Mind. If God numbers their hairs, much more does he number their heads, and take care of their lives, their comforts, their souls. It intimates, that God takes more care of them, than they do of themselves. They who are solicitous to number their money, and goods, and cattle, yet were never careful to number their hairs, which fall and are lost, and they never miss them: but God *numbers the hairs of his people*, and *not a hair of their head shall perish* (Lu. 21:18); not the least hurt shall be done them, but upon

a valuable consideration: so precious to God are his saints, and their lives and deaths!

[7.] That he will shortly, in the day of triumph, own those who now own him, in the day of trial, when those who deny him shall be for ever disowned and rejected by him, v. 32, 33. Note, First, It is our duty, and if we do it, it will hereafter be our unspeakable honour and happiness, to *confess Christ before men*. 1. It is our duty, not only to believe in Christ, but to profess that faith, in suffering for him, when we are called to it, as well as in serving him. We must never be ashamed of our relation to Christ, our attendance on him, and our expectations from him: hereby the sincerity of our faith, is evidenced, his name glorified, and others edified. 2. However this may expose us to reproach and trouble now, we shall be abundantly recompensed for that, *in the resurrection of the just*, when it will be our unspeakable honour and happiness to hear Christ say (what would we more?) "*Him will I confess*, though a poor worthless worm of the earth; this is one of mine, one of my friends and favourites, who loved me and was beloved by me; the purchase of my blood, the workmanship of my Spirit; *I will confess him before my Father*, when it will do him the most service; I will speak a good word for him, when he appears before *my Father* to receive his doom; I will present him, will represent him to *my Father*." Those who honour Christ he will thus honour. They honour him *before men*; that is a *poor* thing: he will honour them *before his Father*; that is a *great* thing. Secondly, It is a dangerous thing for any to deny and disown *Christ before men*; for they who so do will be disowned by him *in the great day*, when they have most need of him: he will not own them for his servants who would not own him for their master: *I tell you, I know you not*, ch. 7:23. In the first ages of Christianity, when for a man to *confess Christ* was to venture all that was dear to him in this world, it was more a trial of sincerity, than it was afterwards, when it had secular advantages attending it.

[8.] That the foundation of their discipleship was laid in such a temper and disposition, as would make sufferings very light and easy to them; and it was upon the condition of a preparedness for suffering, that Christ took them to be his followers, v. 37-39. He told them at first, that they were *not worthy of him*, if they were not willing to part with all for him. Men hesitate not at those difficulties which necessarily attend their profession, and which they counted upon, when they undertook that profession; and they will either cheerfully submit to those fatigues and troubles, or disclaim the privileges and advantages of their profession. Now, in the Christian profession, they are reckoned unworthy the dignity and felicity of it, that put not such a value upon their interest in Christ, as to prefer that before any other interests. They cannot expect the gains of a bargain, who will not come up to the terms of it. Now thus the terms are settled; if religion be worth *any* thing, it is worth *every* thing: and, therefore, all who believe the truth of it, will soon come up to the price of it; and they who make it their business and bliss, will make every thing else to yield to it. They who like not Christ on these terms, may leave him at their peril. Note, It is very encouraging to think, that whatever we leave, or lose, or suffer for Christ, we do not make a hard bargain for ourselves. Whatever we part with for this pearl of price, we may comfort ourselves with this persuasion, that it is well worth what we give for it. The terms are, that we must prefer Christ.

First, Before our nearest and dearest relations; *father or mother, son or daughter*. Between these relations, because there is little room left for envy, there is commonly

more room for love, and, therefore, these are instanced, as relations which are most likely to affect us. Children must love their parents, and parents must love their children; but if they love them better than Christ, they are unworthy of him. As we must not be *deterred* from Christ by the hatred of our relations which he spoke of (v. 21, 35, 36), so we must not be *drawn* from him, by their love. Christians must be as Levi, who *said to his father, I have not seen him*, Deu. 33:9.

Secondly, Before our ease and safety. We must *take up our cross* and *follow him*, else we are *not worthy* of him. Here observe, 1. They who would *follow Christ*, must expect *their cross* and *take it up*. 2. In taking *up the cross*, we must *follow Christ's* example, and bear it as he did. 3. It is a great encouragement to us, when we meet with crosses, that in bearing them we *follow Christ*, who has showed us the way; and that if we follow him faithfully, he will lead us through sufferings like him, to glory with him.

Thirdly, Before life itself, v. 39. *He that findeth his life shall lose it*; he that thinks he had found it when he has saved it, and kept it, by denying Christ, *shall lose it* in an eternal death; but *he that loseth his life for Christ's sake*, that will part with it rather than deny Christ, *shall find it*, to his unspeakable advantage, an eternal life. They are best prepared for the life to come, that sit most loose to this present life.

[9.] That Christ himself would so heartily espouse their cause, as to show himself a friend to all their friends, and to repay all the kindnesses that should at any time be bestowed upon them, v. 40–42. *He that receiveth you, receiveth me*.

First, It is here implied, that though the generality would reject them, yet they should meet with some who would receive and entertain them, would bid the message welcome to their hearts, and the messengers to their houses, for the sake of it. Why was the gospel market made, but that if some will not, others will. In the worst of times there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Christ's ministers shall not *labour in vain*.

Secondly, Jesus Christ takes what is done to his faithful ministers, whether in kindness or in unkindness, as done to himself, and reckons himself *treated* as they are *treated*. *He that receiveth you, receiveth me*. Honour or contempt put upon an ambassador reflects honour or contempt upon the prince that sends him, and ministers are *ambassadors for Christ*. See how Christ may still be entertained by those who would testify their respects to him; his people and ministers we have always with us; and he is *with them always*, even to the end of the world. Nay, the honour rises higher, *He that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me*. Not only Christ takes it as done to himself, but through Christ God does so too. By entertaining Christ's ministers, they entertain not *angels unawares*, but Christ, nay, and God himself, and *unawares* too, as appears, ch. 25:37. *When saw we thee an hungered?*

Thirdly, That though the kindness done to Christ's disciples be never so small, yet if there be occasion for it, and ability to do no more, it shall be accepted, though it be *but a cup of cold water given to one of these little ones*, v. 42. They are *little ones*, poor and weak, and often stand in need of refreshment, and glad of the least. The extremity may be such, that a *cup of cold water* may be a great favour. Note, Kindnesses shown to Christ's disciples are valued in Christ's books, not according to the cost of the gift, but according to the love and affection of the giver. On that score the widow's mite not only passed current, but was stamped high, Lu. 21:3, 4. Thus they who are truly rich in graces may be rich in good works, though poor in the world.

Fourthly, That kindness to Christ's disciples which he will accept, must be done with an eye to Christ, and for his sake. A prophet must be received *in the name of a prophet*, and a *righteous man* in the name of a *righteous man*, and one of those *little ones* in the *name of a disciple*; not because they are learned, or witty, nor because they are our relations or neighbours, but because they are righteous, and so bear Christ's image; because they are prophets and disciples, and so are sent on Christ's errand. It is a believing regard to Christ that puts an acceptable value upon the kindnesses done to his ministers. Christ does not interest himself in the matter, unless we first interest him in it. *Ut tibi debeam aliquid pro eo quod praestas, debes non tantum mihi praestare, sed tanquam mihi—If you wish me to feel an obligation to you for any service you render, you must not only perform the service, but you must convince me that you do it for my sake.* Seneca.

¹Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.