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Preface

## **An Exposition, With Practical Observations, of The Gospel According to St. Mark**

We have heard the evidence given in by the first witness to the doctrine and miracles of our Lord Jesus; and now here is another witness produced, who calls for our attention. The second *living creature* saith, *Come, and see*, Rev. 6:3. Now let us enquire a little,

I. Concerning *this witness*. His name is *Mark*. *Marcus* was a Roman name, and a very common one, and yet we have no reason to think, but that he was by birth a Jew; but as Saul, when he went among the nations, took the Roman name of *Paul*, so he of *Mark*, his Jewish name perhaps being *Mardocai*; so Grotius. We read of John whose surname was *Mark*, sister's son to Barnabas, whom Paul was displeas'd with (Acts 15:37, 38), but afterward had a great kindness for, and not only order'd the churches to receive him (Col. 4:10), but sent for him to be his assistant, with this encomium, *He is profitable to me for the ministry* (2 Tim. 4:11); and he reckons him among his fellow-labourers, Philemon 24. We read of Marcus whom Peter calls his *son*, he having been an instrument of his conversion (1 Pt. 5:13); whether that was the same with the other, and, if not, which of them was the penman of this gospel, is altogether uncertain. It is a tradition very current among the ancients, that St. Mark wrote this gospel under the direction of St. Peter, and that it was confirm'd by his authority; so Hieron. Catal. Script. Eccles. *Marcus discipulus et interpres Petri, juxta quod Petrum referentem audierat, legatus Roma à fratribus, breve scripsit evangelium—Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, being sent from Rome by the brethren, wrote a concise gospel*; and Tertullian saith (Adv. Marcion. lib. 4, cap. 5), *Marcus quod edidit, Petri affirmetur, cujus interpres Marcus—Mark, the interpreter of Peter, delivered in writing the things which had been preached by Peter*. But as Dr. Whitby very well suggests, Why should we have recourse to the authority of Peter for the support of this gospel, or say with St. Jerome that Peter approv'd of it and recommend'd it by his authority to the church to be read, when, though it is true Mark was no apostle, yet we have all the reason in the world to think that both he and Luke were of the number of the seventy disciples, who *companied with the apostles all along* (Acts 1:21), who had a commission like that of the apostles (Lu. 10:19, compar'd with Mk. 16:18), and who, it is highly probable, receiv'd the Holy Ghost when they did (Acts 1:15; 2:1-4), so that it is no diminution at all to the validity or value of this gospel, that Mark was not one of the twelve, as Matthew and John were? St. Jerome saith that, after the writing of this gospel, he went into Egypt, and was the first that preach'd the gospel at Alexandria, where he found'd a church, to which he was a great example of holy living. *Constituit ecclesiam tantâ doctrinâ et vitæ continentîâ ut omnes sectatores Christi ad exemplum sui cogeret—He so adorned, by his doctrine and his life, the church which he found'd, that his example influenc'd all the followers of Christ*.

II. Concerning *this testimony*. Mark's gospel, 1. Is but short, much shorter than Matthew's, not giving so full an account of Christ's sermons as that did, but insisting chiefly on his miracles. 2. It is very much a repetition of what we had in Matthew; many remarkable circumstances being added to the stories there related, but not many new matters. When many witnesses are

called to prove the same fact, upon which a judgment is to be given, it is not thought *tedious*, but highly *necessary*, that they should each of them relate it in their own words, again and again, that by the agreement of the testimony the thing may be established; and therefore we must not think this book of scripture needless, for it is written not only to confirm our belief that *Jesus is the Christ the Son of God*, but to put us in mind of things which we have read in the foregoing gospel, that we may *give the more earnest heed to them*, lest at any time we let them slip; and even *pure minds* have need to be *thus stirred up by way of remembrance*. It was fit that such great things as these should be spoken and written, once, yea twice, because man is so *unapt to perceive* them, and so *apt to forget* them. There is no ground for the tradition, that this gospel was written first in Latin, though it was written at Rome; it was written in Greek, as was St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, the Greek being the more universal language.

## Chapter 1

Mark's narrative does not take rise so early as those of Matthew and Luke do, from the birth of our Saviour, but from John's baptism, from which he soon passes to Christ's public ministry. Accordingly, in this chapter, we have, I. The office of John Baptist illustrated by the prophecy of him (v. 1-3), and by the history of him (v. 4-8). II. Christ's baptism, and his being owned from heaven (v. 9-11). III. His temptation (v. 12, 13). IV. His preaching (v. 14, 15, 21, 22, 38, 39). V. His calling disciples (v. 16-20). VI. His praying (v. 35). VII. His working miracles. 1. His rebuking an unclean spirit (v. 23-28). 2. His curing Peter's mother-in-law, who was ill of a fever (v. 29-31). 3. His healing all that came to him (v. 32, 34). 4. His cleansing a leper (v. 40-45).

### Verses 1-8

We may observe here,

I. What the New Testament is—the *divine* testament, to which we *adhere* above all that is *human*; the new testament, which we *advance* above that which was old. It is *the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God*, v. 1. 1. It is *gospel*; it is God's word, and is *faithful* and *true*; see Rev. 19:9; 21:5; 22:6. It is a *good word*, and well *worthy of all acceptation*; it brings us glad tidings. 2. It is the *gospel of Jesus Christ*, the *anointed Saviour*, the Messiah promised and expected. The foregoing gospel began with the *generation of Jesus Christ*—that was but preliminary, this comes immediately to the business—the *gospel of Christ*. It is called *his*, not only because he is the *Author* of it, and it comes *from him*, but because he is the *Subject of it*, and it treats wholly *concerning him*. 3. This Jesus is the *Son of God*. That truth is the foundation on which the gospel is built, and which it is written to demonstrate; for is Jesus be not *the Son of God*, our *faith is vain*.

II. What the *reference* of the New Testament is to the Old, and its *coherence* with it. The gospel of Jesus Christ *begins*, and so we shall find it *goes on*, just as it is written in the prophets (v. 2); for it *saith no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said should come* (Acts 26:22), which was most proper and powerful for the conviction of the Jews, who believed the Old-Testament prophets to be sent of God and ought to have *evidenced* that they did so by welcoming the accomplishment of their prophecies in its season; but it is of use to us all, for the confirmation of our faith both in the Old Testament and in the New, for the exact harmony that there is between both shows that they both have the same divine original.

Quotations are here borrowed from two prophecies—that of Isaiah, which was the *longest*, and that of Malachi, which was the *latest* (and there were above three hundred years between them), both of whom spoke to the same purport concerning *the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ*, in the ministry of John.

1. Malachi, in whom we had the Old-Testament *farewell*, spoke very plainly (ch. 3:1) concerning John Baptist, who was to give the New-Testament *welcome*. *Behold, I send my messenger before thy face*, v. 2. Christ himself had taken notice of this, and applied it to John (Mt. 11:10), who was God's *messenger*, sent to *prepare Christ's way*.

2. Isaiah, the most evangelical of all the prophets, *begins* the evangelical part of his prophecy with this, which points to the *beginning of the gospel of Christ* (Isa. 40:3); *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness*, v. 3. Matthew had taken notice of

this, and applied it to John, ch. 3:3. But from these two put together here, we may observe, (1.) That Christ, in his gospel, *comes among us*, bringing with him a treasure of grace, and a sceptre of government. (2.) Such is the corruption of the world, that there is something to do to *make room* for him, and to remove that which gives not only *obstruction*, but *opposition* to his progress. (3.) When God sent his Son into the world, he *took care*, and when he sends him into the heart, he *takes care*, effectual care, to *prepare his way before him*; for the designs of his grace shall not be *frustrated*; nor may any expect the comforts of that grace, but such as, by conviction of sin and humiliation for it, are *prepared* for those comforts, and disposed to receive them. (4.) When the *paths* that were *crooked*, are *made straight* (the mistakes of the judgment rectified, and the *crooked ways* of the affections), then way is made for Christ's comforts. (5.) It is in a *wilderness*, for such this world is, that *Christ's way* is prepared, and theirs that follow him, like that which Israel passed through to Canaan. (6.) The messengers of conviction and terror, that come to prepare Christ's way, are *God's messengers*, whom he sends and will own, and must be *received* as such. (7.) They that are sent to *prepare the way of the Lord*, in such a vast howling wilderness as this is, have need to *cry aloud*, and not spare, and to *lift up their voice like a trumpet*.

III. What the *beginning* of the New Testament was. The gospel began in John Baptist; for *the law and the prophets were, until John*, the only divine revelation, but then the *kingdom of God began to be preached*, Lu. 16:16. Peter begins *from the baptism of John*, Acts 1:22. The gospel did not begin *so soon* as the *birth* of Christ, for he took time to *increase in wisdom and stature*, not so late as his entering upon his public ministry, but half a year before, when John began to preach the same doctrine that Christ afterward preached. His baptism was the dawning of the *gospel day*; for,

1. In John's way of *living* there was the beginning of a *gospel spirit*; for it bespoke great self-denial, mortification of the flesh, a holy contempt of the world, and nonconformity to it, which may truly be called the *beginning of the gospel of Christ* in any soul, v. 6. He was *clothed with camels' hair*, not with soft raiment; was girt, not with a golden, but with a *leathern girdle*; and, in contempt of dainties and delicate things, his meat was *locusts and wild honey*. Note, The more we sit loose to the body, and live above the world, the better we are prepared for Jesus Christ.

2. In John's *preaching* and *baptizing* there was the *beginning* of the *gospel doctrines and ordinances*, and the first fruits of them. (1.) He preached the *remission of sins*, which is the great gospel privilege; showed people their *need* of it, that they were *undone* without it, and that it might be obtained. (2.) He preached *repentance*, in order to it; he told people that there must be a renovation of their hearts and a reformation of their lives, that they must forsake their sins and turn to God, and upon those terms and no other, their sins should be forgiven. *Repentance for the remission of sins*, was what the apostles were commissioned to *preach to all nations*, Lu. 24:27. (3.) He preached Christ, and directed his hearers to *expect him* speedily to appear, and to *expect great things* from him. The preaching of Christ is pure gospel, and that was John Baptist's preaching, v. 7, 8. Like a true gospel minister, he preaches, [1.] The great *pre-eminence* Christ is *advanced to*; so high, so great, is Christ, that John, though one of the greatest that was born of women, thinks himself unworthy to be employed in the meanest office about him, even to *stoop down*, and *untie his shoes*. Thus industrious is he to give honour to him, and to bring others to do so too. [2.] The great *power* Christ is *invested with*; He *comes after me* in time, but he is *mightier than I*, mightier than the mighty

ones of the earth, for he is able to *baptize with the Holy Ghost*; he can *give* the Spirit of God, and by him *govern* the spirits of men. [3.] The great *promise* Christ makes in his gospel to those who have *repented*, and have had their sins forgiven them; They shall be *baptized with the Holy Ghost*, shall be *purified* by his graces, and *refreshed* by his comforts. And, *lastly*, All those who received his doctrine, and submitted to his institution, he *baptized with water*, as the manner of the Jews was to admit proselytes, in token of their *cleansing themselves* by repentance and reformation (which were the duties required), and of God's *cleansing them* both by remission and by sanctification, which were the blessings promised. Now this was afterward to be advanced into a gospel ordinance, which John's using it was a preface to.

3. In the success of John's preaching, and the disciples he admitted by baptism, there was the *beginning of a gospel church*. He baptized *in the wilderness*, and declined going into the cities; but *there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem*, inhabitants both of city and country, families of them, and *were all baptized of him*. They entered themselves his disciples, and bound themselves to his discipline; in token of which, they *confessed their sins*; he admitted them his disciples, in token of which, he *baptized* them. Here were the stamina of the gospel church, the *dew of its youth* from *the womb of the morning*, Ps. 110:3. Many of these afterward became followers of Christ, and preachers of his gospel, and this grain of mustard-seed became a *tree*.

### Verses 9-13

We have here a brief account of Christ's baptism and temptation, which were largely related Mt. 3 and 4.

I. His *baptism*, which was his first public appearance, after he had long lived obscurely *in Nazareth*. O how much *hidden worth* is there, which in this world is either lost in the dust of contempt and *cannot* be known, or wrapped up in the veil of humility and *will not* be known! But sooner or later it *shall be* known, as Christ's was.

1. See how *humbly* he owned God, by coming to be *baptized of John*; and thus *it became him to fulfil all righteousness*. Thus he *took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh*, that, though he was perfectly pure and unspotted, yet he was *washed* as if he had been *polluted*; and thus *for our sakes he sanctified himself, that we also might be sanctified*, and be baptized with him, Jn. 17:19.

2. See how *honourably* God owned him, when he submitted to John's *baptism*. Those who *justify God*, and *they* are said to do, who were *baptized with the baptism* of John, he will *glorify*, Lu. 7:29, 30.

(1.) He *saw the heavens opened*; thus he was owned to be the Lord from heaven, and had a glimpse of the glory and joy that were *set before him*, and *secured* to him, as the recompence of his undertaking. Matthew saith, *The heavens were opened to him*. Mark saith, *He saw them opened*. Many have the heavens opened to receive them, but they do not see it; Christ had not only a clear foresight of his sufferings, but of his glory too.

(2.) He *saw the Spirit like a dove descending upon him*. Note, *Then* we may see heaven opened to us, when we perceive the Spirit *descending* and working upon us. God's good work in us is the surest evidence of his good will towards us, and his preparations for us. Justin Martyr says, that *when Christ was baptized, a fire was kindled in Jordan*: and it is an ancient tradition, that *a great light shone round the place*; for the Spirit brings both *light* and *heat*.

(3.) He heard a voice which was intended for his encouragement to proceed in his undertaking, and therefore it is here expressed as directed *to him*, *Thou art my beloved Son*. God lets him know, [1.] That he *loved him* never the *less* for that *low* and *mean* estate to which he had now *humbled himself*; "Though thus emptied and made of no reputation, yet he is my *beloved Son* still." [2.] That he *loved him* much the *more* for that *glorious* and *kind* undertaking in which he had now *engaged himself*. God is *well pleased* in him, as referee of all matters in controversy between him and man; and so well pleased in him, as to be well pleased *with us* in him.

II. His *temptation*. The *good Spirit* that descended upon him, *led him into the wilderness*, v. 12. Paul mentions it as a proof that he had his doctrine from God, and not from man—that, as soon as he was called, he *went not to Jerusalem*, but *went into Arabia*, Gal. 1:17. Retirement from the world is an opportunity of more free converse with God, and therefore must sometimes be chosen, for a while, even by those that are called to the greatest business. Mark observes this circumstance of his being *in the wilderness*—that he was *with the wild beasts*. It was an instance of his Father's care of him, that he was preserved from being torn in pieces by the wild beasts, which encouraged him the more that his Father would provide for him when he was hungry. Special protections are earnest of seasonable supplies. It was likewise an intimation to him of the inhumanity of the men of that generation, whom he was to live among—no better than *wild beasts* in the *wilderness*, nay abundantly worse. In that wilderness,

1. The *evil spirits* were *busy with him*; he was *tempted of Satan*; not by any inward injections (the prince of this world had *nothing in him* to fasten upon), but by outward solicitations. Solicitude often gives advantages to the tempter, therefore *two are better than one*. Christ himself was tempted, not only to teach us, that *it is no sin to be tempted*, but to direct us whither to go for succour when we are tempted, even to him that *suffered*, being *tempted*; that he might experimentally sympathize with us when we are *tempted*.

2. The *good spirits* were *busy about him*; the *angels ministered to him*, supplied him with what he needed, and dutifully attended him. Note, The ministration of the good angels about us, is matter of great comfort in reference to the malicious designs of the evil angels against us; but much more doth it befriend us, to have the indwelling of the spirit in our hearts, which they that have, are so *born of God*, that, as far as they are so, *the evil one toucheth them not*, much less shall be *triumph* over them.

### **Verses 14-22**

Here is, I. A general account of Christ's preaching in Galilee. John gives an account of his preaching in Judea, before this (ch. 2 and 3), which the other evangelists had omitted, who chiefly relate what occurred in Galilee, because that was least known at Jerusalem. Observe,

1. When Jesus began to preach in Galilee; *After that John was put in prison*. When he had *finished* his testimony, then Jesus *began* his. Note, The silencing of Christ's ministers shall not be the suppressing of Christ's gospel; if some be laid aside, others shall be raised up, perhaps mightier than they, to carry on the same work.

2. What he preached; *The gospel of the kingdom of God*. Christ came to set up the kingdom of God among men, that they

might be brought into *subjection to it*, and might obtain *salvation in it*; and he set it up by the preaching of his gospel, and a power going along with it.

Observe, (1.) The great *truths* Christ preached; *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand*. This refers to the Old Testament, in which the kingdom of the Messiah was promised, and the time fixed for the introducing of it. They were not so well versed in those prophecies, nor did they so well observe the signs of the times, as to understand it themselves, and therefore Christ gives them notice of it; "The time prefixed is now *at hand*; glorious discoveries of divine light, life, and love, are now to be made; a new dispensation far more spiritual and heavenly than that which you have hitherto been under, is now to commence." Note, God keeps time; when *the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand*, for the vision is *for an appointed time*, which will be punctually observed, though it tarry past our time.

(2.) The great *duties* inferred from thence. Christ gave them to *understand the times*, that they might know *what Israel ought to do*; they fondly expected the Messiah to appear in external pomp and power, not only to free the Jewish nation from the Roman yoke, but to make it have dominion over all its neighbours, and therefore thought, when that *kingdom of God was at hand*, they must prepare for war, and for victory and preferment, and great things in the world; but Christ tells them, in the prospect of that kingdom approaching, they must *repent, and believe the gospel*. They had broken the *moral law*, and could not be saved by a *covenant of innocency*, for both Jew and Gentile are concluded *under guilt*. They must therefore take the benefit of a *covenant of grace*, must submit to a *remedial law*, and this is it—*repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*. They had not made use of the prescribed preservatives, and therefore must have recourse to the prescribed restoratives. By repentance we must lament and forsake our sins, and by faith we must receive the forgiveness of them. By repentance we must give glory to our Creator whom we have offended; by faith we must give glory to our Redeemer who came to *save us from our sins*. Both these must go together; we must not think either that reforming our lives will save us without trusting in the righteousness and grace of Christ, or that trusting in Christ will save us without the reformation of our hearts and lives. Christ hath joined these two together, and let no man think to put them asunder. They will mutually assist and befriend each other. Repentance will quicken faith, and faith will make repentance evangelical; and the sincerity of both together must be evidenced by a diligent conscientious obedience to all God's commandments. Thus the preaching of the gospel began, and thus it continues; still the call is, Repent, and believe, and live a *life of repentance* and a *life of faith*.

II. Christ appearing as a teacher, here is next his *calling of disciples*, v. 16–20. Observe, 1. Christ will have followers. If he set up a school, he will have scholars; if he set up his standard, he will have soldiers; if he preach, he will have hearers. He has taken an effectual course to secure this; for *all that the Father has given him, shall, without fail, come to him*. 2. The instruments Christ chose to employ in setting up his kingdom, were the *weak and foolish things of the world*; not called from the great sanhedrim, or the schools of the rabbin, but picked up from among the tarpaulins *by the sea-side, that the excellency of the power* might appear to be wholly *of God*, and not at all *of them*. 3. Though Christ needs not the help of man, yet he is pleased to make use of it in setting up his kingdom, that he might deal with us not in a formidable but in a familiar way, and that in his kingdom the *nobles and governors may be of ourselves*, Jer. 31:21. 4. Christ puts honour upon those who, though

mean in the world, are *diligent in their business*, and *loving to one another*; so those were, whom Christ called. He found them *employed*, and employed *together*. *Industry* and unity are *good* and *pleasant*, and there the Lord Jesus commands the blessing, even this blessing, *Follow me*. 5. The business of ministers is to *fish for souls*, and *win them to Christ*. The children of men, in their natural condition, are lost, wander endlessly in the great ocean of this world, and are carried down the stream of its course and way; they are unprofitable. Like leviathan in the waters, they *play therein*; and often, like the fishes of the sea, they devour one another. Ministers, in preaching the gospel, *cast the net* into the waters, Mt. 13:47. Some are enclosed and brought to shore, but far the greater number escape. *Fishermen* take great pains, and expose themselves to great perils, so do *ministers*; and they have need of wisdom. If many a draught brings home nothing, yet they must go on. 6. Those whom Christ called, must *leave all*, to follow him; and by his grace he inclines them to do so. *Not that we must needs go out of the world* immediately, but we must sit loose to the world, and forsake every thing that is inconsistent with our duty to Christ, and that cannot be kept without prejudice to our souls. Mark takes notice of James and John, that they left not only *their father* (which we had in Matthew), but *the hired servants*, whom perhaps they loved as their own brethren, being their *fellow-labourers* and pleasant comrades; not only relations, but companions, must be left for Christ, and old acquaintance. Perhaps it is an intimation of their care for their father; they did not leave him without assistance, they left the *hired servants* with him. Grotius thinks it is mentioned as an evidence that their calling was gainful to them, for it was worth while to keep servants in pay, to help them in it, and their *hands* would be much *missed*, and yet they *left it*.

III. Here is a particular account of his preaching in Capernaum, one of the *cities* of Galilee; for though John Baptist chose to preach *in a wilderness*, and did *well*, and did *good*, yet it doth not therefore follow, that Jesus must do so too; the inclinations and opportunities of ministers may very much differ, and yet both be in the *way of their duty*, and both useful. Observe, 1. When Christ *came into Capernaum*, he *straightway* applied himself to his work there, and took the *first* opportunity of preaching the gospel. Those will think themselves concerned not to *lose time*, who consider what a deal of work they have to do, and what a little time to do it in. 2. Christ religiously observed the sabbath day, though not by tying himself up to the tradition of the elders, in all the niceties of the *sabbath-rest*, yet (which was far better) by applying himself to, and abounding in, the *sabbath-work*, in order to which the sabbath-rest was instituted. 3. Sabbaths are to be sanctified in *religious assemblies*, if we have opportunity; it is a *holy day*, and must be honoured with a *holy convocation*; this was the *good old way*, Acts 13:27; 15:21. On the sabbath-day, *pois sabbasin*—*on the sabbath-days*; every sabbath-day, as duly as it returned, he *went into the synagogue*. 4. In *religious assemblies* on sabbath-days, the gospel is to be preached, and those to be *taught*, who are willing to learn the *truth as it is in Jesus*. 5. Christ was a non-such preacher; he did not preach *as the scribes*, who expounded the law of Moses by rote, as a school-boy says his lesson, but were neither *acquainted* with it (Paul himself, when a Pharisee, was ignorant of the law), nor *affected* with it; it came not *from the heart*, and therefore came not *with authority*. But Christ taught *as one that had authority*, as one that knew the mind of God, and was commissioned to declare it. 6. There is much in the doctrine of Christ, that is *astonishing*; the more we hear it, the more cause we shall see to *admire it*.

**Verses 23-28**

As soon as Christ began to preach, he began to work miracles for the confirmation of his doctrine; and they were such as intimated the design and tendency of his doctrine, which were to conquer Satan, and cure sick souls.

In these verses, we have,

I. Christ's *casting the devil* out of a man that was possessed, in the synagogue at Capernaum. This passage was not related in Matthew, but is afterward in Lu. 4:33. *There was in the synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, en pneumati akathartou—in an unclean spirit*; for the spirit had the man in his possession, and led him captive at his will. So the whole world is said to lie *en toj ponerouj—in the wicked one*. And some have thought it more proper to say, The *body* is *in the soul*, because it is governed by it, than the *soul* *in the body*. He was *in the unclean spirit*, as a man is said to be *in a fever*, or in a frenzy, quite overcome by it. Observe, The devil is here called *an unclean spirit*, because he has lost all the purity of his nature, because he acts in direct opposition to the *Holy Spirit* of God, and because with his suggestions he pollutes the spirits of men. This man *was in the synagogue*; he did not come either to be taught or to be healed, but, as some think, to confront Christ and oppose him, and hinder people from believing on him. Now here we have,

1. The rage which the unclean spirit expressed at Christ; *He cried out*, as one in an agony, at the presence of Christ, and afraid of being dislodged; thus the *devils believe and tremble*, have a horror of Christ, but no hope in him, nor reverence for him. We are told what he said, v. 24, where he doth not go about to *capitulate* with him, or *make terms* (so far was he from being in league or compact with him), but speaks as one that knew his doom. (1.) He calls him *Jesus of Nazareth*; for aught that appears, he was the first that called him so, and he did it with design to possess the minds of the people with *low thoughts* of him, because no good thing was expected out of Nazareth; and with *prejudices* against him as a Deceiver, because every body knew the Messiah must be of Bethlehem. (2.) Yet a confession is extorted from him—that he is *the holy One of God*, as was from the damsel that had the spirit of divination concerning the apostles—that they were the *servants of the most high God*, Acts 16:16, 17. Those who have only a *notion* of Christ—that he is the *holy One of God*, and have no faith in him, or love to him, go no further than the devil doth. (3.) He in effect acknowledgeth that Christ was too hard for him, and that he could not stand before the power of Christ; *"Let us alone*; for if thou take us to task, we are undone, thou canst *destroy us*." This is the misery of those wicked spirits, that they persist in their rebellion, and yet know it will end in their destruction. (4.) He desires to have *nothing to do* with Jesus Christ; for he *despairs* of being *saved* by him, and *dreads* being *destroyed* by him. *"What have we to do with thee? If thou wilt let us alone, we will let thee alone."* See whose language they speak, that *say to the Almighty, Depart from us*. This, being an *unclean spirit*, therefore hated and dreaded Christ, because he knew him to be a *holy One*; for the *carnal mind is enmity against God*, especially against *his holiness*.

2. The victory which Jesus Christ obtained over the unclean spirit; *for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*, and so he makes it to appear; nor will he be turned back from prosecuting this war, either by his flatteries or by his menaces. It is in vain for Satan to beg and pray, *Let us alone*; his power must be broken, and the poor man must be relieved; and therefore, (1.) *Jesus commands*. As he taught, so he healed, *with authority*. *Jesus rebuked him*; he chid him and threatened him, imposed silence upon him; *Hold thy peace*; *phimoutheuti—be muzzled*. Christ has a muzzle for

that unclean spirit when he *fawns* as well as when he *barks*; such acknowledgments of him as this was, Christ *disdains*, so far is he from *accepting* them. Some confess Christ to be the *holy One of God*, that under the cloak of that profession they may carry on malicious mischievous designs; but their confession is doubly an abomination to the Lord Jesus, as it sues in his name for a license to sin, and shall therefore be put to silence and shame. But this is not all, he must not only *hold his peace*, but he must *come out of the man*; this was it he dreaded—his being restrained from doing further mischief. But, (2.) The unclean spirit *yields*, for there is no remedy (v. 26); He *tore him*, put him into a *strong convulsion*; that one could have thought he had been pulled in pieces; when he would not *touch* Christ, in fury at him he grievously disturbed this poor creature. Thus, when Christ by his grace delivers poor souls out of the hands of Satan, it is not without a grievous toss and tumult in the soul; for that spiteful enemy will *disquiet* those whom he cannot *destroy*. He *cried with a loud voice*, to frighten the spectators, and make himself seem terrible, as if he would have it thought that though he was conquered, he was but just conquered, and that he hopes to rally again, and recover his ground.

II. The impression which this miracle made upon the minds of the people, v. 27, 28.

1. It astonished them that saw it; *They were all amazed*. It was evident, beyond contradiction, that the man was possessed—witness the tearing of him, and the *loud voice* with which the *spirit cried*; it was evident that he was *forced out* by the authority of Christ; this was surprising to them, and put them upon considering with themselves, and enquiring of one another, "*What is this new doctrine?*" For it must certainly be of God, which is thus confirmed. *He hath certainly an authority to command us, who hath ability to command even the unclean spirits, and they cannot resist him, but are forced to obey him.*" The Jewish exorcists pretended by charm or invocation to drive away evil spirits; but this was quite another thing, *with authority he commands them*. Surely it is our interest to make *him* our Friend, who has the control of infernal spirits.

2. It raised his reputation among all that heard it; *Immediately his fame spread abroad into the whole adjacent region of Galilee*, which was a third part of the land of Canaan. The story was presently got into every one's mouth, and people wrote it to their friends all the country over, together with the remark made upon it, *What new doctrine is this?* So that it was universally concluded, that he was a *Teacher come from God*, and under that character he shone more bright than if he had appeared in all the external pomp and power which the Jews expected their Messiah to *appear* in; and thus he *prepared his own way*, now that John, who was his harbinger, was clapped up; and the fame of this miracle spread the further, because as yet the Pharisees, who *envied* his fame, and laboured to *eclipse* it, had not advanced their blasphemous suggestion, that he *cast out devils* by compact with the *prince of the devils*.

### **Verses 29-39**

In these verses, we have,

I. A particular account of one miracle that Christ wrought, in the cure of Peter's wife's mother, who was ill of a fever. This passage we had before, in Matthew. Observe,

1. When Christ had done that which *spread his fame* throughout all parts, he did not then sit still, as some think that they may *lie in bed* when their *name is up*. No, he continued to *do good*, for that was it he aimed at, and not his own honour. Nay, those

who are in reputation, had need be busy and careful to keep it up.

2. When he *came out of the synagogue*, where he had taught and healed with a divine authority, yet he conversed familiarly with the poor fishermen that attended him, and did not think it below him. Let the same mind, the same lowly mind, be in us, that was in him.

3. He went into Peter's house, probably invited thither to such entertainment as a poor fisherman could give him, and he accepted of it. The apostles left all for Christ; so far as that what they had should not hinder them from him, yet not so, but that they might use it for him.

4. He cured his mother-in-law, who was sick. Wherever Christ comes, he comes to do good, and will be sure to pay richly for his entertainment. Observe, How complete the cure was; when *the fever left her*, it did not, as usual, leave her *weak*, but the same hand that *healed her*, *strengthened her*, so that she was able to *minister* to them; the cure is in order to that, to fit for action, that we may minister to Christ, and to those that are *his* for his sake.

II. A general account of many cures he wrought—diseases healed, devils expelled. It was on the *evening of the sabbath*, when the *sun did set*, or *was set*; perhaps many scrupled bringing their sick to him, till the sabbath was over, but their weakness therein was no prejudice to them in applying to Christ. Though he proved it *lawful to heal on the sabbath days*, yet, if any stumbled at it, they were welcome at another time. Now observe,

1. How *numerous* the patients were; *All the city was gathered at the door*, as beggars for a dole. That *one cure* in the synagogue occasioned this crowding after him. Others speeding well with Christ should quicken us in our enquiries after him. Now the *Sun of righteousness rises with healing under his wings*; to him shall the *gathering of the people be*. Observe, How Christ was flocked after in a *private house*, as well as in the *synagogue*; wherever he is, there let his servants, his patients, be. And in the *evening of the sabbath*, when the public worship is over, we must continue our attendance upon Jesus Christ; he healed, as Paul preached, publicly, and from house to house.

2. How *powerful* the Physician was; he *healed all* that were brought to him, though ever so many. Nor was it some one particular disease, that Christ set up for the cure of, but he healed those that were *sick of divers* diseases, for his word was a *panpharmakon—a salve for every sore*. And that miracle particularly which he wrought in the synagogue, he *repeated in the house* at night; for he *cast out many devils*, and *suffered not the devils to speak*, for he made them *know who he was*, and that silenced them. Or, He *suffered them not to say that they knew him* (so it may be read); he would not permit any more of them to say, as they did (v. 24), *I know thee, who thou art*.

III. His *retirement* to his *private devotion* (v. 35); *He prayed*, prayed alone; to set us an example of secret prayer. Though as God he was *prayed to*, as man he *prayed*. Though he was glorifying God, and doing good, in his public work, yet he found time to be alone with his Father; and thus *it became him to fulfil all righteousness*. Now observe,

1. The time *when* Christ prayed. (1.) It was *in the morning*, the morning after the *sabbath day*. Note, When a sabbath day is over and past, we must not think that we may intermit our devotion till the next sabbath: no, though we go not *to the synagogue*, we must go to the *throne of grace*, every day in the week; and the morning after the sabbath particularly, that we

may preserve the good impressions of the day. This *morning* was the morning of the *first day of the week*, which afterward he sanctified, and made remarkable, by another sort of *rising early*. (2.) It was early, *a great while before day*. When others were asleep in their beds, he was *praying*, as a genuine Son of David, who seeks God *early*, and *directs his prayer in the morning*; nay, and *at midnight will rise to give thanks*. It has been said, *The morning is a friend to the Muses—Aurora Musis amica*; and it is no less so to the *Graces*. When our spirits are most fresh and lively, then we should take time for *devout* exercises. He that is the *first* and *best*, ought to have the *first* and *best*.

2. The place *where* he prayed; He *departed into a solitary place*, either out of town, or some remote garden or out-building. Though he was in no danger of distraction, or of temptation to vain-glory, yet he retired, to set us an example to his own rule, *When thou prayest enter into thy closet*. Secret prayer must be made secretly. Those that have the most business in public, and of the best kind, must sometimes be *alone with God*; must retire into *solitude*, there to converse with God, and keep up communion with him.

IV. His *return* to his *public* work. The disciples thought they were *up early*, but found their Master was up *before them*, and they enquired which way he went, *followed him* to his *solitary place*, and there *found him* at prayer, v. 36, 37. They told him that he was much wanted, that there were a great many patients waiting for him; *All men seek for thee*. They were proud that their Master was become so popular already, and would have him appear *in public*, yet more in that place, because it was *their own city*; and we are apt to be partial to the places we know and are interested in. "No," saith Christ, "Capernaum must not have the monopoly of the Messiah's preaching and miracles. *Let us go into the next towns, the villages* that lie about here, *that I may preach there also*, and work miracles there, *for therefore came I forth*, not to be constantly resident in one place, but to *go about doing good*." Even the *inhabitants of the villages in Israel* shall *rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord*, Jdg. 5:11. Observe, Christ had still an eye to the end *wherefore he came forth*, and closely pursued that; nor will he be drawn by importunity, or the persuasions of his friends, to decline from that; for (v. 39) he *preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee*, and, to illustrate and confirm his doctrine, *he cast out devils*. Note, Christ's doctrine is Satan's destruction.

#### **Verses 40-45**

We have here the story of Christ's *cleansing a leper*, which we had before, Mt. 8:2-4. It teaches us,

1. *How to apply ourselves to Christ*; come as this leper did, (1.) With great *humility*; this leper came *beseeking him, and kneeling down to him* (v. 40); whether giving divine honour to him as God, or rather a less degree of respect as a *great Prophet*, it teaches us that those who would receive grace and mercy from Christ, must ascribe honour and glory to Christ, and approach to him with humility and reverence. (2.) With a firm belief of *his power*; *Thou canst make me clean*. Though Christ's outward appearance was but *mean*, yet he had this faith in his power, which implies his belief that he was *sent of God*. He believes it with application, not only in general, *Thou cast do every thing* (as Jn. 11:22), but, *Thou cast make me clean*. Note, What we believe of the power of Christ we must bring home to our particular case; *Thou canst do this for me*. (3.) With submission to the will of Christ; *Lord, if thou wilt*. Not as if he had any doubt of Christ's readiness in general to help the distressed, but, with the modesty that became a poor petitioner, he refers his own particular case to him.

2. *What to expect from Christ*; that according to our faith it shall be to us. His address is not in the form of prayer, yet Christ answered it as a request. Note, Affectionate professions of faith in Christ, and resignations to him, are the most prevailing petitions for mercy from him, and shall speed accordingly. (1.) Christ was *moved with compassion*. This is added here, in Mark, to show that Christ's power is employed by his pity for the relief of poor souls; that his reasons are fetched from within himself, and we have nothing in us to recommend us to his favour, but our *misery* makes us the objects of his *mercy*. And what he does for us he does with all possible tenderness. (2.) He *put forth his hand, and touched him*. He *exerted* his power, and directed it to *this* creature. In healing souls, Christ *toucheth them*, 1 Sa. 10:26. When the queen toucheth for the evil, she saith, *I touch, God heals*; but Christ *toucheth and healeth too*. (3.) He said, *I will, be thou clean*. Christ's power was put forth in and by a *word*, to signify in what way Christ would ordinarily work spiritual cures; *He sends his word and heals*, Ps. 107:20; Jn. 15:3; 17:17. The poor leper put an *if* upon the will of Christ; *If thou wilt*; but that *doubt* is soon put *out of doubt*; *I will*. Christ most readily *wills* favours to those that most readily *refer themselves* to his will. He was confident of Christ's *power*; *Thou canst make me clean*; and Christ will show how much his power is drawn out into act by the faith of his people, and therefore speaks the word as one having authority, *Be thou clean*. And power accompanied this word, and the cure was perfect in an instant; *Immediately his leprosy vanished*, and there remained no more sign of it, v. 42.

3. *What to do when we have received mercy from Christ*. We must with his favours receive his commands. When Christ had cured him, *he strictly charged him*; the word here is very significant, *embrimeusamenos*—*graviter interminatus*—*prohibiting with threats*. I am apt to think that this refers not to the directions he gave him to conceal it (v. 44), for those are mentioned by themselves; but that this was such a charge as he gave to the impotent man whom he cured, Jn. 5:14, *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*; for the *leprosy* was ordinarily the punishment of some particular sinners, as in Miriam's, Gehazi's, and Uzziah's, case; now, when Christ healed him, he *warned* him, he *threatened* him with the fatal consequence of it if he should *return to sin* again. He also appointed him, (1.) *To show himself to the priest*, that the priest by his own judgment of this leper might be a witness for Christ, that he was the Messiah, Mt. 11:5. (2.) *Till he had done that, not to say any thing of it to any man*: this is an instance of the *humility* of Christ and his self-denial, that he did not seek his own honour, *did not strive or cry*, Is. 42:2. And it is an example to us, not to *seek our own glory*, Prov. 25:27. He must not *proclaim* it, because that would much increase the crowd that followed Christ, which he thought was too great already; not as if he were unwilling to *do good to all*, to as many as came; but he would do it with as little *noise* as might be, would have no offence given to the government, no disturbance of the public peace, not any thing done that looked like ostentation, or an affecting of popular applause. What to think of the leper's *publishing* it, and *blazing it abroad*, I know not; the concealment of the good characters and good works of good men better become *them* than *their friends*; nor are we always bound by the modest commands of humble men. The leper ought to have observed his orders; yet, no doubt, it was with a good design that he *proclaimed* the cure, and it had no other ill effect than that it increased the multitudes which followed Christ, to that degree, that he *could no more openly enter into the city*; not upon the account of persecution (there was no danger of that yet,) but because the crowd was so great, that the streets would not hold them, which obliged him to go into *desert places*, to a *mountain*

(ch. 3:13), to the *sea-side*, ch. 4:1. This shows how *expedient* it was for us, that Christ should *go away*, and *send the Comforter*, for his bodily presence could be but in one place at a time; and those that *came to him from every quarter*, could not get *near him*; but by his spiritual presence he is with his people wherever they are, and comes to them to *every quarter*.

## Chapter 2

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's healing a man that was sick of a palsy (v. 1–12). II. His calling of Matthew from the receipt of custom, and his eating, upon that occasion, with publicans and sinners, and justifying himself in so doing (v. 13–17). III. His justifying his disciples in not fasting so much as those plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath day (v. 23–28). All which passages we had before, Mt. 9 and 12.

### Verses 1-12

Christ, having been for some time preaching about in the country, here returns to Capernaum his head-quarters, and makes his appearance there, in hopes that by this time the talk and crowd would be somewhat abated. Now observe,

I. The great resort there was to him. Though he was *in the house*, wither Peter's house, or some lodgings of his own which he had taken, yet people came to him as soon as it was *noised* that he was in town; they did not stay till he appeared in the synagogue, which they might be sure he would do on the *sabbath day*, but *straightway many were gathered together to him*. Where the king is, there is the court; where Shiloh is, there *shall the gathering of the people be*. In improving opportunities for our souls, we must take care not to *lose time*. One invited another (Come, let us go see Jesus), so that his house could not contain his visitants. *There was no room to receive them*, they were so numerous, *no not so much as about the door*. A blessed sight, to see people thus flying like a cloud to Christ's house, though it was but a poor one, and *as the doves to their windows!*

II. The good entertainment Christ gave them, the best his house would afford, and better than any other could; he *preached the word unto them*, v. 2. Many of them perhaps came only for cures, and many perhaps only for curiosity, to get a sight of him; but when he had them together he *preached to them*. Though the synagogue-door was open to him at proper times, he thought it not at all amiss to preach in a house, on a week day; though some might reckon it both an improper place and an improper time. *Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters*, Isa. 32:20.

III. The presenting of a poor cripple to him, to be helped by him. The patient was one *sick of the palsy*, it should seem not as that, Mt. 8:6, *grievously tormented*, but perfectly disabled, so that he was *borne of four*, was carried upon *a bed*, as if he had been upon *a bier*, by four persons. It was his misery, that he needed to be so carried, and bespeaks the calamitous state of human life; it was their charity, who did so carry him, and bespeaks the compassion that it is justly expected should be in the children of men toward their fellow-creatures in distress, because we know not how soon the distress may be *our own*. These kind relations or neighbours thought, if they could but carry this poor man once to Christ, they should not need to carry him any more; and therefore made hard shift to get him to him; and when they could not otherwise get to him, they *uncovered the roof where he was*, v. 4. I see no necessity to conclude that Christ was preaching in an *upper room*, though in such the Jews that had stately houses, had their oratories; for then to what purpose should the crowd stand *before the door*, as wisdom's clients used to do? Prov. 8:34. But I rather conjecture that the house he was in, was so little and mean (agreeable to his present state), that it had no *upper room*, but the *ground-floor* was open to the roof: and these petitioners for the poor paralytic, resolving not to be disappointed, when they could not get through the crowd at the door, got their friend by some means or

other to the roof of the house, took off some of the tiles, and so let him down upon his bed with cords into the house where Christ was preaching. This bespoke both their *faith* and their *fergency* in this address to Christ. Hereby it appeared that they were in earnest, and would not go away, nor *let Christ go without a blessing*. Gen. 32:26.

IV. The kind word Christ said to this poor patient; *He saw their faith*; perhaps not so much his, for his distemper hindered him from the exercise of faith, but *theirs* that brought him. In curing the centurion's servant, Christ took notice of it as an instance of *his faith*, that he did not bring him to Christ, but believed he could cure him at a distance; here he commended *their faith*, because they did bring their friend through so much difficulty. Note, True faith and strong faith may work variously, conquering sometimes the objections of reason, sometimes those of sense; but, however manifested, it shall be accepted and approved by Jesus Christ. Christ said, *Son, thy sins be forgiven thee*. The *compellation* is very *tender-Son*; intimating a fatherly *care* of him and *concern* for him. Christ owns true believers as his sons: *a son*, and yet sick of the palsy. Herein God *deals with you as with sons*. The *cordial* is very rich; *Thy sins are forgiven thee*. Note, 1. Sin is the procuring cause of all our pains and sicknesses. The word of Christ was to take his thoughts off from the disease, which was the effect, and to lead them to the sin, the cause, that he might be more concerned about that, to get that pardoned. 2. God doth *then* graciously take away the sting and malignity of sickness, when he forgives sin; recovery from sickness is *then* a mercy indeed, when way is made for it by the pardon of sin. See Isa. 38:17; Ps. 103:3. The way to remove the effect, is, to take away the cause. Pardon of sin strikes at the root of all diseases, and either cures them, or alters their property.

V. The cavil of the scribes at that which Christ said, and a demonstration of the unreasonableness of their cavil. They were expositors of the law, and their doctrine was *true*—that it is blasphemy for any creature to undertake the pardon of sin, and that it is God's prerogative, Isa. 43:25. But, as is usual with such teachers, their application was *false*, and was the effect of their ignorance and enmity to Christ. It is *true*, *None can forgive sins but God only*; but it is false that therefore Christ cannot, who had abundantly proved himself to have a divine power. But Christ *perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves*; this proves him to be God, and therefore confirmed what was to be proved, that he had authority to *forgive sins*; for he *searched* the heart, and knew *what was in man*, Rev. 2:23. God's royalties are inseparable, and he that could *know thoughts*, could *forgive sins*. This magnifies the grace of Christ, in *pardoning sin*, that he knew men's thoughts, and therefore knows more than any other can know, both of the sinfulness of their sins and the particulars of them, and yet is ready to pardon. Now he proves his power to *forgive sin*, by demonstrating his power to cure the *man sick of the palsy*, v. 9–11. He would not have pretended to do *the one*, if he could not have done *the other*; *that ye may know that the Son of man, the Messiah, has power on earth to forgive sin*, that I have that power, *Thou that art sick of the palsy, arise, take up thy bed*. Now, 1. This was a *suitable* argument in itself. He could not have cured the disease, which was the effect, if he could not have taken away the sin, which was the cause. And besides, his curing diseases was a figure of his pardoning sin, for sin is the disease of the soul; when it is pardoned, it is healed. He that could by a word accomplish the sign, could doubtless perform the thing signified, 2. It was suited to them. These carnal scribes would be more affected with such a suitable effect of a pardon as the cure of the disease, and be sooner convinced by it, than by any other more spiritual consequences; therefore it was proper

enough to appeal, whether it is easier to say, *Thy sins are forgiven thee*, or to say, *Arise, and walk?* The removing of the punishment as such, was the remitting of the sin; he that could go so far in the cure, no doubt could perfect it. See Isa. 33:24. VI. The cure of the sick man, and the impression it made upon the people, v. 12. He not only *arise* out of his bed, perfectly well, but, to show that he had perfect strength restored to him, *he took up his bed*, because it lay in the way, *and went forth before them all*; and *they were all amazed*, as well they might, and *glorified God*, as indeed they ought; saying, "*We never saw it on this fashion*; never were such wonders as these done before in our time." Note, Christ's works were without precedent. When we see what he does in healing souls, we must own that we *never saw the like*.

### Verses 13-17

Here is,

I. Christ preaching by the *sea-side* (v. 13), whither he went *for room*, because he found, upon second trial, no house or street large enough to contain his auditory; but upon the strand there might come as many as would. It should seem by this, that our Lord Jesus had a strong voice, and could and did speak loud; for *wisdom crieth without* in the *places of concourse*. Wherever he goes, though it be to the sea-side, *multitudes resort to him*. Wherever the doctrine of Christ is faithfully preached, though it be driven into corners or into deserts, we must follow it.

II. His calling Levi; the same with Matthew, who had a place in the custom-house at Capernaum, from which he was denominated a *publican*; his place fixed him by the water-side, and thither Christ went to meet with him, and to give him an effectual call. This Levi is here said to be *the son of Alpheus* or *Cleophas*, husband to that Mary who was sister or near kinswoman to the virgin Mary and if so, he was own brother to James the less, and Jude, and Simon the Canaanite, so that there were four brothers of them apostles. It is probable that Matthew was but a loose extravagant young man, or else, being a Jew, he would never have been a publican. However, Christ called him to *follow him*. Paul, though a Pharisee, had been one of the chief of sinners, and yet was called to be an apostle. With God, through Christ, there is mercy to pardon the greatest sins, and grace to sanctify the greatest sinners. Matthew, that had been a publican, became an evangelist, the *first* that put pen to paper, and the *fullest* in writing the life of Christ. Great sin and scandal before conversion, are no bar to great gifts, graces, and advancements, after; nay, God may be the more glorified. Christ prevented him with this call; in bodily cures, ordinarily, he was *sought unto*, but in these spiritual cures, he was *found of them that sought him not*. For this is the great evil and peril of the disease of sin, that those who are under it, desire not to be *made whole*.

III. His familiar converse with *publicans and sinners*, v. 15. We are here told, 1. That Christ *sat at meat in Levi's house*, who invited *him and his disciples* to the farewell-feast he made to his friends, when he left all to attend on Christ: such a feast he made, as Elisha did (1 Ki. 19:21), to show, not only with what cheerfulness in himself, but with what thankfulness to God, he quitted all, in compliance with Christ's call. Fitly did he make the *day of his espousals* to Christ a festival day. This was also to testify his respect to Christ, and the grateful sense he had of his kindness, in snatching him from the receipt of custom as a brand out of the burning. 2. That *many publicans and sinners* sat with Christ in Levi's house (for *there were many* belonging to that custom-house); and *they followed him*. They followed Levi; so some understand it, supposing that, like Zaccheus, he was

*chief among the publicans, and was rich; and for that reason, the inferior sort of them attended him for what they could get. I rather take it, that they followed Jesus because of the report they had heard of him. They did not for conscience-sake leave all to follow him, but for curiosity-sake they came to Levi's feast, to see him; whatever brought them thither, they were sitting with Jesus and his disciples. The publicans are here and elsewhere ranked with sinners, the worst of sinners. (1.) Because commonly they were such; so general were the corruptions in the execution of that office, oppressing, exacting, and taking bribes or fees to extortion, and accusing falsely, Lu. 3:13, 14. A faithful fair-dealing publican was so rare, even at Rome, that one Sabinus, who kept a clean reputation in that office, was, after his death, honoured with this inscription, **Kalops telounepsanti**—Here lies an honest publican. (2.) Because the Jews had a particular antipathy to them and their office, as an affront to the liberty of their nation and a badge of their slavery, and therefore put them into an ill name, and thought it scandalous to be seen in their company. Such as these our blessed Lord was pleased to converse with, when he appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh.*

IV. The offence which the scribes and Pharisees took at this, v. 16. They would not come to hear him preach, which they might have been convinced the edified by; but they would come themselves to see him sit with publicans and sinners, which they would be provoked by. They endeavoured to put the disciples out of conceit with their Master, as a man not of such sanctity and severe morals as became his character; and therefore put the question to them. *How is it, that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?* Note, It is no new thing for that which is both well-done, and well-designed, to be misrepresented, and turned to the reproach of the wisest and best of men.

V. Christ's justification of himself in it, v. 17. He stood to what he did, and would not withdraw, though the Pharisees were offended, as Peter afterwards did, Gal. 2:12. Note, Those are too tender of their own good name, who, to preserve it with some nice people, will decline a good work. Christ would not do so. They thought the publicans were to be hated. "No," saith Christ, "they are to be pitied, they are sick and need a physician; they are sinners, and need a Saviour." They thought Christ's character should separate him from them; "No," saith Christ, "my commission directs me to them; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. If the world had been righteous, there had been no occasion for my coming, either to preach repentance, or to purchase remission. It is to a sinful world that I am sent, and therefore my business lies most with those that are the greatest sinners in it." Or thus; "I am not come to call the righteous, the proud Pharisees that think themselves righteous, that ask, *Wherein shall we return?* (Mal. 3:7), Of what shall we repent? But poor publicans, that own themselves to be sinners, and are glad to be invited and encouraged to repent." It is good dealing with those that there is hope of; now there is more hope of a fool than of one that is wise in his own conceit, Prov. 26:12.

### **Verses 18-28**

Christ had been put to justify himself in conversing with publicans and sinners: here he is put to justify his disciples; and in what they do according to his will he will justify them, and bear them out.

I. He justifies them in their not fasting, which was turned to their reproach by the Pharisees. Why do the Pharisees and the disciples of John fast? They used to fast, the Pharisees fasted twice in the week (Lu. 18:12), and probably the disciples of John

did so too; and, it should seem, this very day, when Christ and his disciples were feasting in Levi's house, was their *fast-day*, for the word is *neµsteuousi*—*they do fast, or are fasting*, which aggravated the offence. Thus apt are strict professors to make their own practice a standard, and to censure and condemn all that do not fully come up to it. They invidiously suggest that if Christ went among sinners to do them *good*, as he had pleaded, yet the disciples went to indulge their appetites, for they never knew what it was to fast, or to deny themselves. Note, Ill-will always suspects the worst.

Two things Christ pleads in excuse of his disciples *not fasting*.

1. That these were *easy days* with them, and fasting was not so *seasonable* now as it would be hereafter, v. 19, 20. There is a time for all things. Those that enter into the married state, must expect care and *trouble in the flesh*, and yet, during the nuptial solemnity, they are merry, and think it becomes them to be so; it was very absurd for Samson's bride to *weep before him, during the days that the feast lasted*, Jdg. 14:17. Christ and his disciples were but newly married, the bridegroom was *yet with them*, the nuptials were yet in the celebrating (Matthew's particularly); when the bridegroom should be removed from them to the far country, about his business, then would be a proper time to sit as a widow, in solitude and fasting.

2. That these were *early days* with them, and they were not so able for the severe exercises of religion as hereafter they would be. The Pharisees had long accustomed themselves to such austerities; and John Baptist himself came neither eating nor drinking. His disciples from the first inured themselves to hardships, and thus found it easier to bear strict and frequent fasting, but it was not so with Christ's disciples; their Master came *eating and drinking*, and had not bred them up to the difficult services of religion as yet, for it was all in good time. To put them upon such frequent fasting at first, would be a discouragement to them, and perhaps drive them off from following Christ; it would be of as ill consequence as *putting new wine into old casks*, or sewing *new cloth* to that which is worn thin and threadbare, v. 21, 22. Note, God graciously *considers the frame* of young Christians, that are *weak and tender*, and so must we; nor must we expect more than the *work of the day in its day*, and that day according to the strength, because it is not in our hands to give strength according to the day. Many contract an antipathy to some kind of food, otherwise good, by being surfeited with it when they are young; so, many entertain prejudices against the exercises of devotion by being burthened with them, and *made to serve with an offering*, at their setting out. Weak Christians must take heed of *over-tasking* themselves, and of making the yoke of Christ otherwise than as it is, easy, and sweet, and pleasant.

II. He justifies them in *plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath day*, which, I will warrant you, a disciples of the Pharisees would not dare to have done; for it was contrary to an express tradition of their elders. In this instance, as in that before, they reflect upon the discipline of Christ's school, as if it were not so strict as that of theirs: so common it is for those who deny the *power of godliness*, to be jealous for the *form*, and censorious of those who affect not *their form*.

Observe, 1. What a poor breakfast Christ's disciples had on a sabbath-day morning, when they were going to church (v. 23); they *plucked the ears of corn*, and that was the best they had. They were so intent upon spiritual dainties, that they forgot even their *necessary food*; and the word of Christ was to them instead of that; and their zeal for it even *ate them up*. The Jews made it a piece of religion, to eat dainty food on sabbath days, but the disciples were content with any thing.

2. How even this was *grudged them* by the Pharisees, upon supposition that it was not lawful to *pluck the ears of corn* on the sabbath day, that that was as much a servile work as *reaping* (v. 24); *Why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?* Note, If Christ's disciples do that which is unlawful, Christ will be reflected upon, and upbraided with it, as he was here, and dishonour will redound to his name. It is observable, that when the Pharisees thought Christ did amiss, they told the disciples (v. 16); and now when they thought the disciples did amiss, they spoke to Christ, as make-bates, that did what they could to sow discord between Christ and his disciples, and make a breach in the family.

3. How Christ defended them in what they did.

(1.) By example. They had a good precedent for it in David's eating the *show-bread*, when he was hungry, and there was no other bread to be had (v. 25, 26); *Have ye never read?* Note, Many of our mistakes would be rectified, and our unjust censures of others corrected, if we would but recollect what *we have read* in the scripture; appeals to that are most convincing. "You have read that David, the man after God's own heart, *when he was hungry*, made no difficulty of eating *the show-bread*, which by the law none might eat of but the priests and their families." Note, Ritual observances must give way to moral obligations; and that may be done in a case of necessity, which otherwise may not be done. This, it is said, David did in the days of *Abiathar the High-Priest*; or *just before* the days of Abiathar, who immediately succeeded Abimelech his father in the pontificate, and, it is probable, was at that time his father's deputy, or assistant, in the office; and he it was that escaped the massacre, and brought the ephod to David.

(2.) By argument. To reconcile them to the disciples' *plucking the ears of corn*, let them consider,

[1.] Whom the sabbath was *made for* (v. 27); *it was made for man, and not man for the sabbath*. This we had not in Matthew. The sabbath is a sacred and divine institution; but we must receive and embrace it as a privilege and a benefit, not as a task and a drudgery. *First*, God never designed it to be an *imposition* upon us, and therefore we must not make it so to ourselves. *Man was not made for the sabbath*, for he was made a day before the sabbath was instituted. Man was made *for God*, and for his honour and service, and he just rather die than deny him; but he was not *made for the sabbath*, so as to be tied up by the law of it, from that which is necessary to the support of his life. *Secondly*, God did design it to be an *advantage* to us, and so we must make it, and improve it. He made it *for man*. 1. He had *some* regard to our *bodies* in the institution, that they might rest, and not be tired out with the constant business of this world (Deu. 5:14); *that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest*. Now he that intended the *sabbath-rest* for the *repose* of our bodies, certainly never intended it should restrain us, in a case of necessity, from fetching in the necessary *supports* of the body; it must be construed so as not to contradict itself—for *edification*, and not for *destruction*. 2. He had *much more* regard to our *souls*. The *sabbath* was made a day of rest, only in order to its being a day of holy work, a day of communion with God, a day of praise and thanksgiving; and the rest from worldly business is *therefore* necessary, that we may closely apply ourselves to this work, and spend the whole time in it, in public and in private; but then time is allowed us for that which is necessary to the fitting of our bodies for the service of our souls in God's service, and the enabling of them to *keep pace* with them in that work. See here, (1.) What a *good Master* we serve, all whose institutions are for our own benefit, and if we be so wise as to observe them, we are *wise for ourselves*; it is

not he, but we, that are gainers by our service. (2.) What we should aim at in our *sabbath work*, even the good of our own souls. If the sabbath was made for man, we should then ask ourselves at night, "What am I the better for this sabbath day?" (3.) What care we ought to take not to make those exercises of religion burthens to ourselves or others, which God ordained to be blessings; neither adding to the command by unreasonable strictness, nor indulging those corruptions which are adverse to the command, for thereby we make those devout exercises a penance to ourselves, which otherwise would be a pleasure.

[2.] Whom the sabbath was *made by* (v. 28); "*The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath*; and therefore he will not see the kind intentions of the institution of it frustrated by your impositions." Note, The sabbath days are *days of the Son of man*; he is the Lord of the day, and to his honour it must be observed; by him God made the worlds, and so it was by him that the sabbath was first instituted; by him God gave the law at mount Sinai, and so the *fourth* commandment was *his law*; and that little alteration that was shortly to be made, by the shifting of it one day forward to the first day of the week, was to be in remembrance of *his* resurrection, and therefore the Christian sabbath was to be called *the Lord's day* (Rev. 1:10), the Lord Christ's day; and the *Son of man*, Christ, as Mediator, is always to be looked upon as Lord of the sabbath. This argument he largely insists upon in his own justification, when he was charged with having broken the sabbath, Jn. 5:16

### Chapter 3

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's healing a man that had a withered hand, on the sabbath day, and the combination of his enemies against him for it (v. 1-6). II. The universal resort of people to him from all parts, to be healed, and the relief they all found with him (v. 7-12). III. His ordaining his twelve apostles to be attendants on him, and the preachers of his gospel (v. 13-21). IV. His answer to the blasphemous cavils of the scribes, who imputed his power to cast out devils to a confederacy with the prince of the devils (v. 22-30). V. His owning his disciples for his nearest and dearest relations (v. 31-35).

#### Verses 1-12

Here, as before, we have our Lord Jesus busy at work *in the synagogue* first, and then by *the sea side*; to teach us that his presence should not be confined either to the one or to the other, but, wherever any are gathered together in his name, whether *in the synagogue* or any where else, there is he in the midst of them. *In every place where he records his name*, he will meet his people, and *bless them*; it is his will that men *pray every where*. Now here we have some account of what he did.

I. When he *entered again into the synagogue*, he improved the opportunity he had there, of doing good, and having, no doubt, preached a sermon there, he wrought a miracle for the confirmation of it, or at least for the confirmation of this truth—that *it is lawful to do good on the sabbath day*. We had the narrative, Mt. 12:9.

1. The patient's case was piteous; he had a *withered hand*, by which he was disabled to work for his living; and those that are so, are the most proper objects of charity; let those be helped that cannot help themselves.

2. The spectators were very unkind, both to the patient and to the Physician; instead of interceding for a poor neighbour, they did what they could to hinder his cure: for they intimated that if Christ cured him now on the sabbath day, they would accuse him as a *Sabbath breaker*. It had been very unreasonable, if they should have opposed a physician or surgeon in helping any poor body in misery, by ordinary methods; but much more absurd was it to oppose him that cured without any labour, but by a word's speaking.

3. Christ dealt very fairly with the spectators, and dealt with them *first*, if possible to *prevent* the offence.

(1.) He laboured to convince their judgment. He bade the man *stand forth* (v. 3), that by the sight of him they might be moved with compassion toward him, and might not, for shame, account his cure a crime. And then he appeals to their own consciences; though the thing *speaks itself*, yet *he* is pleased to *speak* it; "*Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days*, as I design to do, *or to do evil*, as you design to do? Whether is better, to *save life* or to *kill*?" What fairer question could be put? And yet, because they saw it would turn against them, *they held their peace*. Note, Those are obstinate indeed in their infidelity, who, when they can say nothing *against* a truth, will say nothing *to it*; and, when they cannot *resist*, yet will not *yield*.

(2.) When they rebelled against the light, he *lamented their stubbornness* (v. 5); *He looked round about on them with anger*, *being grieved for the hardness of their hearts*. The *sin* he had an eye to, was, the *hardness of their hearts*, their insensibleness of the evidence of his miracles, and their inflexible resolution to persist in unbelief. We hear what is said amiss, and see what is

done amiss; but Christ looks at the *root of bitterness* in the heart, the blindness and hardness of *that*. Observe, [1.] How he was *provoked* by the sin; he looked *round upon them*; for they were so many, and had so placed themselves, that they surrounded him: and he looked *with anger*; his anger, it is probable, appeared in his countenance; his anger was, like God's, without the least *perturbation* to himself, but not without great *provocation* from us. Note, The sin of sinners is very displeasing to Jesus Christ; and the way to be angry, and not to sin, is it be angry, as Christ was, at nothing but sin. Let hard-hearted sinners tremble to think of the anger with which he will *look round* upon them shortly, when the *great day of his wrath comes*. [2.] How he *pitied* the sinners; he was *grieved for the hardness of their hearts*; as God was grieved forty years for the hardness of the hearts of their fathers in the wilderness. Note, It is a great grief to our Lord Jesus, to see sinners bent upon their own ruin, and obstinately set against the methods of their conviction and recovery, for he would not that any should perish. This is a good reason why the hardness of our own hearts and of the hearts of others, should be a grief to us.

4. Christ dealt very kindly with the patient; he bade him *stretch forth his hand*, and it was immediately *restored*. Now, (1.) Christ has hereby taught us to go on with resolution in the way of our duty, how violent soever the opposition is, that we meet with in it. We must deny ourselves sometimes in our ease, pleasure, and convenience, rather than give offence even to those who causelessly take it; but we must not deny ourselves the satisfaction of serving God, and doing good, though offence may unjustly be taken at it. None could be more tender of giving offence than Christ; yet, rather than send this poor man away uncured, he would venture offending all the scribes and Pharisees that compassed him about. (2.) He hath hereby given us a *specimen* of the cures wrought by his grace upon *poor souls*; our hands are spiritually *withered*, the powers of our souls weakened by sin, and disabled for that which is good. The great healing day is the *sabbath*, and the healing place the *synagogue*; the healing power is that of Christ. The gospel command is like this recorded here; and the command is rational and just; though our hands are withered, and we cannot of ourselves *stretch them forth*, we must attempt it, must, as well as we can, *lift them up* to God in prayer, *lay hold* on Christ and eternal life, and employ them in good works; and if we do our endeavour, power goes along with the word of Christ, he effects the cure. Though our hands be *withered*, yet, if we will not offer to *stretch them out*, it is our own fault that we are not healed; but if we do, and are healed, Christ and his power and grace must have all the glory.

5. The enemies of Christ dealt very barbarously with him. Such a work of *mercy* should have engaged their love *to him*, and such a work of *wonder* their faith *in him*. But, instead of that, the Pharisees, who pretended to be oracles in the church, and the Herodians, who pretended to be the supporters of the state, though of opposite interests one to another, *took counsel together against him, how they might destroy him*. Note, They that suffer for doing good, do but suffer as their Master did.

II. When he withdrew *to the sea*, he did good there. While his enemies sought to *destroy him*, he quitted the place; to teach us in troublous times to shift for our own safety; but see here,

1. How he was followed into his retirement. When some had such an enmity to him, that they drove him out of their country, others had such a value for him, that they followed him wherever he went; and the enmity of their leaders to Christ did not cool their respect to him. *Great multitudes* followed him from all parts of the nation; as far north, as *from Galilee*; as far south, as

from Judea and Jerusalem; nay, and from Idumea; as far east, as from beyond Jordan; and west, as from about Tyre and Sidon, v. 7, 8. Observe, (1.) What induced them to follow him; it was the report they heard of the *great things he did* for all that applied themselves to him; some wished *to see* one that had done such *great things*, and others hoped he would do great things *for them*. Note, The consideration of the *great things* Christ has done, should engage us to *come to him*. (2.) What they followed him for (v. 10); They *pressed upon him, to touch him, as many as had plagues*. Diseases are here called *plagues, mastigas—corrections, chastisements*; so they are designed to be, to make us *smart* for our sins, that thereby we may be made *sorry* for them, and may be warned not to return to them. Those that were under these *scourgings* came to Jesus; this is the errand on which sickness is sent, to quicken us to enquire after Christ, and apply ourselves to him as our Physician. They *pressed upon him*, each striving which should get *nearest to him*, and which should be *first served*. They *fell down before him* (so Dr. Hammond), as petitioners for his favour; they desired leave but to *touch him*, having faith to be healed, not only by *his touching them*, but by *their touching him*; which no doubt they had many instances of. (3.) What provision he made to be ready to attend them (v. 9); He *spoke to his disciples*, who were fishermen, and had fisher-boats at command, that a *small ship should constantly wait on him*, to carry him from place to place on the same coast; that, when he had despatched the necessary business he had to do in one place, he might easily remove to another, where his presence was requisite, without pressing through the crowds of people that followed him for curiosity. Wise men, as much as they can, decline a crowd.

2. What abundance of good he did in his retirement. He did not withdraw to be idle, nor did he send back those who rudely crowded after him when he withdrew, but took it kindly, and gave them what they came for; for he never said to any that sought him diligently, *Seek ye me in vain*. (1.) Diseases were effectually cured; He *healed many*; divers sorts of patients, ill of divers sorts of diseases; though numerous, though various, he *healed them*. (2.) *Devils* were effectually *conquered*; those whom unclean spirits had got possession of, *when they saw him*, trembled at his presence, and they also *fell down before him*, not to supplicate his favour, but to deprecate his wrath, and by their own terrors were compelled to own that *he was the Son of God*, v. 1. It is sad that this great truth should be denied by any of the children of men, who may have the benefit of it, when a confession of it has so often been extorted from devils, who are excluded from having benefit by it. (3.) Christ sought not applause to himself in doing those great things, for *he strictly charged* those for whom he did them, *that they should not make him known* (v. 12); that they should not be *industrious* to spread the notice of his cures, as it were by advertisements in the newspapers, but let them leave *his own works to praise him*, and let the report of them *diffuse itself*, and make its own way. Let not those that are cured, be forward to divulge it, lest it should feed their pride who are so *highly favoured*; but let the *standers-by* carry away the intelligence of it. When we do that which is *praiseworthy*, and yet covet not to be *praised of men* for it, then *the same mind is in us, which was in Christ Jesus*.

### **Verses 13-21**

In these verses, we have,

I. The choice Christ made of the *twelve apostles* to be his constant followers and attendants, and to be sent abroad as there was occasion, to preach the gospel. Observe,

1. The introduction to this *call* or *promotion* of disciples; He *goes up into a mountain*, and his errand thither was *to pray*. Ministers must be set apart with solemn prayer for the pouring out of the Spirit upon them; though Christ had authority to confer the gifts of the Holy Ghost, yet, to set us an example, he prayed for them.
2. The rule he went by in his choice, and that was his own good pleasure; *He called unto him whom he would*. Not such as we should have thought *fittest to be called, looking upon the countenance, and the height of the stature*; but such as he *thought fit* to call, and determined to *make fit* for the service to which he called them: *even so*, blessed Jesus, *because it seemed good in thine eyes*. Christ calls *whom he will*; for he is a free Agent, and his grace is his own.
3. The efficacy of the call; He *called them* to separate themselves from the crowd, and stand by him, and they *came unto him*. Christ calls those who were *given him* (Jn. 17:6); and *all that the Father gave him, shall come to him*, Jn. 6:37. Those whom it was his *will* to call, he made *willing to come*; his *people shall be willing in the day of his power*. Perhaps they came to him readily enough, because they were in expectation of *reigning with him* in temporal pomp and power; but when afterward they were *undeceived* in that matter, yet they had such a prospect given them of better things, that they would not say they were *deceived* in their Master, nor repented their leaving all to be with him.
4. The end and intention of this call; He *ordained them* (probably by the imposition of hands, which was a ceremony used among the Jews), *that they should be with him* constantly, to be witnesses of *his doctrine, manner of life, and patience*, that they might *fully know it*, and be able to give an account of it; and especially that they might attest the truth of his miracles; they must be *with him* to receive instructions *from him*, that they might be qualified to give instructions *to others*. It would *require time* to fit them for that which he designed them for; for they must be *sent forth to preach*; not to preach till they were *sent*, and not to be *sent* till by a long and intimate acquaintance with Christ they were fitted. Note, Christ's ministers must be much *with him*.
5. The power he gave them to work miracles; and hereby he put a very great honour upon them, beyond that of the great men of the earth. He ordained them to *heal sicknesses and to cast out devils*. This showed that the power which Christ had to work these miracles was an *original* power; that he had it not *as a Servant*, but *as a Son in his own house*, in that he could confer it upon others, and invest them with it: they have a rule in the law, *Deputatus non potest deputare—He that is only deputed himself, cannot depute another*; but our Lord Jesus had *life in himself*, and the Spirit without measure; for he could give this power even to the *weak and foolish things* of the world.
6. Their number and names; He *ordained twelve*, according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel. They are here named not just in the same order as they were in Matthew, nor by couples, as they were there; but as there, so here, Peter is put first and Judas last. Here Matthew is put before Thomas, probably being called in that order; but in that catalogue which Matthew himself drew up, he puts himself after Thomas; so far was he from insisting upon the precedency of his consecration. But that which Mark only takes notice of in this list of the apostles, is, that Christ called James and John *Boanerges*, which is, *The sons of thunder*; perhaps they were remarkable for a loud commanding voice, they were thundering preachers; or, rather, it denotes the zeal and fervency of their spirits, which would make them active for God above their brethren. These two (saith Dr.

Hammond) were to be special eminent ministers of the gospel, which is called *a voice shaking the earth*, Heb. 12:26. Yet John, one of those *sons of thunder*, was full of love and tenderness, as appears by his epistles, and was the beloved disciple.

7. Their retirement with their Master, and close adherence to him; *They went into a house*. Now that this jury was impanelled, they *stood together, to hearken to their evidence*. They went together into the house, to settle the orders of their infant college; and now, it is likely, the bag was given to Judas, which pleased him, and made him easy.

II. The continual crowds that attended Christ's motions (v. 20); *The multitude cometh together again*, unsent for, and unseasonably pressing upon him, some with one errand and some with another; so that he and his disciples could not get time *so much as to eat bread*, much less for a set and full meal. Yet he did not shut his doors against the petitioners, but bade them welcome, and gave to each of them *an answer of peace*. Note, They whose hearts are enlarged in the work of God, can easily bear with great inconveniences to themselves, in the prosecution of it, and will rather lose a meal's meat at any time than slip an opportunity of doing good. It is happy when zealous *hearers* and zealous *preachers* thus *meet*, and encourage one another. Now the *kingdom of God was preached*, and men pressed into it, Lu. 16:16. This was a gale of opportunity worth improving; and the disciples might well afford to adjourn their meals, to lay hold on it. It is good striking while the iron is hot.

III. The care of his relations concerning him (v. 21); *When his friends* in Capernaum heard how he was followed, and what pains he took, they *went out, to lay hold on him*, and fetch him home, for they said, *He is beside himself*. 1. Some understand it of an absurd preposterous care, which had more in it of reproach to him than of respect; and so we must take it as we read it, *He is beside himself*; either they suspected it themselves, or it was suggested to them, and they gave credit to the suggestion, that he was *gone distracted*, and therefore his friends ought to bind him, and put him in a dark room, to bring him to his right mind again. His kindred, many of them, had mean thoughts of him (Jn. 7:5), and were willing to hearken to this ill construction which some put upon his great zeal, and to conclude him crazed in his intellects, and under that pretence to take him off from his work. The prophets were called *mad fellows*, 2 Ki. 9:11. 2. Others understand it of a *well-meaning* care; and then they read *εξεστημ*—"*He fainteth*, he has no time to *eat bread*, and therefore his strength will fail him; he will be stifled with the crowd of people, and will have his spirits quite exhausted with constant speaking, and the virtue that *goes out of him* in his miracles; and therefore let us use a friendly violence with him, and get him a little *breathing-time*." In his preaching-work, as well as his suffering-work, he was attacked with, *Master, spare thyself*. Note, They who go on with vigour and zeal in the work of God, must expect to meet with hindrances, both from the groundless disaffection of their enemies, and the mistaken affections of their friends, and they have need to stand upon their guard against both.

### Verses 22-30

I. Here is, The impudent impious brand which the scribes fastened upon Christ's casting out devils, that they might evade and invalidate the conviction of it, and have a poor excuse for not yielding to it. These *scribes came down from Jerusalem*, v. 22. It should seem they came this long journey on purpose to hinder the progress of the doctrine of Christ; such pains did they take to do mischief; and, coming from Jerusalem, where were the most polite and learned scribes, and where they had opportunity of *consulting together against the Lord and his Anointed*, they were in the greater capacity to do mischief; the reputation of

scribes from Jerusalem would have an influence not only upon the *country people*, but upon the *country scribes*; they had never thought of this base suggestion concerning Christ's miracles till the *scribes from Jerusalem* put it into their heads. They could not deny but that he cast out devils, which plainly bespoke him sent of God; but they insinuated that *he had Beelzebub* on his side, was in league with him, and by *the prince of the devils cast out devils*. There is a trick in the case; Satan is not *cast out*, he only *goes out* by consent. There was nothing in the manner of Christ's *casting out devils*, that gave any cause to suspect this; he did it *as one having authority*; but so they will have it, who resolve not to believe him.

II. The rational answer which Christ gave to this objection, demonstrating the absurdity of it.

1. Satan is so *subtle*, that he will never voluntarily quit his possession; *If Satan cast out Satan, his kingdom is divided against itself*, and it *cannot stand*, v. 23–26. He *called them to him*, as one desirous they should be convinced; he treated them with all the freedom, friendliness, and familiarity that could be; he vouchsafed to reason the case with them, *that every mouth may be stopped*. It was plain that the doctrine of Christ *made war* upon the devil's kingdom, and had a direct tendency to break his power, and crush his interest in the souls of men; and it was as plain that the casting of him out of the bodies of people confirmed that doctrine, and gave it the setting on; and therefore it cannot be imagined that he should come into such a design; every one knows that Satan is no *fool*, nor will act so directly against his own interest.

2. Christ is so *wise*, that, being engaged in war with him, he will attack his forces wherever he meets them, whether in the bodies or souls of people, v. 27. It is plain, Christ's design is to *enter into the strong man's house*, to take possession of the interest he has in the world, and to *spoil his goods*, and convert them to his own service; and therefore it is natural to suppose that he will thus *bind the strong man*, will forbid him to *speak* when he would, and to *stay* where he would, and thus show that he has gained a victory over him.

III. The awful warning Christ gave them to take heed how they spoke such dangerous words as these; however they might make light of them, as only conjectures, and the language of *free-thinking*, if they persisted in it, it would be of fatal consequence to them; it would be found a sin against the last remedy, and consequently *unpardonable*; for what could be imagined possible to bring *them* to repentance for their sin in blaspheming Christ, who would set aside such a *strong* conviction with such a *weak* evasion? It is true, the gospel *promiseth*, because Christ hath *purchased*, forgiveness for the greatest sins and sinners, v. 28. Many of those who reviled Christ on the cross (which was a *blaspheming of the Son of man*, aggravated to the highest degree), found mercy, and Christ himself prayed, *Father, forgive them*; but this was *blaspheming the Holy Ghost*, for it was by the Holy Spirit that he *cast out devils*, and they said, It was *by the unclean spirit*, v. 30. By this method they would outface the conviction of all the gifts of the Holy Ghost after Christ's ascension, and defeat them all, after which there remained no more proof, and therefore they should *never have forgiveness*, but were *liable to eternal damnation*. They were in imminent danger of that everlasting punishment, from which there was *no redemption*, and in which there was no *intermission*, no *remission*.

### **Verses 31-35**

Here is, 1. The *disrespect* which Christ's *kindred, according to the flesh*, showed to him, when he was preaching (and they

knew very well that he was then in his element); they not only *stood without*, having no desire to come in, and hear him, but they sent in a message to *call him out to them* (v. 31. 32), as if he must leave his work, to hearken to their *impertinences*; it is probable that they had *no business with him*, only sent for him on purpose to oblige him to *break off*, lest he should *kill himself*. He knew how far his strength would go, and preferred the salvation of souls before his own life, and soon after made it to appear with a witness; it was therefore an *idle thing* for them, under pretence of his sparing himself, to interrupt him; and it was worse, if really they had business with him, when they knew he preferred his business, as a Saviour, so much before any other business.

2. The *respect* which Christ showed to his spiritual kindred upon this occasion. Now, as at other times, he put a *comparative neglect* upon his mother, which seemed purposely designed to obviate the prevent the extravagant respect which men in aftertimes would be apt to pay her. *Our* respect ought to be guided and governed by Christ's; now the virgin Mary, or Christ's mother, is not equalled with, but postponed to, ordinary believers, on whom Christ here puts a *superlative* honour. He looked upon those that *at about* him, and pronounced those of them that not only heard, but did, the will of God, to be to him as *his brother, and sister, and mother*; as much esteemed, loved, and cared for, as his nearest relations, v. 33–35. This is a good reason why we should *honour those that fear the Lord*, and choose them for our people; why we should be not hearers of the word only, but doers of the work, that we may share with the saints in this honour, Surely it is good to be akin to those who are thus nearly allied to Christ, and to have fellowship with those that have fellowship with Christ; and woe to those that hate and persecute Christ's kindred, that are *his bone and his flesh*, every one *resembling the children of a king* (see Jdg. 8:18, 19); for he will with jealousy plead their cause, and avenge their blood.

#### Chapter 4

In this chapter, we have, I. The parable of the seed, and the four sorts of ground (v. 1-9), with the exposition of it (v. 10–20), and the application of it (v. 21–25). II. The parable of the seed growing gradually, but insensibly (v. 26–29). III. The parable of the grain of mustard-seed, and a general account of Christ's parables (v. 30–34). IV. The miracle of Christ's sudden stilling a storm at sea (v. 35–41).

#### Verses 1-20

The foregoing chapter began with Christ's *entering into the synagogue* (v. 1); this chapter begins with Christ's *teaching again by the sea side*. Thus he changed his method, that if possible all might be reached and wrought upon. To gratify the nice and more genteel sort of people that had seats, *chief seats, in the synagogue*, and did not care for hearing a sermon any where else, he did not preach always by the *sea side*, but, having liberty, went often *into the synagogue*, and taught there; yet, to gratify the poor, the mob, that could not get room in the synagogue, he did not always preach there, but *began again to teach by the sea side*, where they could come *within hearing*. Thus are we *debtors both to the wise and to the unwise*, Rom. 1:14.

Here seems to be a new convenience found out, which had not been used before, though he had before preached by the sea side (ch. 2:13), and that was—his standing *in a ship*, while his hearers *stood upon the land*; and that inland sea of Tiberias having no tide, there was no ebbing and flowing of the waters to disturb them. Methinks Christ's carrying his doctrine into a ship, and preaching it thence, was a presage of his sending the gospel to the *isles of the Gentiles*, and the shipping off of the kingdom of God (that rich cargo) from the Jewish nation, to be sent to a people that would bring forth more of the fruits of it. Now observe here,

I. The *way of teaching* that Christ used with the *multitude* (v. 2); He *taught them many things*, but it was *by parables* or similitudes, which would *tempt them to hear*; for people love to be spoken to in their own language, and careless hearers will catch at a plain comparison borrowed from common things, and will retain and repeat that, when they have *lost*, or perhaps never *took*, the truth which it was designed to explain and illustrate: but unless they would take pains to search into it, it would but amuse them; *seeing they would see, and not perceive* (v. 12); and so, while it gratified their curiosity, it was the punishment of their stupidity; they wilfully shut their eyes against the light, and therefore justly did Christ put it into the dark lantern of a parable, which had a bright side toward those who applied it to themselves, and were willing to be guided by it; but to those who were only *willing for a season to play with it*, it only gave a flash of light now and then, but sent them away in the dark. It is just with God to say of those that *will not see*, that they *shall not see*, and to hide from their eyes, who only look about them with a great deal of carelessness, and never look before them with any concern upon the things that belong to their peace.

II. The *way of expounding* that he used with his *disciples*; *When he was alone* by himself, not only the *twelve*, but others that were *about him with the twelve*, took the opportunity to *ask him* the meaning of the parables, v. 10. They found it good to be *about Christ*; the nearer him the better; good to be *with the twelve*, to be conversant with those that are intimate with him. And he told them what a distinguishing favour it was to them, that they were made acquainted with the *mystery of the kingdom of*

God, v. 11. *The secret of the Lord was with them.* That instructed them, which others were only *amused* with, and they were made to increase in knowledge by every parable, and understood more of the way and method in which Christ designed to set up his kingdom in the world, while others were dismissed, never the wiser. Note, Those who know the *mystery of the kingdom of heaven*, must acknowledge that it is *given to them*; they receive both the light and the sight from Jesus Christ, who, after his resurrection, both *opened the scriptures*, and *opened the understanding*, Lu. 24:27, 45.

In particular, we have here,

1. The parable of the sower, as we had it, Mt. 13:3, etc. He begins (v. 3), with, *Hearken*, and concludes (v. 9) with, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*. Note, The words of Christ demand attention, and those who speak from him, may command it, and should stir it up; even that which as yet we do not *thoroughly* understand, or not *rightly*, we must carefully attend to, believing it to be both intelligible and weighty, that at length we may understand it; we shall find more in Christ's sayings than at first there seemed to be.

2. The exposition of it to the disciples. Here is a question Christ put to them before he expounded it, which we had not in Matthew (v. 13); "*Know ye not this parable? Know ye not the meaning of it? How then will ye know all parables?*" (1.) "If ye know not this, which is so plain, how will ye understand other parables, which will be more dark and obscure? If ye are gravelled and run aground with this, which bespeaks so plainly the different success of the word preached upon those that hear it, which ye yourselves may see easily, how will ye understand the parables which hereafter will speak of the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, which is a thing ye have no idea of?" Note, This should quicken us both to prayer and pains that we may get knowledge, that there are a great many things which we are concerned to know; and if we understand not the plain truths of the gospel, how shall we master those that are more difficult? *Vita brevis, ars longa—Life is short, art is long.* *If we have run with the footmen, and they have wearied us, and run us down, then how shall we contend with horses?* Jer. 12:5. (2.) "If ye know not this, which is intended for your direction in hearing the word, that ye may profit by it; how shall ye profit by what ye are further to hear? This parable is to teach you to be attentive to the word, and affected with it, that you may *understand* it. If ye receive not this, ye will not know how to use the key by which ye must be let into all the rest." If we understand not the rules we are to observe in order to our profiting by the word, how shall we profit by any other rule?

Observe, Before Christ expounds the parable, [1.] He shows them how sad *their* case was, who were not let into the meaning of the doctrine of Christ; *To you it is given, but not to them*. Note, It will help us to put a value upon the privileges we enjoy as disciples of Christ, to consider the deplorable state of those who want such privileges, especially that they are out of the ordinary way of conversion; *lest they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them*. v. 12. Those only who are *converted*, have *their sins forgiven them*: and it is the misery of *unconverted* souls, that they lie under *unpardoned* guilt. [2.] He shows them what a shame it was, that they needed such particular explanations of the word they heard, and did not apprehend it at first. Those that would improve in knowledge, must be made sensible of their ignorance.

Having thus prepared them for it, he gives them the interpretation of the parable of the sower, as we had it before in Matthew. Let us only observe here,

*First*, That in the great field of the church, the word of God is dispensed to all promiscuously; *The sower soweth the word* (v. 14), sows it at a venture, *beside all waters*, upon all sorts of ground (Isa. 32:20), not knowing where it will light, or what fruit it will bring forth. He *scatters* it, in order to the *increase* of it. Christ was awhile *sowing* himself, when he went about teaching and preaching; now he sends his ministers, and sows by their hand. Ministers are sowers; they have need of the skill and discretion of the husbandman (Isa. 28:24–26); they must not observe winds and clouds (Eccl. 11:4, 6), and must look up to God, who *gives seed to the sower*, 2 Co. 9:10.

*Secondly*, That of the many that hear the word of the gospel, and read it, and are conversant with it, there are, comparatively, but few that receive it, so as to bring forth the fruits of it; here is but one in four, that comes to good. It is sad to think, how much of the precious seed of the word of God is lost, and *sown in vain*; but there is a day coming when *lost sermons* must be accounted for. Many that have heard Christ himself *preach in their streets*, will hereafter be bidden to depart from him; those therefore who place all their religion in hearing, as if that alone would save them, do but deceive themselves, and build their hope upon the sand, Jam. 1:22.

*Thirdly*, Many are much affected with the word for the present, who yet receive no abiding benefit by it. The motions of soul they have, answerable to what they hear, are but a mere flash, like the crackling of thorns under a pot. We read of hypocrites, that they *delight to know God's ways* (Isa. 58:2); of Herod, that he heard John gladly (ch. 6:20); of others, that they *rejoiced in his light* (Jn. 5:35); of those to whom Ezekiel was a *lovely song* (Eze. 33:32); and those represented here by the stony ground, received the word *with gladness*, and yet came to nothing.

*Fourthly*, The reason why the word doth not leave commanding, abiding, impressions upon the minds of the people, is, because their hearts are not duly disposed and prepared to receive it; the fault is in themselves, not in the word; some are careless forgetful hearers, and these get *no good at all* by the word; it comes in at one ear, and goes out at the other; others have their convictions overpowered by their corruptions, and they lose the good impressions the word has made upon them, so that they get no *abiding* good by it.

*Fifthly*, The devil is very busy about loose, careless hearers, as the fowls of the air go about the seed that lies above ground; when the heart, like the *highway*, is unploughed, unhumbed, when it *lies common*, to be trodden on by every passenger, as theirs that are great company-keepers, then the devil is *like the fowls*; he comes swiftly, and carries away the word ere we are aware. When therefore these fowls come down upon the sacrifices, we should take care, as *Abram* did, to *drive them away* (Gen. 15:11); that, though we cannot keep them from hovering over our heads, we may not let them nestle in our hearts.

*Sixthly*, Many that are not openly *scandalized*, so as to throw off their profession, as they on the stony ground did, yet have the efficacy of it secretly *choked* and stifled, so that it comes to nothing; they continue in a barren, hypocritical profession, which brings nothing to pass, and so go down as certainly, though more plausibly, to hell.

*Seventhly*, Impressions that are not *keep*, will not be *durable*, but will wear off in suffering, trying times; like footsteps on the sand of the sea, which are gone the next high tide of persecution; when *that* iniquity doth abound, the love of many to the ways of God waxeth cold; many that keep their profession in fair days, lose it in a storm; and do as those that go to sea only for

pleasure, come back again when the wind arises. It is the ruin of hypocrites, that they *have no root*; they do not act from a living fixed principle; they do not mind *heart-work*, and without that religion is nothing; for he is the Christian, that is *one inwardly*.

Eighthly, Many are hindered from profiting by the word of God, by their abundance of the world. Many a good lesson of humility, charity, self-denial, and heavenly-mindedness, is choked and lost by that prevailing complacency in the world, which *they* are apt to have, on whom it smiles. Thus many professors, that otherwise might have come to something, prove like Pharaoh's *lean kine* and *thin ears*.

Ninthly, Those that are not encumbered with the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, may yet lose the benefit of their profession by the *lusts of other things*; this is added here in Mark; *by the desires which are about other things* (so Dr. Hammond), an inordinate appetite toward those things that are pleasing to sense or to the fancy. Those that have but little of the world, may yet be ruined by an indulgence of the body.

Tenthly, Fruit is the thing that God expects and requires from those that enjoy the gospel: fruit according to the *seed*; a temper of mind, and a course of life, agreeable to the gospel; Christian graces daily exercised, Christian duties duly performed. This is *fruit*, and it will abound to our account.

Lastly, No good fruit is to be expected but from good seed. If the seed be sown on *good ground*, if the heart be humble, and holy, and heavenly, there will be *good fruit*, and it will *abound* sometimes even to a *hundred fold*, such a crop as Isaac reaped, Gen. 26:12.

### **Verses 21-34**

The lessons which our Saviour designs to teach us here by parables and figurative expressions are these:—

I. That those who *are good* ought to consider the obligations they are under to *do good*; that is, as in the parable before, to *bring forth fruit*. God expects a grateful return of his gifts to us, and a useful improvement of his gifts in us; for (v. 21), *Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed?* No, but that it may be *set on a candlestick*. The apostles were ordained, to receive the gospel, not for themselves only, but for the good of others, to communicate it to them. All Christians, as they have *received the gift*, must *minister the same*. Note, 1. Gifts and graces make a man *as a candle*; the *candle of the Lord* (Prov. 20:27), lighted by the Father of lights; the most eminent are but candles, poor lights, compared with the *Sun of righteousness*. A candle gives light but a *little way*, and but a *little while*, and is easily blown out, and continually burning down and wasting. 2. Many who are *lighted* as candles, put themselves *under a bed, or under a bushel*: they do not *manifest* grace themselves, nor *minister* grace to others; they have estates, and do no good with them; have their limbs and senses, wit and learning perhaps, but nobody is the better for them; they have spiritual gifts, but do not use them; like a taper in an urn, they burn to themselves. 3. Those who are lighted as candles, should set themselves *on a candlestick*; that is, should improve all opportunities of doing good, as those that were made for the glory of God, and the service of the communities they are members of; we are not born for ourselves.

The reason given for this, is, because *there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested*, which *should not* be made manifest

(so it might better be read), v. 22. There is no treasure of gifts and graces lodged in any but with design to be communicated; nor was the gospel made a *secret* to the apostles, to be concealed, but that it should *come abroad*, and be divulged to all the world. Though Christ expounded the parables to his disciples privately, yet it was with design to make them the more publicly useful; they were *taught*, that they might teach; and it is a general rule, that *the ministration of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*, not himself only, but others also.

II. It concerns those who hear the word of the gospel, to *mark* what they hear, and to *make a good use* of it, because their *weal* or *woe* depends upon it; what he had said before he saith again, *If any man have ears to hear, let him hear*, v. 23. Let him give the gospel of Christ a fair hearing; but that is not enough, it is added (v. 24), *Take heed what ye hear*, and give a due regard to that which ye do hear; *Consider what ye hear*, so Dr. Hammond reads it. Note, What we hear, doth us no good, unless we consider it; those especially that are to teach others must themselves be very observant of the things of God; must take notice of the message they are to deliver, that they may be exact. We must likewise *take heed what we hear*, by *proving* all things, that we may *hold fast that which is good*. We must be *cautious*, and stand upon our guard, lest we be imposed upon. To enforce this caution, consider,

1. As we deal with God, God will deal with us, so Dr. Hammond explains these words, "*With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you*. If ye be faithful servants to him, he will be a faithful Master to you: *with the upright he will show himself upright*."

2. As we improve the talents we are entrusted with, we shall increase them; if we make use of the knowledge we have, for the glory of God and the benefit of others, it shall sensibly grow, as stock in trade doth by being turned; *Unto you that hear, shall more be given; to you that have, it shall be given*, v. 25. If the disciples *deliver* that to the church, which they have *received of the Lord*, they shall be *led* more into the *secret of the Lord*. Gifts and graces multiply by being exercised; and God has promised to bless the *hand of the diligent*.

3. If we do not *use*, we *lose*, what we have; *From him that hath not*, that doeth no good with what he hath, and so hath it in vain, is as if he had it not, *shall be taken even that which he hath*. Burying a talent is the betraying of a trust, and amounts to a forfeiture; and gifts and graces *rust* for want of *wearing*.

III. The good seed of the gospel sown in the world, and sown in the heart, doth by degrees produce wonderful effects, but without noise (v. 26, etc.); *So is the kingdom of God*; so is the gospel, when it is sown, and received, as seed in good ground.

1. It will *come up*; though it seem lost and buried under the clods, it will find or make its way through them. The seed *cast into the ground will spring*. Let but the word of Christ have the place it ought to have in a soul, and it will show itself, as the *wisdom from above* doth in a *good conversation*. After a field is sown with corn, how soon is the surface of it altered! How gay and pleasant doth it look, when it is covered with green!

2. The husbandman cannot describe how it comes up; it is one of the mysteries of nature; It *springs and grows up, he knows not how*, v. 27. He sees it has grown, but he cannot tell in what manner it grew, or what was the cause and method of its growth. Thus we know not how the Spirit by the word makes a change in the heart, any more than we can account for the

blowing of the wind, which we hear the sound of, but cannot tell whence it comes, or whither it goes. Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; how *God manifested in the flesh* came to be *believed on in the world*, 1 Tim. 3:16.

3. The husbandman, when he hath sown the seed, doth nothing toward the springing of it up; *He sleeps, and rises, night and day*; goes to sleep *at night*, gets up *in the morning*, and perhaps never so much as thinks of the corn he hath sown, or ever looks upon it, but follows his pleasures or other business, and yet *the earth brings forth fruit of itself*, according to the ordinary course of nature, and by the concurring power of the God of nature. Thus the *word of grace*, when it is received in faith, is in the heart a *work of grace*, and the preachers contribute nothing to it. The Spirit of God is carrying it on when *they sleep*, and can do no business (Job 33:15, 16), or when they rise to go about other business. The prophets do not *live for ever*; but the word which they preached, is doing its work, when they are in their graves, Zec. 1:5, 6. The dew by which the seed is brought up *tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men*, Mic. 5:7.

4. It grows gradually; *first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear*, v. 28. When it is sprung up, it will go forward; nature will have its course, and so will grace. Christ's interest, both in the world and in the heart, is, and will be, a *growing* interest; and though *the beginning be small, the latter end will greatly increase*. Though thou sowest not that body that shall be, but *bare grain*, yet *God will give to every seed its own body*; though at first it is but a tender *blade*, which the frost may nip, or the foot may crush, yet it will increase to *the ear*, to the *full corn in the ear*. *Natura nil facit per saltum—Nature does nothing abruptly*. God carries on his work insensibly and without noise, but insuperably and without fail.

5. It comes to perfection at last (v. 29); *When the fruit is brought forth*, that is, when it is *ripe*, and ready to be *delivered* into the owner's hand; then he *puts in the sickle*. This intimates, (1.) That Christ *now accepts* the services which are done to him by an honest heart from a good principle; from the fruit of the gospel taking place and working in the soul, Christ *gathers in* a harvest of honour to himself. See Jn. 4:35. (2.) That he will reward them in eternal life. When those that receive the gospel aright, have finished their course, the harvest comes, when they shall be gathered as *wheat into God's barn* (Mt. 13:30), as a shock of corn *in his season*.

IV. The work of grace is small in its beginnings, but comes to be great and considerable at last (v. 30–32); *"Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God, as now to be set up by the Messiah? How shall I make you to understand the designed method of it?"* Christ speaks as one considering and consulting with himself, how to illustrate it with an apt similitude; *With what comparison shall we compare it?* Shall we fetch it from the motions of the sun, or the revolutions of the moon? No, the comparison is borrowed from this earth, it is *like a grain of mustard-seed*; he had compared it before to *seed sown*, here to *that seed*, intending thereby to show,

1. That the beginnings of the *gospel kingdom* would be very small, like that which is *one of the least of all seeds*. When a Christian church was *sown in the earth* for God, it was all contained in one room, and the *number of the names* was but one hundred and twenty (Acts 1:15), as the children of Israel, when they went down into Egypt, were but seventy souls. The work of grace in the soul, is, at first, but the *day of small things*; a *cloud no bigger than a man's hand*. Never were there such great things undertaken by such an inconsiderable handful, as that of the discipling of the nations by the ministry of the apostles; nor

a work that was to end in such great glory, as the work of grace raised from such weak and unlikely beginnings. *Who hath begotten me these?*

2. That the perfection of it will be very great; *When it grows up, it becomes greater than all herbs*. The gospel kingdom in the world, shall increase and spread to the remotest nations of the earth, and shall continue to the latest ages of time. The *church* hath *shot out great branches*, strong ones, spreading far, and fruitful. The *work of grace* in the soul has mighty products, now while it is in its growth; but what will it be, when it is perfected in heaven? The difference between a *grain of mustard seed* and a *great tree*, is nothing to that between a *young convert* on earth and a *glorified saint* in heaven. See Jn. 12:24.

After the parables thus specified the historian concludes with this general account of Christ's preaching—that *with many such parables he spoke the word unto them* (v. 33); probably designing to refer us to the larger account of the parables of this kind, which we had before, Mt. 13. He spoke in parables, *as they were able to hear them*; he fetched his comparisons from those things that were familiar to them, and level to their capacity, and delivered them in plain expressions, in condescension to their capacity; though he did not let them into the *mystery* of the parables, yet his manner of expression was easy, and such as they might hereafter recollect to their edification. But, for the present, *without a parable spoke he not unto them*, v. 34. The glory of the Lord was covered with a cloud, and God speaks to us in the language of the *sons of men*, that, though not *at first*, yet *by degrees*, we may understand his meaning; the disciples themselves understood those sayings of Christ afterward, which at first they did not rightly take the sense of. But these parables *he expounded to them, when they were alone*. We cannot but wish we had had that exposition, as we had of the parable of the sower; but it was not so needful; because, when the church should be enlarged, that would *expound* these parables to us, without any more ado.

### **Verses 35-41**

This miracle which Christ wrought for the relief of his disciples, in stilling the storm, we had before (Mt. 8:23, etc.); but it is here more fully related. Observe,

1. It was *the same day* that he had preached out of a ship, *when the even was come*, v. 35. When he had been *labouring in the word and doctrine* all day, instead of *reposing* himself, he *exposeth* himself, to teach us not to think of a constant remaining rest till we come to heaven. The end of a toil may perhaps be but the beginning of a toss. But observe, the ship that Christ made his pulpit is taken under his special protection, and, though in danger, cannot sink. What is used for Christ, he will take particular care of.

2. He himself proposed putting to sea at night, because he would lose no time; *Let us pass over to the other side*; for we shall find, in the next chapter, he has work to do there. Christ went about doing good, and no difficulties in his way should hinder him; thus industrious we should be in serving him, and our generation according to his will.

3. They did not put to sea, till *they had sent away the multitude*, that is, had given to each of them that which they came for, and answered all their requests; for he sent none home complaining that they had attended him *in vain*. Or, They sent them away *with a solemn blessing*; for Christ came into the world, not only to pronounce, but to *command*, and to *give*, the blessing.

4. They took him *even as he was*, that is, in the same dress that he was in when he preached, without any cloak to throw over

him, which he ought to have had, to keep him *warm*, when he went to sea at night, especially after preaching. We must not hence infer that we may be careless of our health, but we may learn hence not to be over nice and solicitous about the body.

5. The storm was so great, that the ship was *full of water* (v. 37), not by springing a leak, but perhaps partly with the shower, for the word here used signifies a *tempest of wind with rain*; however, the ship being little, the waves beat into it so that *it was full*. Note, It is no new thing for that ship to be greatly hurried and endangered, in which Christ and his disciples, Christ and his name and gospel, are embarked.

6. There were *with him other little ships*, which, no doubt, shared in the distress and danger. Probably, these *little ships* carried those who were desirous to go along with Christ, for the benefit of his preaching and miracles on the other side. The *multitude went away* when he put to sea, but some there were, that would venture upon the water with him. Those follow the Lamb aright, that follow him *wherever he goes*. And those that hope for a happiness in Christ, must be willing to take their lot with him, and run the same risks that he runs. One may boldly and cheerfully put to sea in Christ's company, yea though we foresee a storm.

7. Christ was asleep in this storm; and here we are told that it was *in the hinder part of the ship*, the pilot's place: he lay at the helm, to intimate that, as Mr. George Herbert expresses it,

When winds and waves assault my keel,  
He doth preserve it, he doth steer,  
Ev'n when the boat seems most to reel.  
Storms are the triumph of his art;  
Though he may close his eyes, yet not his heart.

He had a *pillow* there, such a one as a fisherman's ship would furnish him with. And he *slept*, to try the faith of his disciples and to stir up prayer: upon the trial, their faith appeared *weak*, and their prayers *strong*. Note, Sometimes when the church is in a storm, Christ seems as if he were asleep, unconcerned in the troubles of his people, and regardless of their prayers, and doth not presently appear for their relief. *Verily he is a God that hideth himself*, Isa. 45:15. But as, when he tarries, he doth not tarry (Hab. 2:3), so when he sleeps he doth not sleep; the keeper of Israel doth not so much as slumber (Ps. 121:3, 4); he slept, but his heart was awake, as the spouse, Cant. 5:2.

8. His disciples encouraged themselves with their having his presence, and thought it the best way to improve that, and appeal to that, and ply the oar of prayer rather than their other oars. Their confidence lay in this, that they had their Master with them; and the ship that has Christ in it, though it may be *tossed*, cannot *sink*; the bush that has God in it, though it may *burn*, shall not *consume*. Caesar encouraged the master of the ship, that had him on board, with this, *Caesarem vehis, et fortunam Caesaris*—*Thou hast Caesar on board, and Caesar's fortune*. They *awoke Christ*. Had not the necessity of the case called for it, they would not have *stirred up* or *awoke* their Master, *till he had pleased* (Cant. 2:7); but they knew he would *forgive them this wrong*. When Christ seems as if he slept in a storm, he is awaked by the prayers of his people; when we know not what to do, our eye must be to him (2 Chr. 20:12); we may be at our wits' end, but not at our faith's end, while we have such a Saviour to

go to. Their address to Christ is here expressed very emphatically; *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* I confess this sounds somewhat harsh, rather like chiding him for sleeping than begging him to awake. I know no excuse for it, but the great familiarity which he was pleased to admit them into, and the freedom he allowed them; and the present distress they were in, which put them into such a fright, that they knew not what they said. *They* do Christ a deal of wrong, who suspect him to be *careless* of his people in distress. The matter is not so; he is not willing that any should perish, much less any of his little ones, Mt. 18:14.

9. The word of command with which Christ rebuked the storm, we have here, and had not in Matthew, v. 39. He says, *Peace, be still—Σιωπα, πεφίμοιμο—be silent, be dumb*. Let not the wind any longer roar, nor the sea rage. Thus he *stills the noise of the sea, the noise of her waves*; a particular emphasis is laid upon the noisiness of them, Ps. 65:7, and 93:3, 4. The noise is threatening and terrifying; let us hear no more of it. This is, (1.) A word of command to us; when our wicked hearts are *like the troubled sea which cannot rest* (Isa. 57:20); when our passions are up, and are unruly, let us think we hear the law of Christ, saying, *Be silent, be dumb*. Think not confusedly, speak not unadvisedly; but *be still*. (2.) A word of comfort to us, that, be the storm of trouble ever so loud, ever so strong, Jesus Christ can lay it with a word's speaking. When without are fightings, and within are fears, and the spirits are in a tumult, Christ can *create the fruit of the lips, peace*. If he say, *Peace, be still*, there is a *great calm* presently. It is spoken of as God's prerogative to command the seas, Jer. 31:35. By this therefore Christ proves himself to be God. He that made the seas, can make them *quiet*.

10. The reproof Christ gave them for their fears, is here carried further than in Matthew. There it is, *Why are ye fearful?* Here, *Why are ye so fearful?* Though there may be cause for some fear, yet not for fear to such a degree as this. There it is, *O ye of little faith*. Here it is, *How is it that ye have no faith?* Not that the disciples were without faith. No, they believed that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*; but at this time their fears prevailed so that they seemed to *have no faith* at all. It was out of the way, when they had occasion for it, and so it was as if they had not had it. "*How is it, that in this matter ye have no faith, that ye think I would not come in with seasonable and effectual relief?*" Those may suspect their faith, who can entertain such a thought as that Christ *careth not* though his *people perish*, and Christ justly takes it ill.

*Lastly*, The impression this miracle made upon the disciples, is here differently expressed. In Matthew it is said, *The men marvelled*; here it is said, *They feared greatly*. They *feared a great fear*; so the original reads it. Now their fear was rectified by their faith. When they feared the winds and the seas, it was for want of the reverence they ought to have had for Christ. But now that they saw a demonstration of his power over them, they feared *them* less, and *him* more. They *feared* lest they had offended Christ by their unbelieving fears; and therefore studied now to give him honour. They had *feared* the power and wrath of the Creator in the storm, and that fear had torment and amazement in it; but now they feared the power and grace of the Redeemer in the calm; they *feared the Lord and his goodness*, and it had pleasure and satisfaction in it, and by it they gave glory to Christ, as Jonah's mariners, who, when the *sea ceased from her raging, feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord*, Jon. 1:16. This sacrifice they offered to the honour of Christ; they said, *What manner of man is this? Surely more than a man, for even the winds and the seas obey him*.



## Chapter 5

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's casting the legion of devils out of the man possessed, and suffering them to enter into the swine (v. 1–20). II. Christ's healing the woman with the bloody issue, in the way as he was going to raise Jairus's daughter to life (v. 21–43). These three miracles we had the story of before (Mt. 8:28, etc. and Mt. 9:18, etc.) but more fully related here.

### Verses 1-20

We have here an instance of Christ's dispossessing the strong man armed, and disposing of him as he pleased, to make it appear that he was *stronger than he*. This he did when he was come *to the other side*, whither he went through a storm; his business there was to rescue this poor creature out of the hands of Satan, and when he had done that, he returned. Thus he came from heaven to earth, and returned, in a storm, to redeem a remnant of mankind out of the hands of the devil, though but a *little remnant*, and did not think his pains *ill bestowed*.

In Matthew, they were said to be *two* possessed with devils; here it is said to be a *man* possessed with an unclean spirit. If there were *two*, there was one, and Mark doth not say that there was *but one*; so that this difference cannot give us any just offence; it is probable that one of them was much more remarkable than the other, and said what was said. Now observe here,

I. The miserable condition that this poor creature was in; he was under the power of an *unclean spirit*, the devil got possession of him, and the effect of it was not, as in many, a silent melancholy, but a raging frenzy; he was raving mad; his condition seems to have been worse than any of the possessed, that were Christ's patients.

1. He had *his dwelling among the tombs*, among the graves of dead people. Their tombs were out of the cities, in *desolate places* (Job 3:14); which gave the devil great advantage: for *woe to him that is alone*. Perhaps the devil drove him to *the tombs*, to make people fancy that the souls of the dead were turned into daemons, and did what mischief was done, so to excuse themselves from it. The touch of a grave was polluting, Num. 19:16. The *unclean spirit* drives people into that company that is *defiling*, and so keeps possession of them. Christ, by rescuing souls out of Satan's power, *saves the living from among the dead*.

2. He was very strong and ungovernable; *No man could bind him*, as it is requisite both for their own good, and for the safety of others, that those who are distracted should be. Not only cords would not hold him, but *chains and fetters of iron* would not, v. 3, 4. Very deplorable is the case of such as *need to be thus bound*, and of all miserable people in this world they are most to be pitied; but his case was worst of all, in whom the devil was so strong, that he could not be *bound*. This sets forth the sad condition of those souls in which the devil has dominion; those *children of disobedience*, in whom that unclean spirit works. Some notoriously wilful sinners are like this madman; all are herein *like the horse and the mule*, that they need to be *held in with bit and bridle*; but some are like the *wild ass*, that will not be so held. The commands and curses of the law are as *chains and fetters*, to restrain sinners from their wicked courses; but they *break those bands in sunder*, and it is an evidence of the power of the devil in them.

3. He was a terror and torment to himself and to all about him, v. 5. The devil is a *cruel* master to those that are *led captive* by

him, a perfect tyrant; this wretched creature was *night and day in the mountains and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones*, either bemoaning his own deplorable case, or in a rage and indignation against heaven. Men in frenzies often wound and destroy themselves; what is a man, when reason is *dethroned* and Satan *enthroned*? The worshippers of Baal in their fury *cut themselves*, like this madman in his. The voice of God is, *Do thyself no harm*; the voice of Satan is, *Do thyself all the harm thou canst*; yet God's word is despised, and Satan's regarded. Perhaps his *cutting himself with stones* was only cutting his feet with the sharp stones he ran barefoot upon.

II. His application to Christ (v. 6); *When he saw Jesus afar off*, coming ashore, he *ran, and worshipped him*. He usually *ran upon* others with *rage*, but he *ran to* Christ with *reverence*. That was done by an invisible hand of Christ, which could not be done with chains and fetters; his fury was all on a sudden curbed. Even the devil, in this poor creature, was forced to tremble before Christ, and bow to him: or, rather, the poor man came, and *worshipped Christ*, in a sense of the need he had of his help, the power of Satan in and over him being, for this instant, suspended.

III. The word of command Christ gave to the unclean spirit, to quit his possession (v. 8); *Come out of him, thou unclean spirit*. He made the man desirous to be relieved, when he enabled him to *run, and worship him*, and then put forth his power for his relief. If Christ *work in us* heartily to pray for a deliverance from Satan, he will work for us that deliverance. Here is an instance of the power and authority with which Christ *commanded the unclean spirits, and they obeyed him*, ch. 1:27. He said, *Come out of the man*. The design of Christ's gospel is to *expel* unclean spirits out of the souls of people; "*Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit*, that the Holy Spirit may enter, may take possession of the heart, and have dominion in it."

IV. The dread which the devil had of Christ. The *man ran, and worshipped Christ*; but it was the devil in the man, that *cried with a loud voice* (making use of the poor man's tongue), *What have I to do with thee?* v. 7. Just as that other unclean spirit, ch. 1:24. 1. He calls God the *most high God*, above all other gods. By the name *Elion—the Most High*, God was *known* among the Phoenicians, and the other nations that bordered upon Israel; and by that name the devil calls him. 2. He owns Jesus to be the *Son of God*. Note, It is no strange thing to hear the best words drop from the worst mouths. There is such a way of saying this as none can attain to but *by the Holy Ghost* (1 Co. 12:3); yet it may be said, after a sort, by the *unclean spirit*. There is no judging of men by their loose sayings; but by their fruits ye shall know them. Piety from the teeth outward is an easy thing. The most fair-spoken hypocrite cannot say better than to call Jesus the Son of God, and yet that the devil did. 3. He disowns any design against Christ; "*What have I to do with thee?* I have no need of thee, I pretend to none; I desire to have nothing to do with thee; I *cannot stand* before thee, and *would not fall*." 4. He deprecates his wrath; I *adjure thee*, that is, "I earnestly beseech thee, by all that is sacred, I beg of thee for God's sake, by whose permission I have got possession of this man, that, though thou drive me out hence, yet that thou *torment me not*, that thou do not restrain me from doing mischief somewhere else; though I know I am *sentenced*, yet let me not be *sent* to the chains of darkness, or hindered from going to and fro, to *devour*."

V. The account Christ took from this unclean spirit of his name. This we had not in Matthew. Christ asked him, *What is thy name?* Not but that Christ could call all the *fallen* stars, as well as the *morning* stars, by their names; but he demands this, that

the standers by might be affected with the vast numbers and power of those malignant infernal spirits, as they had reason to be, when the answer was, *My name is Legion, for we are many*; a legion of soldiers among the Romans consisted, some say, of six thousand men, others of twelve thousand and five hundred; but the number of a legion with them, like that of a regiment with us, was not always the same. Now this intimates that the devils, the infernal powers, are, 1. *Military* powers; a legion is a number of soldiers in arms. The devils war against God and his glory, Christ and his gospel, men and their holiness and happiness. They are such as we are to *resist* and *wrestle against*, Eph. 6:12. 2. That they are *numerous*; he *owns*, or rather he *boasts*—*We are many*; as if he hoped to be *too many* for Christ himself to deal with. What multitudes of apostate spirits were there, and all enemies to God and man; when here were a legion posted to keep garrison in one poor wretched creature against Christ! Many there are that rise up against us. 3. That they are *unanimous*; they are *many* devils, and yet but *one legion* engaged in the same wicked cause; and therefore that cavil of the Pharisees, which supposed Satan to cast out Satan, and to be divided against himself, was altogether groundless. It was not *one* of this legion that betrayed the rest, for they all said, as one man, *What have I to do with thee?* 4. That they are very *powerful*; Who can stand before a *legion*? We are not a match for our spiritual enemies, in our own strength; but *in the Lord, and in the power of his might*, we shall be able to *stand against them*, though there are legions of them. 5. That there is *order* among them, as there is in a *legion*; there are *principalities, and powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world*, which supposes that there are those of a lower rank; the *devil* and his angels; the *dragon* and his; the prince of the devils and his subjects: which makes those enemies the more formidable.

VI. The request of this legion, that Christ would suffer them to go into a herd of swine that was *feeding nigh unto the mountains* (v. 11), those mountains which the demoniacs haunted, v. 5. Their request was, 1. That he *would not send them away out of the country* (v. 10); not only that he would not *commit* them, or *confine* them, to their infernal prison, and so *torment them before the time*; but that he would not *banish* them *that country*, as justly he might, because in this poor man they had been such a terror to it, and done so much mischief. They seem to have had a particular affection for *that country*; or, rather, a particular spite to it; and to have liberty to walk *to and fro through* the rest of *the earth*, will not serve (Job 1:7), unless the *range of those mountains* be allowed them for their pasture, Job 39:8. But why would they abide in *that country*? Grotius saith, Because in *that country* there were many *apostate Jews*, who had thrown themselves out of the covenant of God, and had thereby given Satan power over them. And some suggest, that, having by experience got the knowledge of the dispositions and manners of the people of that country, they could the more effectually do them mischief by their temptations. 2. That he would suffer them to *enter into the swine*, by destroying which they hoped to do more mischief to the souls of all the people in the country, than they could by entering into the body of any particular person, which therefore they did not ask leave to do, for they knew Christ would not grant it.

VII. The permission Christ gave them to enter into the swine, and the immediate destruction of the swine thereby; *He gave them leave* (v. 13), he did not forbid or restrain them, he let them do as they had a mind. Thus he would let the Gadarenes see what powerful spiteful enemies devils are, that they might thereby be induced to make him their Friend, who alone was able to control and conquer them, and had made it appear that he was so. Immediately the *unclean spirits entered into the swine*,

which by the law were unclean creatures, and naturally love to *wallow in the mire*, the fittest place for them. Those that, like the swine, delight in *the mire* of sensual lusts, are fit habitations for Satan, and are, like Babylon, the *hold of every foul spirit*, and a *cage of every unclean and hateful bird* (Rev. 18:2), as pure souls are habitations of the Holy Spirit. The consequence of the devils entering into the swine, was, that they all *ran mad* presently, and ran headlong into the adjoining sea, where they were all drowned, to the number of *two thousand*. The man they possessed did only *cut himself*, for God had said, *He is in your hands, only save his life*. But thereby it appeared, that, if he had not been so restrained, the poor man would have *drowned himself*. See how much we are indebted to the providence of God, and the ministration of good angels, for our preservation from malignant spirits.

VIII. The report of all this dispersed through the country immediately. They that *fed the swine*, hastened to the owners, to give an account of their charge, v. 14. This drew the people together, to see what was done: and, 1. When they saw how wonderfully the poor man was cured, they hence conceived a *veneration for Christ*, v. 15. They saw him that was *possessed with the devil*, and knew him well enough, by the same token that they had many a time been frightened at the sight of him; and were now as much surprised to see him *sitting clothed and in his right mind*; when Satan was cast out, he came to himself, and was his own man presently. Note, Those who are grave and sober, and live by rule and with consideration, thereby make it appear that by the power of Christ the devil's power is broken in their souls. The sight of this *made them afraid*; it astonished them, and forced them to own the power of Christ, and that he is *worthy to be feared*. But, 2. When they found that their swine were lost, they thence conceived a *dislike of Christ*, and wished to have rather his room than his company; they prayed him to *depart out of their coasts*, for they think not any good he can do them sufficient to make them amends for the loss of so many swine, fat swine, it may be, and ready for the market. Now the devils had what they would have; for by no handle do these evil spirits more effectually manage sinful souls than by that of the love of the world. They were afraid of some further punishment, if Christ should tarry among them, whereas, if they would but part with their sins, he had life and happiness for them; but, being loth to quit either their sins or their swine, they chose rather to abandon their Saviour. Thus *they* do, who, rather than let go a base lust, will throw away their interest in Christ, and their expectations from him. They should rather have argued, "If he has such a power as this over devils and all creatures, it is good having him our Friend; if the devils have leave to tarry *in our country* (v. 10), let us entreat *him* to tarry in it too, who alone can control them." But, instead of this, they wished him further off. Such strange misconstructions do carnal hearts make of the just judgments of God; instead of being by them driven to him as they ought, they set him at so much the greater distance; though he hath said, *Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt*, Jer. 25:6.

IX. An account of the conduct of the poor man after his deliverance. 1. He *desired that he might go along with Christ* (v. 18), perhaps for fear lest the evil spirit should again seize him; or, rather, that he might receive instruction from him, being unwilling to stay among those heathenish people that desired him to depart. Those that are freed from the evil spirit, cannot but covet acquaintance and fellowship with Christ. 2. Christ *would not suffer him* to go with him, lest it should savour of ostentation, and to let him know that he could both protect and instruct him at a distance. And besides, he had other work for

him to do; he must go home to his friends, and tell them what *great things the Lord had done for him*, the Lord Jesus had done; that Christ might be honoured, and his neighbours and friends might be edified, and invited to believe in Christ. He must take particular notice rather of Christ's *pity* than of his *power*, for that is it which especially he glories in; he must tell them what *compassion* the Lord had had on him in his misery. 3. The man, in a transport of joy, proclaimed, all the country over, what *great things Jesus had done for him*, v. 20. This is a debt we owe both to Christ and to our brethren, that he may be glorified and they edified. And see what was the effect of it; *All men did marvel*, but few went any further. Many that cannot but wonder at the works of Christ, yet do not, as they ought, *wonder after him*.

### Verses 21-34

The Gadarenes having desired Christ to leave their country, he did not stay to trouble them long, but presently went by water, as he came, *back to the other side* (v. 21), and there *much people gathered to him*. Note, If there be some that reject Christ, yet there are others that receive him, and bid him welcome. A despised gospel will *cross the water*, and go where it will have better entertainment. Now among the many that applied themselves to him,

I. Here is one, that comes *openly to beg* a cure for a sick child; and it is no less a person than one of the *rulers of the synagogue*, one that presided in the synagogue-worship or, as some think, one of the judges of the consistory court, which was in every city, consisting of *twenty-three*. He was not named in Matthew, he is here, *Jairus*, or *Jair*, Jdg. 10:3. He addressed himself to Christ, though a ruler, with great humility and reverence; *When he saw him, he fell at his feet*, giving honour to him as one really greater than he appeared to be; and with great importunity, he *besought him greatly*, as one in earnest, as one that not only valued the mercy he came for, but that knew he could obtain it no where else. The case is this, He has a *little daughter*, about twelve years old, the darling of the family, and she *lies a dying*; but he believes that if Christ will but come, and *lay his hands upon her*, she will return even from the gates of the grave. He said, at first, when he came, *She lies a dying* (so Mark); but afterward, upon fresh information sent him, he saith, *She is even now dead* (so Matthew); but he still prosecutes his suit; see Lu. 8:42–49. Christ readily agreed, and went with him, v. 24.

II. Here is another, that comes *clandestinely to steal* a cure (if I may so say) for herself; and she got the relief she came for. This cure was wrought by *the way*, as he was going to raise the ruler's daughter, and was followed by a crowd. See how Christ improved his time, and lost none of the precious moments of it. Many of his discourses, and some of his miracles, are dates *by the way-side*; we should be doing good, not only when we *sit in the house*, but when we *walk by the way*, Deu. 6:7. Now observe,

1. The piteous case of this poor woman. She had a constant *issue of blood* upon her, for *twelve years*, which had thrown her, no doubt, into great weakness, had embittered the comfort of her life, and threatened to be her death in a little time. She had had the best advice of physicians, that she could get, and had made use of the many medicines and methods they prescribed: as long as she had any thing to give them, they had kept her in hopes that they could cure her; but now that she had spent all she had among them, they gave her up as incurable. See here, (1.) That skin for skin, and all that a man has, will be give for life and health; she spent all she had upon physicians. (2.) It is ill with those patients whose physicians are their worst disease; who

suffer by their physicians, instead of being relieved by them. (3.) Those that are not *bettered* by medicines, commonly *grow worse*, and the disease gets the more ground. (4.) It is usual with people not to apply themselves to Christ, till they have tried in vain all other helpers, and find them, as certainly they will, *physicians of no value*. And he will be found a *sure refuge*, even to those who make him their *last refuge*.

2. The strong faith that she had in the power of Christ to heal her; she said within herself, though it doth not appear that she was encouraged by any preceding instance to say it, *If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole*, v. 28. She believed that he cured, not as a prophet, by virtue *derived* from God, but as the Son of God, by a virtue *inherent* in himself. Her case was such as she could not in modesty tell him publicly, as others did their grievances, and therefore a private cure was what she wished for, and her faith was suited to her case.

3. The wonderful effect produced by it; *She came in the crowd behind him*, and with much ado got to *touch his garment*, and immediately she felt the cure wrought, v. 29. The flux of blood was *dried up*, and she felt herself perfectly well all over her, as well as ever she was in her life, in an instant; by this it appears that the cure was altogether miraculous; for those that in such cases are cured by natural means, recover their strength slowly and gradually, and not *per saltum*—*all at once*; but *as for God, his work is perfect*. Note, Those whom Christ heals of the disease of sin, that bloody issue, cannot but experience in themselves a universal change for the better.

4. Christ's enquiry after his concealed patient, and the encouragement he gave her, upon the discovery of her; Christ *knew in himself that virtue had gone out of him*, v. 30. He knew it not by any deficiency of spirits, through the exhausting of this virtue, but rather by an agility of spirits, in the exerting of it, and the innate and inseparable pleasure he had in doing good. And being desirous to see his patient, he asked, not in displeasure, as one affronted, but in tenderness, as one concerned, *Who touched my clothes?* The disciples, not without a show of rudeness and indecency, almost ridiculed his question (v. 31); *The multitudes throng thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?* As if it had been an improper question. Christ passed by the affront, and *looks around to see her that had done this thing*; not that he might *blame* her for her presumption, but that he might *commend* and *encourage* her faith, and by his own act and deed might *warrant* and *confirm* the cure, and *ratify* to her that which she had *surreptitiously* obtained. He needed not that any should inform him, for he had presently his eye upon her. Note, As secret acts of sin, so secret acts of faith, are known to the Lord Jesus, and are under his eye. If believers derive virtue from Christ ever so closely, he knows it, and is pleased with it. The poor woman, hereupon, presented herself to the Lord Jesus (v. 33), *fearing and trembling*, not knowing how he would take it. Note, Christ's patients are often trembling, when they have reason to be triumphing. She might have come boldly, *knowing what was done in her*; yet, *knowing that, she fears and trembles*. It was a *surprise*, and was not yet, as it should have been, a *pleasing surprise*. However, she *fell down before him*. Note, There is nothing better for those that fear and tremble, than to throw themselves at the feet of the Lord Jesus; to humble themselves before him, and refer themselves to him. And she *told him all the truth*. Note, We must not be ashamed to own the secret transactions between Christ and our souls; but, when called to it, mention, to his praise, and the encouragement of others, what he has done for our souls, and the experience we have had of *healing virtue* derived from him. And the consideration of this,

that nothing can be hid from Christ, should engage us to confess all to him. See what an encouraging word he gave her (v. 34); *Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole*. Note, Christ puts honour upon faith, because faith gives honour to Christ. But see how *what is done by faith* on earth is ratified in heaven; Christ saith, *Be whole of thy disease*. Note, If our faith sets the seal of its *amen* to the power and promise of God, saying, "So it is, and so let it be to me;" God's grace will set the seal of its *amen* to the prayers and hopes of faith, saying, "So be it, and so it shall be, to thee." And therefore, "*Go in peace*"; be well satisfied that thy cure is honestly come by, is effectually wrought, and take the comfort of it." Note, They that by faith are healed of their spiritual diseases, have reason to *go in peace*.

### Verses 35-43

Diseases and deaths came into the world by the sin and disobedience of the first Adam; but by the grace of the second Adam both are conquered. Christ, having healed an incurable disease, here goes on to triumph over death, as in the beginning of the chapter he had triumphed over an outrageous devil.

I. The melancholy news is brought to Jairus, that his *daughter is dead*, and therefore, if Christ be as other physicians, he comes too late. While there is life, there is hope, and room for the use of means; but when life is gone, it is past recall; *Why troublest thou the Master any further?* v. 35. Ordinarily, the proper thought in this case, is, "The matter is determined, the will of God is done, and I submit, I acquiesce; *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, Who can tell but God will yet be gracious to me, and the child shall live? But now that it is dead, wherefore should I weep? I shall go to it, but it shall not return to me.*" With such words we should *quiet ourselves* at such a time, that our souls may be *as a child that is weaned from his mother*: but there the case was extraordinary; the death of the child doth not, as usually, put an end to the narrative.

II. Christ encourageth the afflicted father yet to hope that his application to Christ on the behalf of his child should not be in vain. Christ had staid to work a cure by the way, but he shall be no sufferer by that, nor loser by the gain of others; *Be not afraid, only believe*. We may suppose Jairus at a pause, whether he should ask Christ to go on or no; but have we not as much occasion for the grace of God, and his consolations, and consequently of the prayers of our ministers and Christian friends, when death is in the house, as when sickness is? Christ therefore soon determines this matter; "*Be not afraid* that my coming will be to no purpose, only believe that I will make it turn to a good account." Note, 1. We must not despair concerning our relations that are dead, nor *sorrow* for them *as those that have no hope*. See what is said to Rachel, who *refused to be comforted concerning her children*, upon the presumption that they *were not*; *Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for there is hope in thine end, that thy children shall come again*, Jer. 31:16, 17. Therefore fear not, faint not. 2. Faith is the only remedy against disquieting grief and fear at such a time: let that silence them, *Only believe*. Keep up a confidence in Christ, and a dependence upon him, and he will do what is for the best. Believe the resurrection, and then be not afraid.

III. He went with a select company to the house where the dead child was. He had, by the crowd that attended him, given advantage to the poor woman he last healed, and, having done that, now he shook off the crowd, and *suffered no man to follow*

*him* (to follow with him, so the word is), but his three bosom-disciples, Peter, and James, and John; a competent number to be witnesses of the miracle, but not such a number as that his taking them with him might look like vainglory.

IV. He raised the dead child to life; the circumstances of the narrative here are much the same as we had them in Matthew; only here we may observe,

1. That the child was extremely well beloved, for the relations and neighbours *wept and wailed greatly*. It is very afflictive when that which is come forth like a flower is so *soon cut down*, and withereth before it is grown up; when that grieves us, of which we said, *This same shall comfort us*.

2. That it was evident beyond dispute, that the child was really and truly dead. Their *laughing* Christ to *scorn*, for saying, *She is not dead, but sleepeth*, though highly reprehensible, serves for the proof of this.

3. That Christ put those out as unworthy to be witnesses of the miracle, who were noisy in their sorrow, and were so ignorant in the things of God, as not to understand him when he spoke of death as a *sleep*, or so scornful, as to ridicule him for it.

4. That he took the parents of the child to be witnesses of the miracle, because in it he had an eye to *their faith*, and designed it for *their* comfort, who were the *true*, for they were the *silent* mourners.

5. That Christ raised the child to life by a word of power, which is recorded here, and recorded in Syriac, the language in which Christ spoke, for the greater certainty of the thing; *Talitha, cumi; Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise*. Dr. Lightfoot saith, It was customary with the Jews, when they gave physic to one that was *sick*, to say, *Arise from thy disease*; meaning, *We wish thou mayest arise*: but to one that was *dead*, Christ said, *Arise from the dead*; meaning, *I command that thou arise*; nay, there is more in it—the dead have not power to arise, therefore power goes along with this word, to make it effectual. *Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis—Give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt*. Christ works while he commands, and works by the command, and therefore may command what he pleaseth, even the dead to arise. Such is the gospel call to those that are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and can no more rise from that death by their own power, than this child could; and yet that word, *Awake, and arise from the dead*, is neither vain, nor in vain, when it follows immediately, *Christ shall give thee light*, Eph. 5:14. It is by the word of Christ that spiritual life is given, *I said unto thee, Live*, Eze. 16:6.

6. That the damsel, as soon as life returned, *arose, and walked*, v. 42. Spiritual life will appear by our *rising* from the bed of sloth and carelessness, and our *walking* in a religious conversation, our *walking up and down* in Christ's name and strength; even from those that are *of the age of twelve years*, it may be expected that they should walk as those whom Christ has *raised to life*, otherwise than in the native *vanity of their minds*.

7. That all who saw it, and heard of it, admired the miracle, and him that wrought it; *They were astonished with a great astonishment*. They could not but acknowledge that there was something in it extraordinary and very great, and yet they knew not what to make of it, or to infer from it. Their wonder should have worked forward to a lively faith, but it rested in a *stupor* or *astonishment*.

8. That Christ endeavoured to conceal it; *He charged them straitly, that no man should know it*. It was sufficiently known to a competent number, but he would not have it as yet *proclaimed* any further; because his own resurrection was to be the great

instance of his power over death, and therefore the divulging of other instances must be reserved till that great proof was given: let one part of the evidence be kept private, till the other part, on which the main stress lies, be made ready.

9. That Christ took care something should be *given her to eat*. By this it appeared that she was raised not only to life, but to a good state of health, that she had an appetite to her meat; even the new-born babes in Christ's house desire the sincere milk, 1 Pt. 2:1, 2. And it is observable, that, as Christ, when at first he had made man, presently provided food for him, and food out of the earth of which he was made (Gen. 1:29), so now when he had given a new life, he took care that something should be given to eat; for is he has given *life*, he may be trusted to give *livelihood*, because *the life is more than meat*, Mt. 6:25. Where Christ hath given *spiritual life*, he will provide food for the support and nourishment of it unto life eternal, for he will *never forsake*, or be wanting to, the *work of his own hands*.

## Chapter 6

A great variety of observable passages we have, in this chapter, concerning our Lord Jesus, the substance of all which we had before in Matthew, but divers circumstances we have, which we did not there meet with. Here is, I. Christ contemned by his countrymen, because he was one of them, and they knew, or thought they knew, his original (v. 1-6). II. The just power he gave his apostles over unclean spirits, and an account given of their negotiation (v. 7-13). III. A strange notion which Herod and others had of Christ, upon which occasion we have the story of the martyrdom of John Baptist (v. 14-29). IV. Christ's retirement into a desert place with his disciples; the crowds that followed him thither to receive instruction from him; and his feeding five thousand of them with five loaves and two fishes (v. 30-44). V. Christ's walking upon the sea to his disciples, and the abundance of cures he wrought on the other side of the water (v. 45-56).

### Verses 1-6

Here, I. Christ makes a visit to *his own country*, the place not of his birth, but of his education; that was *Nazareth*; where his relations were. He had been in danger of his life among them (Lu. 4:29), and yet he came among them again; so strangely doth he wait to be gracious, and seek the salvation of his enemies. Whither he went, though it was into danger, *his disciples followed him* (v. 1); for they had left all, to follow him whithersoever he went.

II. There he *preached* in their *synagogue*, on the *sabbath day*, v. 2. It seems, there was not such flocking to him there as in other places, so that he had no opportunity of preaching till they came together on the sabbath day; and then he expounded a portion of scripture with great clearness. In religious assemblies, on sabbath days, the word of God is to be preached according to Christ's example. *We give glory* to God by receiving instruction from him.

III. They could not but own that which was very honourable concerning him. 1. That he spoke with great *wisdom*, and that this wisdom was *given to him*, for they knew he had no learned education. 2. That he did *mighty works*, did them with his own hands, for the confirming of the doctrine he taught. They acknowledged the two great proofs of the divine original of his gospel—the *divine wisdom* that appeared in the contrivance of it, and the *divine power* that was exerted for the ratifying and recommending of it; and yet, though they could not deny the premises, they would not admit the conclusion.

IV. They studied to disparage him, and to raise prejudices in the minds of people against him, notwithstanding. All this *wisdom*, and all these *mighty works*, shall be of no account, because he had a home-education, had never travelled, nor been at any university, or bred up at the feet of any of their doctors (v. 3); *Is not this the Carpenter?* In Matthew, they upbraid him with being the carpenter's son, his supposed father Joseph being of that trade. But, it seems, they could say further, *Is not this the Carpenter?* our Lord Jesus, it is probable, employing himself in that business with his father, before he entered upon his public ministry, at least, sometimes in journey-work. 1. He would thus *humble himself*, and make himself of no reputation, as one that had taken upon him the form of a servant, and came to minister. Thus low did our Redeemer stoop, when he came to redeem us out of our low estate. 2. He would thus teach us to *abhor idleness*, and to find *ourselves something to do* in this world; and rather to take up with mean and laborious employments, and such as no more is to be got by than a bare livelihood,

than indulge ourselves in sloth. Nothing is more pernicious for young people than to get a *habit of sauntering*. The Jews had a good rule for this—that their young men who were designed for scholars, were yet bred up to some trade, as Paul was a tent-maker, that they might have some business to fill up their time with, and, if need were, to get their bread with. 3. He would thus put an honour upon despised mechanics, and encourage those who eat the labour of their hands, though great men look upon them with contempt.

Another thing they upbraided him with, was, the meanness of his relations; "*He is the son of Mary; his brethren and sisters are here with us; we know his family and kindred;*" and therefore, though they were *astonished* at his doctrine (v. 2), yet they were *offended* at his person (v. 3), were prejudiced against him, and looked upon him with contempt; and for that reason would not receive his doctrine, though ever so well recommended. May we think that if they had not known his pedigree, but he had dropped among them from the clouds, without father, without mother, and without descent, they would have entertained him with any more respect? Truly, no; for in Judea, where this was not known, that was made an objection against him (Jn. 9:29); *As for this fellow, we know not from whence he is*. Obstinate unbelief will never want excuses.

V. Let us see how Christ bore this contempt.

1. He partly *excused it*, as a common thing, and what might be expected, though not reasonably or justly (v. 4); *A prophet is not despised any where but in his own country*. Some exceptions there may be to this rule; doubtless many have got over this prejudice, but ordinarily it holds good, that ministers are seldom so acceptable and successful in their own country as among strangers; *familiarity* in the younger years breeds a contempt, the advancement of one that was an inferior begets *envy*, and men will hardly set those among the guides of their souls whose fathers they were ready to set with the dogs of their flock; in such a case therefore it must not be thought hard, it is common treatment, it was Christ's, and *wisdom is profitable to direct to other soil*.

2. He did *some good* among them, notwithstanding the slights they put upon him, for he is kind even to the evil and unthankful; *He laid his hands upon a few sick folks, and healed them*. Note, It is generous, and becoming the followers of Christ, to content themselves with the pleasure and satisfaction of doing good, though they be unjustly denied the praise of it.

3. Yet he *could there do* no such mighty works, at least not so many, as in other places, because of the unbelief that prevailed among the people, by reason of the prejudices which their leaders instilled into them against Christ, v. 5. It is a strange expression, as if unbelief tied the hands of omnipotence itself; he *would have done* as many miracles there as he had done elsewhere, but he could not, because people would not make application to him, nor sue for his favours; he could have wrought them, but they forfeited the honour of having them wrought for them. Note, By unbelief and contempt of Christ men stop the current of his favours to them, and put a bar in their own door.

4. He *marvelled because of their unbelief*, v. 6. We never find Christ wondering but at the *faith* of the Gentiles that were strangers, as the *centurion* (Mt. 8:10), and the woman of Samaria, and at the unbelief of Jews that were his own countrymen. Note, The unbelief of those that enjoy the means of grace, is a most amazing thing.

5. He *went round about the village, teaching*. If we cannot do good where we would, we must do it where we can, and be glad

if we may have any opportunity, though but in the villages, of serving Christ and souls. Sometimes the gospel of Christ finds better entertainment in the country villages, where there is less wealth, and pomp, and mirth, and subtlety, than in the populous cities.

### Verses 7-13

Here is, I. The commission given to the twelve apostles, to preach and work miracles; it is the same which we had more largely, Mt. 10. Mark doth not name them here, as Matthew doth, because he had named them before, when they were first called into fellowship with him, ch. 3:16–19. Hitherto they had been conversant with Christ, and had set at his feet, had heard his doctrine, and seen his miracles; and now he determines to make some use of them; they had *received*, that they might *give*, had *learned*, that they might *teach*; and therefore now he *began to send them forth*. They must not always be studying in the academy, to get knowledge, but they must preach in the country, to do good with the knowledge they have got. Though they were not as yet so well accomplished as they were to be, yet, according to their present ability and capacity, they must be set to work, and make further improvements afterward. Now observe here,

1. That Christ sent them forth *by two and two*; this Mark takes notice of. They went two and two to a place, that out of the mouth of two witnesses every word might be established; and that they might be company for one another when they were among strangers, and might strengthen the hands, and encourage the hearts, one of another; might help one another if any thing should be amiss, and keep one another in countenance. Every common soldier has his comrade; and it is an approved maxim, *Two are better than one*. Christ would thus teach his ministers to associate, and both lend and borrow help.

2. That he *gave them power over unclean spirits*. He commissioned them to attack the devil's kingdom, and empowered them, as a specimen of their breaking his interest in the souls of men by their doctrine, to cast him out of the bodies of those that were possessed. Dr. Lightfoot suggests, that they cured diseases, and cast out devils, by the Spirit, but preached that only which they had learned from the mouth of Christ.

3. That he *commanded them* not to take provisions along with them, neither *victuals* nor *money*, that they might appear, wherever they came, to be poor men, men not of this world, and therefore might with the better grace call people off from it to another world. When afterward he bid them *take purse and scrip* (Lu. 22:36), that did not intimate (as Dr. Lightfoot observes) that his care of them was abated from what it had been; but that they should meet with worse times and worse entertainment than they met with at their first mission. In Matthew and Luke they are forbidden to *take staves* with them, that is, fighting staves; but here in Mark they are bid to take nothing save a *staff only*, that is, a walking staff, such as pilgrims carried. They must not put on *shoes*, but *sandals* only, which were only the soles of shoes tied under their feet, or like pumps, or slippers; they must go in the readiest plainest dress they could, and must not so much as have *two coats*; for their stay abroad would be short, they must return before winter, and what they wanted, those they preached to would cheerfully accommodate them with.

4. He directed them, whatever city they came to, to make that house their head-quarters, which happened to be their first quarters (v. 10); *"There abide, till ye depart from that place*. And since ye know ye come on an errand sufficient to make you welcome, have such charity for your friends that first invited you, as to believe they do not think you burthensome."

5. He pronounces a very heavy doom upon those that rejected the gospel they preached (v. 11); "*Whosoever shall not receive you, or will not so much as hear you, depart thence* (if one will not, another will), and *shake off the dust under your feet, for a testimony against them*. Let them know that they have had a fair offer of life and happiness made them, witness that dust; but that, since they have refused it, they cannot expect ever to have another; let them take up with their own dust, for so shall their doom be." That dust, like the dust of Egypt (Ex. 9:9), shall turn into a plague to them; and their condemnation in the great day, will be more intolerable than *that of Sodom*: for the angels were sent to Sodom, and were abused there; yet that would not bring on so great a guilt and so great a ruin as the contempt and abuse of the apostles of Christ, who bring with them the offers of gospel grace.

II. The apostles' conduct in pursuance of their commission. Though they were conscious to themselves of great weakness, and expected no secular advantage by it, yet, in obedience to their Master's order, and in dependence upon his strength, they *went out* as Abraham, not knowing whither they went. Observe here,

1. The doctrine they preached; *They preached that men should repent* (v. 12); that they should change their minds, and reform their lives, in consideration of the near approach of the kingdom of the Messiah. Note, The great design of the gospel preachers, and the great tendency of gospel preaching, should be, to bring people to repentance, to a *new heart* and a *new way*. They did not amuse people with curious speculations, but told them that they must repent of their sins, and turn to God.

2. The miracles they wrought. The power Christ gave them *over unclean spirits*, was not ineffectual, nor did they receive it in vain, but used it, for they *cast out many devils* (v. 13); and they *anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them*. Some think this oil was used *medicinally*, according to the custom of the Jews; but I rather think it was used as a *sign of miraculous healing*, by the appointment of Christ, though not mentioned; and it was afterward used by those *elders of the church*, to whom *by the Spirit* was given the *gift of healing*, Jam. 5:14. It is certain here, and therefore probable there, that *anointing the sick with oil*, is appropriated to that extraordinary power which has long ceased, and therefore that sign must cease with it.

### **Verses 14-29**

Here is, I. The wild notions that the people had concerning our Lord Jesus, v. 15. His own countrymen could believe nothing great concerning him, because they knew his poor kindred; but others that were not under the power of that prejudice against him, were yet willing to believe any thing rather than the truth—that he was the Son of God, and the true Messiah: they said, He is Elias, whom they expected; or, *He is a prophet*, one of the Old-Testament prophets raised to life, and returned to this world; or *as one of the prophets*, a prophet now newly raised up, equal to those under the Old Testament.

II. The opinion of Herod concerning him. He heard of *his name* and fame, of what he said and what he did; and he said, "It is certainly John Baptist, v. 14. As sure as we are here, *It is John, whom I beheaded*, v. 16. He is *risen from the dead*; and though while he was with us *he did no miracle*, yet, having removed for awhile to another world, he is come again with greater power, and *now mighty works do show forth themselves in him*."

Note, 1. Where there is an *idle faith*, there is commonly a *working fancy*. The people said, It is a prophet risen from the dead; Herod said, It is *John Baptist risen from the dead*. It seems by this, that the *rising of a prophet from the dead*, to do *mighty*

*works*, was a thing expected, and was thought neither impossible nor improbable, and it was now readily suspected when it was *not true*; but afterward, when *it was true* concerning Christ, and a truth undeniably evidenced, yet then it was obstinately gainsaid and denied. Those who most wilfully disbelieve the truth, are commonly most credulous of errors and fancies.

2. They who fight against the cause of God, will find themselves baffled, even when they think themselves conquerors; they cannot gain their point, for the word of the Lord endures for ever. They who rejoiced when the witnesses were slain, fretted as much, when in three or four days they *rose again* in their successors, Rev. 11:10, 11. The impenitent unreformed sinner, that escapeth the sword of Jehu, shall Elisha slay.

3. A guilty conscience needs no accuser or tormentor but itself. Herod charges himself with the murder of John, which perhaps no one else dare charge him with; *I beheaded him*; and the terror of it made him imagine that Christ was John risen. He feared John while he lived, and now, when he thought he had got clear of him, fears him ten times worse when he is dead. One might as well be haunted with ghosts and furies, as with the horrors of an accusing conscience; those therefore who would keep an undisturbed peace, must keep an undefiled conscience, Acts 24:16.

4. There may be the terrors of strong conviction, where there is not the truth of a saving conversion. This Herod, who had this notion concerning Christ, afterward sought to kill him (Lu. 13:31), and did set him at nought (Lu. 23:11); so that he will not be persuaded, though it be *by one risen from the dead*; no, not by a John the Baptist risen from the dead.

III. A narrative of Herod's putting John Baptist to death, which is brought in upon this occasion, as it was in Matthew. And here we may observe,

1. The great value and veneration which Herod had some time had for John Baptist, which is related only by this evangelist, v. 20. Here we see what a great way a man may go toward grace and glory, and yet come short of both, and perish eternally.

(1.) He *feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and a holy*. It is possible that a man may have a great reverence for good men, and especially for good ministers, yea, and for that in them that is good, and yet himself be a bad man. Observe, [1.] John was a *just man, and a holy*; to make a complete good man, both justice and holiness are necessary; holiness toward God, and justice toward men. John was mortified to this world, and so was a good friend both to justice and holiness. [2.] Herod knew this, not only by common fame, but by personal acquaintance with him. Those that have but little justice and holiness themselves, may yet discern it with respect in others. And, [3.] He therefore *feared* him, he honoured him. Holiness and justice command veneration, and many that are not good themselves, have respect for those that are.

(2.) He *observed* him; he sheltered him from the malice of his enemies (so some understand it); or, rather, he had a regard to his exemplary conversation, and took notice of that in him that was praiseworthy, and commended it in the hearing of those about him; he made it appear that he observed what John said and did.

(3.) He *heard him* preach; which was great condescension, considering how mean John's appearance was. To hear Christ himself preach in our streets will be but a poor plea in the great day, Lu. 13:26.

(4.) He *did many of those things* which John in his preaching taught him. He was not only a *hearer of the word*, but in part a *doer of the work*. Some sins which John in his preaching reprov'd, he forsook, and some duties he bound himself to; but it will

not suffice to do *many* things, unless we have *respect to all* the commandments.

(5.) He *heard him gladly*. He did not hear him with terror as Felix heard Paul, but heard him with pleasure. There is a flashy joy, which a hypocrite may have in hearing the word; Ezekiel was to his hearers as a *lovely song* (Eze. 33:32); and the *stony ground received the word with joy*, Lu. 8:13.

2. John's faithfulness to Herod, in telling him of his faults. Herod had married his brother Philip's wife, v. 17. All the country, no doubt, cried shame on him for it, and reproached him for it; but John *reproved* him, told him plainly, *It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife*. This was Herod's own iniquity, which he could not leave, when he did many things that John taught him; and therefore John tells him of this particularly. Though he were a king, he would not spare him, any more than Elijah did Ahab, when he said, *Hast thou killed and also taken possession?* Though John had an interest in him, and he might fear this plain-dealing would destroy his interest, yet he reprov'd him; for *faithful are the wounds of a friend* (Prov. 27:6); and though there are some swine that will *turn again, and rend* those that *cast pearls* before them, yet, ordinarily, *he that rebuketh a man* (if the person reprov'd has any thing of the understanding of a man), *afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with his tongue*, Prov. 28:23. Though it was dangerous to offend Herod, and much more to offend Herodias, yet John would run the hazard rather than be wanting in his duty. Note, Those ministers that would be found faithful in the work of God, must not be afraid of the face of man. If we seek to please men, further than is for their spiritual good, we are not the servants of Christ.

3. The malice which Herodias bore to John for this (v. 19); She *had a quarrel with him, and would have killed him*; but when she could not obtain that, she got him committed to prison, v. 17. Herod respected him, till he touched him in his Herodias. Many that pretend to honour prophesying, are for smooth things only, and love good preaching, if it keep far enough from their beloved sin; but if that be touched, they cannot bear it. No marvel if the world hate those who testify of it that its works are evil. But it is better that sinners persecute ministers now for their faithfulness, than curse them eternally for their unfaithfulness.

4. The plot laid to take off John's head. I am apt to think that Herod was himself in the plot, notwithstanding his pretences to be displeas'd and surpris'd, and that the thing was concert'd between him and Herodias; for it is said to be *when a convenient day was come* (v. 21), fit for such a purpose. (1.) There must be a ball at court, upon the king's birth-day, and a supper prepared for *his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee*. (2.) To grace the solemnity, the daughter of Herodias must *dance* publicly, and Herod must take on him to be wonderfully charmed with her dancing; and if he be, they that *sit with him* cannot but, in compliment to him, be so too. (3.) The king hereupon must make her an extravagant promise, to give her *whatever she would ask, even to the half of the kingdom*; and yet, that, if rightly understood, would not have reach'd the end design'd, for John Baptist's head was worth more than his *whole kingdom*. This promise is bound with an oath, that no room might be left to fly off from it; *He sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask, I will give*. I can scarcely think he would have made such an unlimited promise, but that he knew what she would ask. (4.) She, being instructed by Herodias her mother, asked the *head of John Baptist*; and she must have it brought her *in a charger*, as a pretty thing for her to play with (v. 24, 25); and there must be

no delay, no time lost, she must have it *by and by*. (5.) Herod granted it, and the execution was done immediately while the company were together, which we can scarcely think the king would have done, if he had not determined the matter before. But he takes on him, [1.] To be very backward to it, and that he would not for all the world have done it, if he had not been surprised into such a promise; The *king was exceeding sorry*, that is, he seemed to be so, he said he was so, he looked as if he had been so; but it was all sham and grimace, he was really pleased that he had found a pretence to get John out of the way. *Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare—The man who cannot dissemble, knows not how to reign*. And yet he was not without sorrow for it; he could not do it but with great regret and reluctance; natural conscience will not suffer men to sin easily; the very commission of it is vexatious; what then will the reflection upon it be? [2.] He takes on him to be very sensible of the obligation of his oath; whereas if the damsel had asked but a fourth part of his kingdom, I doubt not but he would have found out a way to evade his oath. The promise was rashly made, and could not bind him to do an unrighteous thing. Sinful oaths must be repented of, and therefore not performed; for repentance is the undoing of what we have done amiss, as far as is in our power. When Theodosius the emperor was urged by a suitor with a *promise*, he answered, *I said it*, but did not *promise* it if it be unjust. If we may suppose that Herod knew nothing of the design when he made that rash promise, it is probable that he was hurried into the doing of it by those about him, only to carry on the humour; for he did it *for their sakes who sat with him*, whose company he was proud of, and therefore would do any thing to gratify them. Thus do princes make themselves slave to those whose respect they covet, and both value and secure themselves by. None of Herod's subjects stood in more awe of him than he did of *his lords, high captains, and chief estates*. The king sent an *executioner*, a soldier of his guard. Bloody tyrants have executioners ready to obey their most cruel and unrighteous decrees. Thus Saul has a *Doeg* at hand, to *fall upon the priests of the Lord*, when his own footmen declined it.

5. The effect of this is, (1.) That Herod's wicked court is *all in triumph*, because this prophet tormented them; the head is made a present of *to the damsel*, and by her to her *mother*, v. 28. (2.) That John Baptist's sacred college is *all in tears*; the disciples of John little thought of this; but, when they *heard of it*, they came, and took up the neglected *corpse*, and *laid it in a tomb*; where Herod, if he had pleased, might have found it, when he frightened himself with the fancy that John Baptist was *risen from the dead*.

#### **Verses 30-44**

In these verses, we have,

I. The return to Christ of the apostles whom he had sent forth (v. 7), to preach, and work miracles. They had dispersed themselves into several quarters of the country for some time, but when they had made good their several appointments, by consent they *gathered themselves together*, to compare notes, and came to Jesus, the centre of their unity, to give him an account of what they had done pursuant to their commission: as the servant that was sent to invite to the feast, and had received answers from the guests, came, and *showed his Lord all those things*, so did the apostles here; they *told him all things*, both *what they had done, and what they had taught*. Ministers are accountable both for what they *do*, and for what they *teach*; and must both watch over their own souls, and watch for the souls of others, as those that must *give account*, Heb. 13:17. Let them

not either *do* any thing, or *teach* any thing, but what they are willing should be related and repeated to the Lord Jesus. It is a comfort to faithful ministers, when they can appeal to Christ concerning their doctrine and manner of life, both which perhaps have been misrepresented by men; and he gives them leave to be free with him, and to lay open their case before him, to *tell him all things*, what treatment they have met with, what success, and what disappointment.

II. The tender care Christ took for their repose, after the fatigue they had (v. 31); *He said unto them*, perceiving them to be almost spent, and out of breath, *Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile*. It should seem that John's disciples came to Christ with the mournful tidings of their master's death, much about the same time that his own disciples came to him with the report of their negotiation. Note, Christ takes cognizance of the *frights* of some, and the *toils* of others, of his disciples, and provides suitable relief for both, rest for those that are tired, and refuge for those that are terrified. With what kindness and compassion doth Christ say to them, *Come, and rest!* Note, The most active servants of Christ cannot be always upon the stretch of business, but have bodies that require some relaxation, some breathing-time; we shall not be able to serve God without ceasing, day and night, till we come to heaven, where they *never rest* from praising him, Rev. 4:8. And the Lord is for the body, considers its frame, and not only allows it time for rest, but puts it in mind of resting. *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers. Return to thy rest*. And those that work diligently and faithfully, may cheerfully retire to rest. *The sleep of the labouring man is sweet*. But observe, 1. Christ calls them to come *themselves apart*; for, if they had any body with them, they would have something to say, or something to do, for their good; if they must *rest*, they must be *alone*. 2. He invites them not to some pleasant country-seat, where there were fine buildings and fine gardens, but *into a desert place*, where the accommodations were very poor, and which was fitted by nature only, and not by art, for quietness and rest. But it was of a piece with all the other circumstances he was in; no wonder that he who had but a ship for his preaching place, had but a desert for his resting place. 3. He calls them only to rest *awhile*; they must not expect to rest *long*, only to *get breath*, and then to go to work again. There is no *remaining rest* for the people of God till they come to heaven. 4. The reason given for this, is, not so much because they had been in *constant work*, but because they now were in a *constant hurry*; so that they had not their work in any order; *for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat*. Let but proper time be set, and kept for every thing, and a great deal of work may be done with a great deal of ease; but if people be continually coming and going, and no rule or method be observed, a little work will not be done without a deal of trouble. 5. They withdrew, accordingly, *by ship*; not crossing the water, but making a coasting voyage to the desert of Bethsaida, v. 32. Going *by water* was much less toilsome than going *by land* would have been. They went away *privately*, that they might be by themselves. The most public persons cannot but wish to be private sometimes.

III. The diligence of the people to follow him. It was rude to do so, when he and his disciples were desirous, for such good reason, to *retire*; and yet they are not blamed for it, nor bid to go back, but bid welcome. Note, A failure in good manners will easily be excused in those who follow Christ, if it be but made up in a fulness of good affections. They followed him of their own accord, without being called upon. Here is no time set, no meeting appointed, no bell tolled; yet they thus fly like a cloud, and as the doves to their windows. They followed him *out of the cities*, quitted their houses and shops, their callings and

affairs, to hear him preach. They followed him *afoot*, though he was gone by sea, and so, to try them, seemed to put a slight upon them, and to endeavour to shake them off; yet they stuck to him. They *ran* afoot, and made such haste, that they *out-went* the disciples, and *came together* to him with an appetite to the word of God. Nay they followed him, though it was into a *desert place*, despicable and inconvenient. The presence of Christ will turn a wilderness into a paradise.

IV. The entertainment Christ gave them (v. 34); *When he saw much people*, instead of being moved with displeasure, because they disturbed him when he desired to be private, as many a man, many a good man, would have been, he was *moved with compassion toward them*, and looked upon them with concern, because *they were as sheep having no shepherd*, they seemed to be well-inclined, and manageable as sheep, and willing to be taught, but they had *no shepherd*, none to lead and guide them in the right way, none to feed them with good doctrine: and therefore, in compassion to them, he not only *healed their sick*, as it is in Matthew, but he *taught them many things*, and we may be sure that they were all true and good, and fit for them to learn.

V. The provision he made for them all; all his hearers he generously made his guests, and treated them at a *splendid* entertainment: so it might truly be called, because a *miraculous* one.

1. The disciples moved that they should be *sent home*. When *the day was not far spent*, and night drew on, they said, *This is a desert place, and much time is now past; send them away to buy bread*, v. 35, 36. This the disciples suggested to Christ; but we do not find that the multitude themselves did. They did not say, *Send us away* (though they could not but be hungry), for they *esteemed the words of Christ's mouth more than their necessary food*, and forgot themselves when they were hearing him; but the disciples thought it would be a kindness to them to dismiss them. Note, Willing minds will do more, and hold out longer, in that which is good, than one would expect from them.

2. Christ ordered that they should all be fed (v. 37); *Give ye them to eat*. Though their crowding after him and his disciples hindered them from eating (v. 31), yet he would not *therefore*, to be even with them, send them away fasting, but, to teach us to be kind to those who are rude to us, he ordered provision to be made for them; that bread which Christ and his disciples took with them into the desert, that they might make a quiet meal of it for themselves, he will have them to partake of. Thus was he given to hospitality. They attended on the spiritual food of his word, and then he took care that they should not want corporal food. The way of duty, as it is the way of safety, so it is the way to supply. Let God alone to fill the pools with rain from heaven, and so to make a well even in the valley of Baca, for those that are going Zion-ward, from strength to strength, Ps. 84:6, 7. Providence, not *tempted*, but duly *trusted*, never yet failed any of God's faithful servants, but has refreshed many with seasonable and surprising relief. It has often been seen in the *mount of the Lord, Jehovah-jireh*, that *the Lord will provide* for those that wait on him.

3. The disciples objected against it as impracticable; *Shall we go, and buy two hundred penny-worth of bread, and give them to eat?* Thus, through the weakness of their faith, instead of waiting for directions from Christ, they perplex the cause with projects of their own. It was a question, whether they had two hundred pence with them, whether the country would of a sudden afford so much bread if they had, and whether that would suffice so great a company; but thus Moses objected (Num. 11:22), *Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them?* Christ would let them see their folly in forecasting for themselves, that

they might put the greater value upon his provision for them.

4. Christ effected it, to universal satisfaction. They had brought with them *five loaves*, for the victualling of their ship, and *two fishes* perhaps they caught as they came along; and that is the bill of fare. This was but a little for Christ and his disciples, and yet this they must give away, as the widow her *two mites*, and as the church of Macedonia's *deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality*. We often find Christ entertained at other people's tables, dining with one friend, and supping with another: but here we have him supping a great many at his own charge, which shows that, when others *ministered to him of their substance*, it was not because he could not supply himself otherwise (if he was *hungry*, he needed not *tell them*); but it was a piece of humiliation, that he was pleased to submit to, nor was it agreeable to the intention of miracles, that he should work them for himself. Observe,

(1.) The provision was *ordinary*. Here were no rarities, no varieties, though Christ, if he had pleased, could have furnished his table with them; but thus he would teach us to be content with food convenient for us, and not to be desirous of dainties. If we have for necessity, it is no matter though we have not for delicacy and curiosity. God, in love, gives *meat for our hunger*; but, in wrath, gives *meat for our lusts*, Ps. 78:18. The promise to them that fear the Lord, is, that verily they shall be fed; he doth not say, They shall be *feasted*. If Christ and his disciples took up with mean things, surely we may.

(2.) The guests were *orderly*; for they *sat down by companies on the green grass* (v. 39), they *sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties* (v. 40), that the provision might the more easily and regularly be distributed among them; for God is the God of order, and not of confusion. Thus care was taken that every one should have enough, and none be over-looked, nor any have more than was fitting.

(3.) A blessing was craved upon the meat; *He looked up to heaven, and blessed*. Christ did not call one of his disciples to crave a blessing, but did it himself (v. 41); and by virtue of this blessing the bread strangely multiplied, and so did the fishes, for they did *all eat, and were filled*, though they were to the number of *five thousand*, v. 42, 44. This miracle was significant, and shows that Christ came into the world, to be the great feeder as well as the great healer; not only to restore, but to preserve and nourish, spiritual life; and in him there is enough for all that come to him, enough to fill the soul, to fill the treasures; none are sent empty away from Christ, but those that come to him full of themselves.

(4.) Care was taken of the fragments that remained, with which they filled *twelve baskets*. Though Christ had bread enough at command, he would hereby teach us, not to make waste of any of God's good creatures; remembering how many there are that do want, and that we know not but we may some time or other want such fragments as we throw away.

#### **Verses 45-56**

This passage of story we had Mt. 14:22, etc., only what was there related concerning Peter, is omitted here. Here we have, I. The dispersing of the assembly; Christ *constrained his disciples* to go before by ship to Bethsaida, intending to follow them, as they supposed, by land. The people were loth to scatter, so that it cost him some time and pains to send them away. For now that they had got a good supper, they were in no haste to leave him. But as long as we are here in this world, we have no continuing city, no not in communion with Christ. The everlasting feast is reserved for the future state.

II. Christ departed *into a mountain, to pray*. Observe, 1. He *prayed*; though he had so much preaching-work upon his hands, yet he was much in prayer; he prayed often, and prayed long, which is an encouragement to us to depend upon the intercession he is making for us at the right hand of the Father, that *continual* intercession. 2. He went *alone*, to pray; though he needed not to retire for the avoiding either of distraction or of ostentation, yet, to set us an example, and to encourage us in our *secret* addresses to God, he prayed *alone*, and, for want of a closet, went up into a mountain, to pray. A good man is never less alone than when alone with God.

III. The disciples were in distress at sea; *The wind was contrary* (v. 48), so that they *toiled in rowing*, and could not get forward. This was a specimen of the hardships they were to expect, when hereafter he should send them abroad to preach the gospel; it would be like sending them to sea at this time with the *wind in their teeth*: they must expect to toil in rowing, they must work hard to strive against so strong a stream; they must likewise expect to be tossed with waves, to be persecuted by their enemies; and by exposing them now he intended to train them up for such difficulties, that they might learn to *endure hardness*. The church is often like a ship at sea, *tossed with tempests, and not comforted* we may have Christ for us, and yet wind and tide against us; but it is a comfort to Christ's disciples in a storm, that their Master is in the heavenly mount, interceding for them.

IV. Christ made them a kind visit upon the water. He could have checked the winds, where he was, or have sent an angel to their relief; but he chose to help them in the most endearing manner possible, and therefore came to them himself.

1. He did not come till the *fourth watch of the night*, not till after three o'clock in the morning; but then he came. Note, If Christ's visits to his people be deferred long, yet at length he will come; and their extremity is his opportunity to appear for them so much the more seasonably. Though the salvation tarry, yet we must wait for it; *at the end it shall speak*, in the fourth watch of the night, *and not lie*.

2. He came, walking upon the waters. The sea was now tossed with waves, and yet Christ came, walking upon it; for though the *floods lift up their voice, the Lord on high is mightier*, Ps. 93:3, 4. No difficulties can obstruct Christ's gracious appearances for his people, when the set time is come. He will either find, or force, a way through the most tempestuous sea, for their deliverance, Ps. 42:7, 8,

3. He *would have passed by them*, that is, he set his face and steered his course, as if he would have gone further, and took no notice of them; this he did, to awaken them to call to him. Note, Providence, when it is acting designedly and directly for the succour of God's people, yet sometimes seems as if it were *giving them the go-by*, and regarded not their case. They thought that *he would*, but we may be sure that he would not, *have passed by them*.

4. They were frightened at the sight of him, supposing him to have been an apparition; *They all saw him, and were troubled* (v. 50), thinking it had been some daemon, or evil genius, that haunted them, and raised this storm. We often perplex and frighten ourselves with phantasms, the creatures of our own fancy and imagination.

5. He encouraged them, and silenced their fears, by making himself known to them; *he talked familiarly with them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid*. Note, (1.) We know not Christ till he is pleased to reveal himself to us. *"It is I; I your*

Master, I your friend, I your Redeemer and Saviour. *It is I*, that came to a troublesome earth, and now to a tempestuous sea, to look after you." (2.) The knowledge of Christ, as he is in himself, and near to us, is enough to make the disciples of Christ cheerful even in a storm, and no longer fearful. *If it be so, why am I thus?* If it is Christ that is with thee, *be of good cheer, be not afraid*. Our fears are soon satisfied, if our mistakes be but rectified, especially our mistakes concerning Christ. See Gen. 21:19; 2 Ki. 6:15–17. Christ's presence with us in a stormy day, is enough to make us of good cheer, though clouds and darkness be round about us. He said, *It is I*. He doth not tell them who he was (there was no occasion), they knew his voice, as the sheep know the voice of their own shepherd, Jn. 10:4. How readily doth the spouse say, once and again, *It is the voice of my beloved!* Cant. 2:8; 5:2. He said, *εγω ειμι—I am he; or I am*; it is God's name, when he comes to deliver Israel, Ex. 3:14. So it is Christ's, now that he comes to deliver his disciples. When Christ said to those that came to apprehend him by force, *I am he*, they were struck down by it, Jn. 18:6. When he saith to those that come to apprehend him by faith, *I am he*, they are raised up by it, and comforted.

6. He *went up to them into the ship*, embarked in the same bottom with them, and so made them perfectly easy. Let them but have their Master with them, and all is well. And as soon as he was come into the ship, *the wind ceased*. In the former storm that they were in, it is said, *He arose, and rebuked the winds, and said to the sea, Peace, be still* (ch. 4:39); but here we read of no such formal command given, only the wind ceased all of a sudden. note, Our Lord Jesus will be sure to do his own work always effectually, though not always alike solemnly, and with observation. Though we hear not the command given, yet, if thus the wind cease, and we have the comfort of a calm, say, It is because Christ is in the ship, and his decree is gone forth *or ever we are aware*, Cant. 6:12. When we come with Christ to heaven, the wind ceaseth presently; there are no storms in the upper region.

7. They were more surprised and astonished at this miracle than did become them, and there was that at the bottom of their astonishment, which was really culpable; *They were sore amazed in themselves*, were in a perfect ecstasy; as if it were a new and unaccountable thing, as if Christ had never done the like before, and they had no reason to expect he should do it now; they ought to admire the power of Christ, and to be confirmed hereby in their belief of his being the Son of God: but why all this confusion about it? It was because they *considered not the miracle of the loaves*; had they given that its due weight, they would not have been so much surprised at this; for his multiplying the bread was as great an instance of his power as his walking on the water. They were strangely stupid and unthinking, and their heart was hardened, or else they would not have thought it a thing incredible that Christ should command a calm. It is for want of a right understanding of Christ's former works, that we are transported at the thought of his present works, as if there never were the like before.

V. When they came to the land of Gennesaret, which lay between Bethsaida and Capernaum, the people bid them very welcome; *The men of that place presently knew Jesus* (v. 54), and knew what mighty works he did wherever he came, what a universal Healer he was; they knew likewise that he used to stay but a little while at a place, and therefore they were concerned to improve the opportunity of this kind visit which he made them; *They ran through that whole region round about*, with all possible expedition, and *began to carry about in beds those that were sick*, and not able to go themselves; there was no danger

of their getting cold when they hoped to get a cure, v. 55. Let him go where he would, he was crowded with patients—in towns, in the cities, in the villages about the cities; they *laid the sick in the streets*, to be in his way, and begged leave for them to touch if it were but *the border of his garment*, as the woman with the bloody issue did, by whom, it should seem, this method of application was first brought in; *and as many as touched, were made whole*. We do not find that they were desirous to be taught by him, only to be healed. If ministers could not cure people's bodily diseases, what multitudes would attend them! But it is sad to think how much more concerned the most of men are about their bodies than about their souls.

## Chapter 7

In this chapter we have, I. Christ's dispute with the scribes and Pharisees about eating meat with unwashed hands (v. 1–13); and the needful instructions he gave to the people on that occasion, and further explained to his disciples (v. 14–23). II. His curing of the woman Canaan's daughter that was possessed (v. 24–30). III. The relief of a man that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech (v. 31–37).

### Verses 1-23

One great design of Christ's coming, was, to set aside the ceremonial law which God made, and to put an end to it; to make way for which he begins with the ceremonial law which men had made, and added to the law of God's making, and discharges his disciples from the obligation of that; which here he doth fully, upon occasion of the offence which the Pharisees took at them for the violation of it. These Pharisees and scribes with whom he had this argument, are said to *come from Jerusalem* down to Galilee—fourscore or a hundred miles, to pick quarrels with our Saviour there, where they supposed him to have the greatest interest and reputation. Had they come so far to be taught by him, their zeal had been commendable; but to come so far to oppose him, and to check the progress of his gospel, was great wickedness. It should seem that the scribes and Pharisees at Jerusalem pretended not only to a pre-eminence above, but to an authority over, the country clergy, and therefore kept up their visitations and sent inquisitors among them, as they did to John when he appeared, Jn. 1:19.

Now in this passage we may observe,

I. What the tradition of the elders was: by it all were enjoined to *wash their hands* before meat; a cleanly custom, and no harm in it; and yet as such to be over-nice in it discovers too great a care about the body, which is *of the earth*; but they placed religion in it, and would not leave it indifferent, as it was in its own nature; people were at their liberty to do it or not to do it; but they interposed their authority, and commanded all to do it upon pain of excommunication; this they kept up as a *tradition of the elders*. The Papists pretend to a zeal for the authority and antiquity of the church and its canons, and talk much of councils and fathers, when really it is nothing but a zeal for their own wealth, interest, and dominion, that governs them; and so it was with the Pharisees.

We have here an account of the practice of the Pharisees and *all the Jews*, v. 3, 4. 1. They *washed their hands oft*; they washed them, *πυγμῆμ*; the critics find a great deal of work about that word, some making it to denote the frequency of their washing (so we render it); others think it signifies the pains they took in washing their hands; they washed with great care, they washed their hands *to their wrists* (so some); they lifted up their hands when they were wet, that the water might *run to their elbows*. 2. They particularly washed before they *ate bread*; that is, before they sat down to a solemn meal; for that was the rule; they must be sure to wash before they ate the bread on which they begged a blessing. "Whosoever eats the bread over which they recite the benediction, *Blessed be he that produceth bread*, must wash his hands before and after," or else he was thought to be defiled. 3. They took special care, when they came in *from the markets*, to wash their hands; from the *judgment-halls*, so some; it signifies any place of concourse where there were people of all sorts, and, it might be supposed, some heathen or Jews under

a ceremonial pollution, by coming near to whom they thought themselves polluted; saying, *Stand by thyself, come not near me, I am holier than thou*, Isa. 65:5. They say, The rule of the rabbies was—That, if they washed their hands well in the morning, the first thing they did, it would serve for all day, provided they kept alone; but, if they went into company, they must not, at their return, either eat or pray till they had washed their hands; thus the elders gained a reputation among the people for sanctity, and thus they exercised and kept up an authority over their consciences. 4. They added to this the washing of *cups*, and *pots*, and *brazen vessels*, which they suspected had been made use of by heathens, or persons polluted; nay, and the very *tables* on which they ate their meat. There were many cases in which, by the law of Moses, washings were appointed; but they *added* to them, and enforced the observation of their own impositions as much as of God's institutions.

II. What the practice of Christ's disciples was; they knew what the law was, and the common usage; but they understood themselves so well that they would not be bound up by it: they ate bread with *defiled*, that is, with *unwashen hands*, v. 2. Eating with *unwashen hands* they called eating with *defiled hands*; thus men keep up their superstitious vanities by putting every thing into an ill name that contradicts them. The disciples knew (it is probable) that the Pharisees had their eye upon them, and yet they would not humour them by a compliance with their traditions, but took their liberty as at other times, and ate bread with *unwashen hands*; and herein *their righteousness*, however it might seem to come short, did really *exceed, that of the scribes and Pharisees*, Mt. 5:20.

III. The offence which the Pharisees took at this; They *found fault* (v. 2); they censured them as profane, and men of a loose conversation, or rather as men that would not submit to the power of the church, to decree rites and ceremonies, and were therefore rebellious, factious, and schismatical. They brought a complaint against them to their Master, expecting that he should check them, and order them to conform; for they that are fond of their own inventions and impositions, are commonly ready to appeal to Christ, as if he should countenance them, and as if his authority must interpose for the enforcing of them, and the rebuking of those that do not comply with them. They do not ask, Why do not thy disciples *do as we do?* (Though that was what they meant, coveting to make themselves the standard.) But, Why do not they *walk according to the tradition of the elders?* v. 5. To which it was easy to answer, that, by receiving the doctrine of Christ, they had *more understanding than all their teachers, yea more than the ancients*, Ps. 119:99, 100.

IV. Christ's vindication of them; in which,

1. He argues with the Pharisees concerning the authority by which this ceremony was imposed; and *they* were the fittest to be discoursed with concerning that, who were the great sticklers for it: but this he did not speak of publicly to the multitude (as appears by his *calling the people* to him, v. 14) lest he should have seemed to stir them up to faction and discontent at their governors; but addressed it as a reproof to the persons concerned: for the rule is, *Suum cuique—Let every one have his own.*

(1.) He reproves them for their hypocrisy in pretending to honour God, when really they had no such design in their religious observances (v. 6, 7); *They honour me with their lips*, they pretend it is for the glory of God that they impose those things, to distinguish themselves from the heathen; but really *their heart is far from God*, and is governed by nothing but ambition and covetousness. They would be thought hereby to appropriate themselves as a holy people to the Lord their God, when really it is

the furthest thing in their thought. They rested in the outside of all their religious exercises, and their hearts were not right with God in them, and this was worshipping God in vain; for neither was he pleased with such sham-devotions, nor were they profited by them.

(2.) He reproves them for placing religion in the inventions and injunctions of their elders and rulers; They *taught for doctrines the traditions of men*. When they should have been pressing upon people the great principles of religion, they were enforcing the canons of their church, and judged of people's being Jews or no, according as they did, or did not, conform to them, without any consideration had, whether they lived in obedience to God's laws or no. It was true, there were *divers washings* imposed by the law of Moses (Heb. 9:10), which were intended to signify that inward purification of the heart from worldly fleshly lusts, which God requires as absolutely necessary to our communion with him; but, instead of providing the substance, they presumptuously added to the ceremony, and were very nice in *washing pots and cups*; and observe, he adds, *Many other such like things ye do*, v. 8. Note, Superstition is an endless thing. If one human invention and institution be admitted, though seemingly ever so innocent, as this of washing hands, *behold, a troop comes*, a door is opened for *many other such things*.

(3.) He reproves them for *laying aside the commandment of God*, and overlooking that, not urging that in their preaching, and in their discipline conniving at the violation of that, as if that were no longer of force, v. 8. Note, It is the mischief of impositions, that too often they who are zealous for them, have little zeal for the essential duties of religion, but can contentedly see them laid aside. Nay, they *rejected the commandment of God*, v. 9. *He do fairly disannul and abolish the commandment of God*; and even *by your traditions make the word of God of no effect*, v. 13. God's statutes shall not only *lie forgotten*, as antiquated obsolete laws, but they shall, in effect, *stand repealed*, that their traditions may take place. They were entrusted to expound the law, and to enforce it; and, under pretence of using that power, they violated the law, and dissolved the bonds of it; destroying the text with the comment.

This he gives them a particular instance of, and a flagrant one—God commanded children to *honour their parents*, not only by the law of Moses, but, antecedent to that, by the law of nature; and whoso *revileth, or speaketh evil of*, father or mother, *let him die the death*, v. 10. Hence it is easy to infer, that it is the duty of children, if their parents be poor, to relieve them, according to their ability; and if those children are worthy to die, that curse their parents, much more those that starve them. But if a man will but conform himself in all points to the tradition of the elders, they will find him out an expedient by which he may be discharged from this obligation, v. 11. If his parents be in want and he has wherewithal to help them, but has no mind to do it, let him swear by the *Corban*, that is, by the *gold of the temple*, and the *gift upon the altar*, that his parents shall not be profited by him, that he will not relieve them; and, if they ask any thing of him, let him tell them this, and it is enough; as if by the obligation of this wicked vow he had discharged himself from the obligation of God's holy law; thus Dr. Hammond understands it: and it is said to be an ancient canon of the rabbin, That vows take place in things commanded by the law, as well as in things indifferent; so that, if a man make a vow which cannot be ratified without breaking a commandment, the vow must be ratified, and the commandment violated; so Dr. Whitby. Such doctrine as this the Papists teach, discharging children from all obligation to their parents by their monastic vows, and their entrance into religion, as they call it. He concludes, *Any*

*many such like things do ye.* Where will men stop, when once they have made the word of God give way to their tradition?

These eager imposers of such ceremonies, at first only *made light* of God's commandments *in comparison* with their traditions, but afterward *made void* God's commandments, if they stood *in competition* with them. All this, in effect, Isaiah prophesied of them; what he said of the hypocrites of his own day, was applicable to the scribes and Pharisees, v. 6. Note, When we see, and complain of, the wickedness of the present times, yet we do not *enquire wisely of that matter*, if we say that all *the former days were better than these*, Eccl. 7:10. The worst of hypocrites and evil doers have had their predecessors.

2. He instructs the people concerning the principles upon which this ceremony was grounded. It was requisite that this part of his discourse should be public, for it related to daily practice, and was designed to rectify a great mistake which the people were led into by their elders; he therefore *called the people unto him* (v. 14), and bid them *hear and understand*. Note, It is not enough for the common people to *hear*, but they must *understand* what they hear. When Christ would run down the tradition of the Pharisees about washing before meat, he strikes at the opinion which was the root of it. Note, Corrupt customs are best cured by rectifying corrupt notions.

Now that which he goes about to set them right in, is, what the pollution is, which we are in danger of being damaged by, v.

15. (1.) Not by the *meat we eat*, though it be eaten with unwashed hands; that is but from without, and goes through a man.

But, (2.) It is by the breaking out of the corruption that is in our hearts; the mind and conscience are defiled, guilt is contracted, and we become odious in the sight of God by that which *comes out* of us; our wicked thoughts and affections, words and actions, these defile us, and these only. Our care must therefore be, to *wash our heart from wickedness*.

3. He gives his disciples, in private, an explication of the instructions he gave the people. They *asked* him, when they had him by himself, *concerning the parable* (v. 17); for to them, it seems, it was a parable. Now, in answer to their enquiry, (1.) He reproves their dulness; "*Are ye so without understanding also? Are ye dull also*, as dull as the people that *cannot* understand, as dull as the Pharisees that *will not*? Are ye *so* dull?" He doth not expect they should understand every thing; "But are ye so weak as not to understand *this*?" (2.) He explains this truth to them, that they might *perceive* it, and then they would *believe* it, for it carried its own evidence along with it. Some truths prove themselves, if they be but rightly explained and apprehended. If we understand the spiritual nature of God and of his law, and what it is that is offensive to him, and disfits us for communion with him, we shall soon perceive, [1.] That that which we eat and drink cannot defile us, so as to call for any religious washing; it *goes into the stomach*, and passes the several digestions and secretions that nature has appointed, and what there may be in it that is defiling is voided and gone; *meats for the belly, and the belly for meats*, but *God shall destroy both it and them*. But, [2.] It is that which *comes out from* the heart, the corrupt heart, that defiles us. As by the ceremonial law, whatsoever (almost) comes out of a man, defiles him (Lev. 15:2; Deu. 23:13), so what comes out from the *mind* of a man is that which defiles him before God, and calls for a religious washing (v. 21); *From within, out of the heart of men*, which they boast of the *goodness* of, and think is the best part of them, thence that which defiles proceeds, thence comes all the mischief. As a corrupt fountain sends forth corrupt streams, so doth a corrupt heart send forth corrupt reasonings, corrupt appetites and passions, and all those wicked words and actions which are produced by them. Divers particulars are specified, as in Matthew; we had one there,

which is not here, and that is, *false witness-bearing*; but *seven* are mentioned here, to be added to those we had there. *First, Covetousnesses*, for it is plural; *pleonexiai*—*immoderate desires* of more of the wealth of the world, and the gratifications of sense, and still more, still crying, *Give, give*. Hence we read of a *heart exercised with covetous practices*, 2 Pt. 2:14. *Secondly, Wickedness*—*poneuriai*; malice, hatred, and ill-will, a desire to do mischief, and a delight in mischief done. *Thirdly, Deceit*; which is wickedness covered and disguised, that it may be the more securely and effectually committed. *Fourthly, Lasciviousness*; that filthiness and foolish talking which the apostle condemns; the eye full of adultery, and all wanton dalliances. *Fifthly, The evil eye*; the envious eye, and the covetous eye, grudging others the good we give them, or do for them (Prov. 23:6), or grieving at the good they do or enjoy. *Sixthly, Pride*—*hypereuphania*; exalting ourselves in our own conceit above others, and looking down with scorn and contempt upon others. *Seventhly, Foolishness*—*aphrosyne*; imprudence, inconsideration; some understand it especially of vainglorious boasting, which St. Paul calls *foolishness* (2 Co. 11:1, 19), because it is here joined with *pride*; I rather take it for that rashness in speaking and acting, which is the cause of so much evil. *Ill-thinking* is put first, as that which is the spring of all our *commissions*, and *unthinking* put last, as that which is the spring of all our *omissions*. Of all these he concludes (v. 23), 1. That they *come from within*, from the corrupt nature, the carnal mind, the evil treasure in the heart; justly is it said, that the *inward part is very wickedness*, it must needs be so, when all this comes from within. 2. That they *defile the man*; they render a man unfit for communion with God, they bring a stain upon the conscience; and, if not mortified and rooted out, will shut men out of the new Jerusalem, into which no *unclean thing shall enter*.

### Verses 24-30

See here, I. How *humbly* Christ was pleased to *conceal himself*. Never man was so cried up as he was in Galilee, and therefore, to teach us, though not to decline any opportunity of doing good, yet not to be fond of popular applause, he arose from thence, and *went into the borders* of Tyre and Sidon, where he was little known; and there he entered, not into a synagogue, or place of concourse, but *into a private house*, and he *would have no man to know it*; because it was foretold concerning him, *He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall his voice be heard in the streets*. Not but that he was willing to preach and heal here as well as in other places, but for this he would be sought unto. Note, As there is a time to *appear*, so there is a time to *retire*. Or, he would not be known, because he was upon the borders of Tyre and Sidon, among Gentiles, to whom he would not be so forward to show himself as to the tribes of Israel, whose glory he was to be.

II. How *graciously* he was pleased to *manifest himself*, notwithstanding. Though he would not carry a harvest of miraculous cures into those parts, yet, it should seem, he came on purpose to drop a handful, to let fall this one which we have here an account of. *He could not be hid*; for, though a candle may be put under a bushel, the sun cannot. Christ was too well known to be long *incognito-hid*, any where; the oil of gladness which he was anointed with, like ointment of the right hand, would betray itself, and fill the house with its odours. Those that had only heard his fame, could not converse with him, but they would soon say, "This must be Jesus." Now observe,

1. The application made to him by a poor woman in distress and trouble. She was a Gentile, a Greek, *a stranger to the*

*commonwealth of Israel, an alien to the covenant of promise*; she was by extraction a Syrophenician, and not in any degree proselyted to the Jewish religion; she had a *daughter*, a young daughter, that was possessed *with the devil*. How many and grievous are the calamities that young children are subject to! Her address was, (1.) Very humble, pressing, and importunate; *She heard of him, and came, and fell at his feet*. Note, Those that would obtain mercy from Christ, must throw themselves at his feet; must refer themselves to him, humble themselves before him, and give up themselves to be ruled by him. Christ never put any from him, that fell at his feet, which a poor trembling soul may do, that has not boldness and confidence to throw itself into his arms. (2.) It was very particular; she tells him what she wanted. Christ gave poor supplicants leave to be thus free with him; she besought him that he would *cast forth the devil out of her daughter*, v. 26. Note, The greatest blessing we can ask of Christ for our children is, that he would break the power of Satan, that is, the power of sin, in their souls; and particularly, that he would cast forth the *unclean spirit*, that they may be temples of the Holy Ghost, and he may dwell in them.

2. The discouragement he gave to this address (v. 27); He said unto her, "*Let the children first be filled*"; let the Jews have all the miracles wrought for them, that they have occasion for, who are in a particular manner God's chosen people; and let not that which was intended for them, be thrown to those who are not of God's family, and who have not that knowledge of him, and interest in him, which they have, and who are as *dogs in comparison of them*, vile and profane, and who are as *dogs to them*, snarling at them, spiteful toward them, and ready to worry them." Note, Where Christ knows the faith of poor supplicants to be strong, he sometimes delights to try it, and put it to the stretch. But his saying, *Let the children first be filled*, intimates that there was mercy in reserve for the Gentiles, and not far off; for the Jews began already to be surfeited with the gospel of Christ, and some of them had desired him to *depart out of their coasts*. The children begin to play with their meat, and their leavings, their loathings, would be a feast for the Gentiles. The apostles went by this rule, *Let the children first be filled*, let the Jews have the first offer; and if their full souls loathe this honeycomb, *Lo, we turn to the Gentiles!*

3. The turn she gave to this word of Christ, which made against her, and her improvement of it, to make for her, v. 28. She said, "*Yes, Lord*, I own it is true that the *children's bread* ought not to be cast to the dogs; but they were never denied the *crumbs* of that bread, nay it belongs to them, and they are allowed a place *under the table*, that they may be ready to receive them. I ask not for a *loaf*, no, nor for a *morsel*, only for a *crumb*; do not refuse me that." This she speaks, not as undervaluing the mercy, or making light of it in itself, but magnifying the abundance or miraculous cures with which she heard the Jews were feasted, in comparison with which a single cure was but as a crumb. Gentiles do not come in crowds, as the Jews do; *I come alone*. Perhaps she had heard of Christ's feeding five thousand lately at once, after which, even when they had gathered up the fragments, there could not but be some crumbs left for the dogs.

4. The grant Christ thereupon made of her request. Is she thus humble, thus earnest? For *this saying, Go thy way*, thou shalt have what thou camest for, *the devil is gone out of thy daughter*, v. 29. This encourages us to *pray* and not to *faint*, to continue instant in prayer, not doubting but to prevail at last; the vision at the end shall *speak, and not lie*. Christ's saying that is *was done*, did it effectually, as at other times his saying, *Let it be done*; for (v. 30) she *came to her house*, depending upon the word of Christ, that her daughter was healed, and so she *found it*, the *devil was gone out*. Note, Christ can conquer Satan at a

distance; and it was not only when the demoniacs *saw him*, that they yielded to his power (as ch. 3:11), but when they saw him not, for the Spirit of the Lord is not *bound*, nor *bounded*. She found her daughter not in any toss or agitation, but very quietly *laid on the bed*, and reposing herself; waiting for her mother's return, to rejoice with her, that she was so *finely well*.

### Verses 31-37

Our Lord Jesus seldom staid long in a place, for he knew where his work lay, and attended the changes of it. When he had cured the woman of Canaan's daughter, he had done what he had to do in that place, and therefore presently left those parts, and returned *to the sea of Galilee*, whereabout his usual residence was; yet he did not come directly thither, but fetched a compass *through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis*, which lay mostly on the other side Jordan; such long walks did our Lord Jesus take, when he *went about doing good*.

Now here we have the story of a cure that Christ wrought, which is not recorded by any other of the evangelists; it is of one that was *deaf and dumb*.

I. His case was sad, v. 32. There were those that brought to him one that was *deaf*; some think, born deaf, and then he must be dumb of course; others think that by some distemper or disaster he was become deaf, or, at least, thick of hearing; and he had an *impediment in his speech*. He was *mogilalos*; some think that he was quite dumb; others, that he could not speak but with great difficulty to himself, and so as scarcely to be understood by those that heard him. He was *tongue-tied*, so that he was perfectly unfit for conversation, and deprived both of the pleasure and of the profit of it; he had not the satisfaction either of hearing other people talk, or of telling his own mind. Let us take occasion from hence to give thanks to God for preserving to us the sense of hearing, especially that we may be capable of hearing the word of God; and the faculty of speech, especially that we may be capable of speaking God's praises; and let us look with compassion upon those that are deaf or dumb, and treat them with great tenderness. They that brought this poor man to Christ, besought him that he would *put his hand upon him*, as the prophets did upon those whom they *blessed* in the name of the Lord. It is not said, They besought him to *cure him*, but to *put his hand upon him*, to take cognizance of his case, and put forth his power to do to him as he pleased.

II. His cure was solemn, and some of the circumstances of it were singular.

1. Christ *took him aside from the multitude*, v. 33. Ordinarily, he wrought his miracles publicly before all the people, to show that they would bear the strictest scrutiny and inspection; but this he did privately, to show that he did not seek his own glory, and to teach us to avoid every thing that savours of ostentation. Let us learn of Christ to be humble, and to do good where no eye sees, but his that is *all eye*.

2. He used more significant actions, in the doing of this cure, than usual. (1.) He *put his fingers into his ears*, as if he would *syringe* them, and fetch out that which stopped them up. (2.) He spit upon his own finger, and then *touched his tongue*, as if he would moisten his mouth, and so loosen that with which his tongue was tied; these were no causes that could in the least contribute to his cure, but only signs of the exerting of that power which Christ had in himself to cure him, for the encouraging of his faith, and theirs that brought him. The application was all from himself, it was his own *fingers* that he put into his ears, and his own *spittle* that he put upon his tongue; for he alone heals.

3. He *looked up to heaven*, to give his Father the praise of what he did; for he sought his praise, and did his will, and, as Mediator, acted in dependence on him, and with an eye to him. Thus he signified that it was by a divine power, a power he had as the Lord from heaven, and brought with him thence, that he did this; for the *hearing ear* and the *seeing eye* the *Lord has made*, and can remake even *both of them*. He also hereby directed his patient who could *see*, though he could not *hear*, to look up to heaven for relief. Moses with his stammering tongue is directed to look that way (Ex. 4:11); *Who hath made man's mouth? Or who maketh the dumb or deaf, or the seeing or the blind? Have not I the Lord?*

4. He sighed; not as if he found any difficulty in working this miracle, or obtaining power to do it from his father; but thus he expressed his pity for the miseries of human life, and his sympathy with the afflicted in their afflictions, as one that was himself *touched with the feeling of their infirmities*. And as to this man, he *sighed*, not because he was loth to do him this kindness, or did it with reluctancy; but because of the many temptations which he would be exposed to, and the sins he would be in danger of, the tongue-sins, after the restoring of his speech to him, which before he was free from. He had better be *tongue-tied* still, unless he have grace to *keep his mouth as with a bridle*, Ps. 39:1.

5. He said, *Ephphatha*; that is, *Be opened*. This was nothing that looked like *spell* or *charm*, such as they used, who had *familiar spirits*, who *peeped and muttered*, Isa. 8:19. Christ speaks as one having authority, and power went along with the word. *Be opened*, served both parts of the cure; "Let the *ears* be *opened*, let the *lips* be *opened*, let him hear and speak freely, and let the restraint be taken off;" and the effect was answerable (v. 35); *Straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed*, and all was well: and happy he who, as soon as he had his hearing and speech, had the blessed Jesus so near him to converse with.

Now this cure was, (1.) A proof of Christ's being the Messiah; for it was foretold that by his power the *ears of the deaf should be unstopped*, and the *tongue of the dumb* should be made to *sing*, Isa. 35:5, 6. (2.) It was a specimen of the operations of his gospel upon the minds of men. The great command of the gospel, and grace of Christ to poor sinners, is *Ephphatha-Be opened*. Grotius applies it thus, that the internal impediments of the mind are removed by the Spirit of Christ, as those bodily impediments were by the word of his power. He *opens the heart*, as he did Lydia's, and thereby opens the ear to receive the word of God, and opens the mouth in prayer and praises.

6. He ordered it to be kept very private, but it was made very public (1.) It was his humility, that he *charged them they should tell no man*, v. 36. Most men will proclaim their own goodness, or, at least, desire that others should proclaim it; but Christ, though he was himself in no danger of being puffed up with it, knowing that we are, would thus set us an example of self-denial, as in other things, so especially in praise and applause. We should take pleasure in doing good, but not in its being known. (2.) It was their zeal, that, though he charged them to say nothing of it, yet they published it, before Christ would have had it published. But they meant honestly, and therefore it is to be reckoned rather an act of indiscretion than an act of disobedience, v. 36. But they that told it, and they that heard it, were *beyond measure astonished*, *hyperperissoys*—*more than above measure*; they were exceedingly affected with it, and this was said by every body, it was the common verdict, *He hath done all things well* (v. 37); whereas there were those that hated and persecuted him as an *evil-doer*, they are ready to

witness for him, not only that he has done no evil, but that he has done a great deal of good, and has done it well, modestly and humbly, and very devoutly, and all gratis, *without money and without price*, which added much to the lustre of his good works. He *maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak*; and that is *well*, it is well for them, it is well for their relations, to whom they had been a burthen; and therefore *they* are inexcusable who speak ill of him.

## Chapter 8

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's miraculous feeding of four thousand with seven loaves and a few small fishes (v. 1-9). II. His refusing to give the Pharisees a sign from heaven (v. 10-13). III. His cautioning his disciples to take heed of the leaven of Pharisaism and Herodianism (v. 14-21). IV. His giving of sight to a blind man at Bethsaida (v. 22-26). V. Peter's confession of him (v. 27-30). VI. The notice he gave his disciples of his own approaching sufferings (v. 31-33), and the warning he gave them to prepare for sufferings likewise (v. 34-38).

### Verses 1-9

We had the story of a miracle very like this before, in this gospel (ch. 6:35), and of this same miracle (Mt. 15:32), and here is little or no addition or alternation as to the circumstances. Yet observe,

1. That our Lord Jesus was greatly followed; *The multitude was very great* (v. 1); notwithstanding the wicked arts of the scribes and Pharisees to blemish him, and to blast his interest, the common people, who had more honesty, and therefore more true wisdom, than their leaders, kept up their high thoughts of him. We may suppose that this multitude were generally of the meaner sort of people, with such Christ conversed, and was familiar; for thus he humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation, and thus encouraged the meanest to come to him for life and grace.
2. Those that followed him, underwent a great deal of difficulty in following him; *They were with him three days, and had nothing to eat*, that was hard service. Never let the Pharisee say, that *Christ's disciples fast not*. There were those, probably, that brought some food with them from home; but by this time it was all spent, and they had a great way home; and yet they *continued* with Christ, and did not speak of leaving him till he spoke of dismissing them. Note, True zeal makes nothing of hardships in the way of duty. They that have a full feast for their souls may be content with slender provision for their bodies. It was an old saying among the Puritans, *Grown bread and the gospel are good fare*.
3. As Christ has a *compassion* for all that are in wants and straits, so he has a special *concern* for those that are reduced to straits by their zeal and diligence in attending on him. Christ said, *I have compassion on the multitude*. Whom the proud Pharisees looked upon with disdain, the humble Jesus looked upon with pity and tenderness; and thus must we *honour all men*. But that which he chiefly considers, is, *They have been with me three days, and have nothing to eat*. Whatever losses we sustain, or hardships we go through, for Christ's sake, and in love to him, he will take care that they shall be made up to us one way or other. *They that seek the Lord, shall not long want any good thing*, Ps. 34:10. Observe with what sympathy Christ saith (v. 3), *If I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way*, for hunger. Christ knows and considers our frame; and he is *for the body*, if we glorify him, *verily we shall be fed*. He considered that *many of them came from afar*, and had a great way home. When we see *multitudes* attending upon the word preached, it is comfortable to think that Christ knows whence they all come, though we do not. *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest*, Rev. 2:13. Christ would by no means have them go home fasting, for it is not his manner to send those *empty* way from him, that in a right manner attend on him.
4. The doubts of Christians are sometimes made to work for the magnifying of the power of Christ. The disciples could not

imagine whence so many men should be *satisfied with bread* here in the wilderness, v. 4. That therefore must needs be *wonderful*, and appear so much the more so, which the disciples looked upon as *impossible*.

5. Christ's time to act for the relief of his people, is, when things are brought to the last extremity; when they were ready to *faint*, Christ provided for them. That he might not invite them to follow him for the *loaves*, he did not supply them but when they were utterly reduced, and then he *sent them away*.

6. The bounty of Christ is inexhaustible, and, to evidence that, Christ *repeated* this miracle, to show that he is still the same for the succour and supply of his people that attend upon him. His favours are renewed, as our wants and necessities are. In the former miracle, Christ used all the bread he had, which was *five loaves*, and fed all the guests he had, which were *five thousand*, and so he did now; though he might have said, "If five loaves would feed five thousand, four may feed four thousand;" he took all the seven loaves, and fed with them the four thousand; for he would teach us to take things as they are, and accommodate ourselves to them; to use what we have, and make the best of that which is. Here it was, as in the dispensing of manna, *He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack*.

7. In our Father's house, in our Master's house, *there is bread enough, and to spare*; there is a fulness in Christ, which he communicates to all that passes through his hands; so that from it we receive, and *grace for grace*, Jn. 1:16. Those need not fear wanting, that have Christ to live upon.

8. It is good for those that follow Christ, *to keep together*; these followers of Christ continued in a body, *four thousand* of them together, and Christ fed them all. Christ's sheep must abide by the flock, and go forth by their footsteps, and verily they shall be fed.

### **Verses 10-21**

Still Christ is upon motion; now he visits the parts of Dalmanutha, that no corner of the land of Israel might say that they had not had his presence with them. He came thither *by ship* (v. 10); but, meeting with occasions of dispute there, and not with opportunities of doing good, he *entered into the ship again* (v. 13), and came back. In these verses, we are told,

I. How he refused to gratify the Pharisees, who challenged him to give them a *sign from heaven*. They *came forth* on purpose to *question with him*; not to propose questions to him, that they might learn of him, but to cross question with him, that they might ensnare him.

1. They demanded of him a *sign from heaven*, as if the signs he gave them on earth, which were more familiar to them, and were more capable of being examined and enquired into, were not sufficient. There was a *sign from heaven* at his baptism, in the descent of the dove, and the voice (Mt. 3:16, 17); it was public enough; and if they had attended John's baptism as they ought to have done, they might themselves have seen it. Afterward, when he was nailed to the cross, they prescribed a new sign; *Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him*; thus obstinate infidelity will still have something to say, though ever so unreasonable. They demanded this sign, *tempting him*; not in hopes that he would give it them, that they might be satisfied, but in hopes that he would not, that they might imagine themselves to have a pretence for their infidelity.

2. He denied them their demand; He *sighed deeply in his spirit*, v. 12. He *groaned* (so some), being grieved for the *hardness of*

*their hearts*, and the little influence that his preaching and miracles had had upon them. The infidelity of those that have long enjoyed the means of conviction, is a great grief to the Lord Jesus; it troubles him, that sinners should thus stand in their own light, and put a bar in their own door. (1.) He expostulates with them upon this demand; "*Why doth this generation seek after a sign; this generation, that is so unworthy to have the gospel brought to it, and to have any sign accompanying it; this generation, that so greedily swallows the traditions of the elders, without the confirmation of any sign at all; this generation, into which, by the calculating of the times prefixed in the Old Testament, they might easily perceive that the coming of the Messiah must fall; this generation, that has had such plenty of sensible and merciful signs given them in the cure of their sick? What an absurdity is it for them to desire a sign!*" (2.) He refuses to answer their demand; *Verily, I say unto you, there shall no sign, no such sign, be given to this generation.* When God spoke to particular persons in a particular case, out of the road of his common dispensation, they were encouraged to ask a sign, as Gideon and Ahaz; but when he speaks in general to all, as in the law and the gospel, sending each with their own evidence, it is presumption to prescribe other signs than what he has given. *Shall any teach God knowledge?* He denied them, and then *left them*, as men not fit to be talked with; if they will not be convinced, they shall not; leave them to their strong delusions.

II. How he warned his disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. Observe here,

1. What the caution was (v. 15); "*Take heed, beware, lest ye partake of the leaven of the Pharisees, lest ye embrace the tradition of the elders, which they are so wedded to, lest ye be proud, and hypocritical, and ceremonious, like them.*" Matthew adds, *and of the Sadducees*; Mark adds, *and of Herod*: whence some gather, that Herod, and his courtiers were generally Sadducees, that is, deists, men of no religion. Others give this sense, The Pharisees demanded a *sign from heaven*; and Herod was long *desirous* to see some miracle wrought by Christ (Lu. 23:8); such as he should prescribe, so that the leaven of both was the same; they were unsatisfied with the signs they had, and would have others of their own devising; "Take heed of *this leaven*" (saith Christ), "be convinced by the miracles ye have seen, and covet not to see more."

2. How they misunderstood this caution. It seems, at their putting to sea this time, they had *forgotten to take bread, and had not in their ship more than one loaf*, v. 14. When therefore Christ bid them *beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*, they understood it as an intimation to them, not to apply themselves to any of the Pharisees for relief, when they came to the other side, for they had lately been offended at them for eating with *unwashed hands*. They *reasoned among themselves*, what should be the meaning of this caution, and concluded, "*It is because we have no bread*"; he saith this, to reproach us for being so careless as to go to sea, and go among strangers, with but one loaf of bread; he doth, in effect, tell us, we must be brought to *short allowance*, and must eat our bread by weight." They *reasoned it—dielogizonto*, they *disputed* about it; one said, "It was owing to you;" and the other said, "It was owing to you, that we are so ill provided for this voyage." Thus distrust of God makes Christ's disciples quarrel among themselves.

3. The reproof Christ gave them for their uneasiness in this matter, as it argued a disbelief of his power to supply them, notwithstanding the abundant experience they had had of it. The reproof is given with some warmth, for he knew their hearts, and knew they needed to be thus soundly chidden; "*Perceive ye not yet, neither understand, that which you have had so many*

demonstrations of? *Have ye your hearts yet hardened*, so as that nothing will make any impression upon them, or bring them to compliance with your Master's designs? *Having eyes, see ye not* that which is plain before your eyes? *Having ears, hear ye not* that which you have been so often told? How strangely stupid and senseless are ye! *Do ye not remember* that which was done but the other day, *when I broke the five loaves among the five thousand*, and soon after, *the seven loaves among the four thousand*? Do ye not remember *how many baskets full ye took up* of the fragments?" Yes, they did remember, and could tell that they took up *twelve* baskets full one time, and *seven* another; "Why then," said he, "*how is it that ye do not understand*? As if he that multiplied *five* loaves, and *seven*, could not multiply one." They seemed to suspect that the one was not matter enough to work upon, if he should have a mind to entertain his hearers a third time: and if that was their thought, it was indeed a very senseless one, as if it were not all alike to the Lord, to save by many or few, and as easy to make one loaf to feed five thousand as five. It was therefore proper to remind them, not only of the sufficiency, but of the overplus, of the former meals; and justly were they chidden for not understanding what Christ therein designed, and what they from thence might have learned. Note, (1.) The experiences we have had of God's goodness to us in the way of duty, greatly aggravate our distrust of him, which is *therefore* very provoking to the Lord Jesus. (2.) Our *not understanding* of the true intent and meaning of God's favours to us, is equivalent to our not remembering of them. (3.) We are *therefore* overwhelmed with present cares and distrusts, because we do not *understand*, and remember, what we have known and seen of the power and goodness of our Lord Jesus. It would be a great support to us, to *consider the days of old*, and we are wanting both to God and ourselves if we do not. (4.) When we thus *forgot the works of God*, and distrust him, we should chide ourselves severely for it, as Christ doth his disciples here; "Am I thus without understanding? How is it that my heart is thus hardened?"

### **Verses 22-26**

This cure is related only by this evangelist, and there is something singular in the circumstances.

I. Here is a *blind man* brought to Christ by his friends, with a desire that he would *touch him*, v. 22. Here appears the faith of those that brought him—they doubted not but that one touch of Christ's hand would recover him his sight; but the man himself showed not that earnestness for, or expectation of, a cure that other blind men did. If those that are spiritually blind, do not pray for themselves, yet let their friends and relations pray for them, that Christ would be pleased to *touch them*.

II. Here is Christ *leading* this blind man, v. 23. He did not bid his friends lead him, but (which bespeaks his wonderful condescension) he himself *took him by the hand, and led him*, to teach us to be as Job was, *eyes to the blind*, Job 29:15. Never had poor blind man such a Leader. He led him *out of the town*. Had he herein only designed privacy, he might have led him into a house, into an inner chamber, and have cured him there; but he intended hereby to upbraid Bethsaida with the *mighty works* that had *in vain* been done *in her* (Mt. 11:21), and was telling her, in effect, she was unworthy to have any more done within her walls. Perhaps Christ took the blind man *out of the town*, that he might have a larger prospect in the *open fields*, to try his sight with, than he could have in the *close streets*.

III. Here is the cure of the blind man, by that blessed Oculist, who came into the world to *preach the recovering of sight to the blind* (Lu. 4:18), and to *give* what he *preached*. In this cure we may observe, 1. That Christ used a *sign*; he *spat on his eyes*

(spat *into* them, so some), and *put his hand upon him*. He could have cured him, as he did others, with a word speaking, but thus he was pleased to assist his faith which was very weak, and to help him against his *unbelief*. And this spittle signified the *eye-salve* wherewith Christ anoints the eyes of those that are spiritually blind, Rev. 3:18. 2. That the cure was wrought *gradually*, which was not usual in Christ's miracles. He *asked him if he saw aught*, v. 23. Let him tell what condition his sight was in, for the satisfaction of those about him. And he *looked up*; so far he *recovered his sight*, that he could open his eyes, and he said, *I see men as trees walking*; he could not distinguish men from trees, otherwise than he could discern them to move. He had some glimmerings of sight, and betwixt him and the sky could perceive a man erect like a tree, but *could not discern the form thereof*, Job 4:16. But, 3. It was soon completed; Christ never doeth *his work* by the halves, nor leaves it till he can say, *It is finished*. He *put his hands again upon his eyes*, to disperse the remaining darkness, and then bade him look up again, and he *saw every man clearly*, v. 25. Now Christ took this way, (1.) Because he would not *tie himself to a method*, but would show with what liberty he acted in all he did. He did not cure by *rote*, as I may say, and in a *road*, but *varied* as he thought fit. Providence gains the same end in different ways, that men may attend its motions with an *implicit faith*. (2.) Because it should be to the patient *according to his faith*; and perhaps this man's faith was at first very weak, but afterward gathered strength, and accordingly his cure was. Not that Christ always went by this rule, but thus he would sometimes put a rebuke upon those who came to him, doubting. (3.) Thus Christ would show how, and in what method, those are healed by his grace, who by nature are *spiritually blind*; at first, their knowledge is confused, they see *men as trees walking*; but, like the light of the morning, it *shines more and more to the perfect day*, and then they *see all things clearly*, Prov. 4:18. Let us enquire then, if we *see aught* of those things which *faith* is the *substance* and *evidence* of; and if through grace we see *any thing* of them, we may hope that we shall see yet *more and more*, for Jesus Christ will *perfect* for ever those that are *sanctified*.

IV. The directions Christ gave the man he had cured, not to *tell it to any in the town of Bethsaida*, nor so much as to *go into the town*, where probably there were some expecting him to come back, who had seen Christ lead him out of the town, but, having been eyewitnesses of so many miracles, had not so much as the curiosity to follow him: let not those be gratified with the sight of him when he was cured, who would not show so much respect to Christ as to go a step out of the town, to see this cure wrought. Christ doth not forbid him to tell it to others, but he must not tell it to *any in the town*. Slighting Christ's favours is forfeiting them; and Christ will make those know the worth of their privileges by the want of them, that would not know them otherwise. Bethsaida, in the day of her visitation, would not know the things that belonged to her peace, and now they are *hid from her eyes*. They will not see, and therefore shall not see.

### **Verses 27-38**

We have read a great deal of the doctrine Christ preached, and the miracles he wrought, which were many, and strange, and well-attested, of various kinds, and wrought in several places, to the astonishment of the multitudes that were eye-witnesses of them. It is now time for us to pause a little, and to consider what these things mean; the wondrous works which Christ then forbade the publishing of, being recorded in these sacred writings, are thereby published to all the world, to us, to all ages; now what shall we think of them? Is the record of those things designed only for an amusement, or to furnish us with matter for

discourse? No, certainly *these things are written, that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God* (Jn. 20:31); and this discourse which Christ had with his disciples, will assist us in making the necessary reflections upon the miracles of Christ, and a right use of them. Three things we are here taught to infer from the miracles Christ wrought.

I. They *prove* that he is *the true Messiah*, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world: this the works he did witnessed concerning him; and this his disciples, who were the eye-witnesses of those works, here profess their belief of; which cannot but be a satisfaction to us in making the same inference from them.

1. Christ enquired of them what the sentiments of the people were concerning him; *Who did men say that I am?* v. 27. Note, Though it is a small thing for us to be judged of men, yet it may sometimes do us good to know what people say of us, not that we may seek our own glory, but that we may hear our faults. Christ asked them, not that he might be informed, but that they might observe it themselves, and inform one another.

2. The account they gave him, was such as plainly intimated the *high opinion* the people had of him. Though they came short of the truth, yet they were convinced by his miracles that he was an extraordinary person, sent from the invisible world with a divine commission. It is probable that they would have acknowledged him to be the Messiah, if they had not been possessed by their teachers with a notion that the Messiah must be a temporal Prince, appearing in external pomp and power, which the figure Christ made, would not comport with; yet (whatever the Pharisees said, whose copyhold was touched by the strictness and spirituality of his doctrine) none of the people said that he was a Deceiver, but some said that *he was John Baptist*, others *Elias*, others *one of the prophets*, v. 28. All agreed that he was one *risen from the dead*.

3. The account they gave him of their own sentiments concerning him, intimated their abundant satisfaction in him, and in their having left all to follow him, which now, after some time of trial, they see no reason to repent; *But whom say ye that I am?* To this they have an answer ready, *Thou art the Christ*, the Messiah often promised, and long expected, v. 29. To be a Christian indeed, is, sincerely to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and to act accordingly; and that he is so, plainly appears by his wondrous works. This they knew, and must shortly publish and maintain; but for the present they must keep it secret (v. 30), till the proof of it was completed, and they were completely qualified to maintain it, by the pouring out of the Holy Ghost; and then *let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ*, Acts 2:36.

II. These miracles of Christ *take off the offence of the cross*, and assure us that Christ was, in it, not conquered, but a Conqueror. Now that the disciples are convinced that Jesus is the Christ, they may bear to hear of his sufferings, which Christ now *begins* to give them notice of, v. 31.

1. Christ *taught* his disciples that he must *suffer many things*, Though they had got over the vulgar error of the Messiah's being a temporal Prince, so far as to believe their Master to be the Messiah, notwithstanding his present meanness, yet still they retained it, so far as to expect that he would *shortly* appear in outward pomp and grandeur, and *restore the kingdom to Israel*; and therefore, to rectify that mistake, Christ here gives them a prospect of the contrary, that he must be *rejected of the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes*, who, they expected, should be brought to own and prefer him; that, instead of being

crowned, *he must be killed*, he must be crucified, and *after three days he must rise again* to a heavenly life, and to be *no more in this world*. This he spoke *openly* (v. 32), *parrepsia*. He said it freely and plainly, and did not wrap it up in ambiguous expressions. The disciples might easily understand it, if they had not been very much under the power of prejudice: or, it intimates that he spoke it cheerfully and without any terror, and would have them to hear it so: he spoke that saying *boldly*, as one that not only knew he *must* suffer and die, but was resolved he *would*, and made it his own act and deed.

2. Peter opposed it; *He took him, and began to rebuke him*. Here Peter showed more love than discretion, a zeal for Christ and his safety, but not according to knowledge. He *took him*—*proslabomenos*. He took hold of him, as it were to stop and hinder him, took him in his arms, and embraced him (so some understand it); he fell on his neck, as impatient to hear that his dear Master should suffer such hard things; or he took him aside privately, and *began to rebuke* him. This was not the language of the least authority, but of the greatest affection, of that *jealousy* for the welfare of those we love, which is *strong as death*. Our Lord Jesus allowed his disciples to be free with him, but Peter here took too great a liberty.

3. Christ checked him for his opposition (v. 33); *He turned about*, as one offended, and *looked on his disciples*, to see if the rest of them were of the same mind, and concurred with Peter in this, that, if they did, they might take the reproof to themselves, which he was now about to give to Peter; and he said, *Get thee behind me, Satan*. Peter little thought to have had such a sharp rebuke for such a kind dissuasive, but perhaps expected as much commendation now for his love as he had lately for his faith. Note, Christ sees that amiss in what we say and do, which we ourselves are not aware of, and knows what manner of spirit we are of, when we ourselves do not. (1.) Peter spoke as one that did not rightly understand, nor had duly considered, the purposes and counsels of God. When he saw such proofs as he every day saw of the *power* of Christ, he might conclude that he could not be *compelled to suffer*; the most potent enemies could not overpower him whom diseases and deaths, whom winds and waves and devils themselves, were forced to obey and yield to: and when he saw so much of the *wisdom* of Christ every day, he might conclude that he would not *choose to suffer* but for some very great and glorious purposes; and therefore he ought not thus to have contradicted him, but to have acquiesced. He looked upon his death only as a *martyrdom*, like that of the prophets, which he thought might be prevented, if either he would take a little care not to provoke the chief priests, or to keep out of the way; but he knew not that the thing was necessary for the glory of God, the destruction of Satan, and the salvation of man, that the Captain of our salvation must be *made perfect through sufferings*, and so must *bring many sons to glory*. Note, The wisdom of man is perfect folly, when it pretends to give measures to the divine counsels. The cross of Christ, the great instance of God's power and wisdom, was to some a stumbling-block, and to others foolishness. (2.) Peter spoke as one that did not rightly understand, nor had duly considered, the nature of Christ's kingdom; he took it to be *temporal* and *human*, whereas it is *spiritual* and *divine*. *Thou savourest not the things that are of God, but those that are of men; ou phroneis*—*thou mindest not*; so the word is rendered, Rom. 8:5. Peter seemed to mind more the things that relate to the lower world, and the life that now is, than those which relate to the upper world, and the life to come. Minding the *things of men* more than the *things of God*, our own credit, ease, and safety, more than the *things of God*, and his glory and kingdom, is a very great sin, and the root of much sin, and very common among Christ's disciples; and it will appear in suffering times, those

times of temptation, when those in whom the *things of men* have the ascendant, are in danger of falling off. *Non sapis—Thou art not wise* (so it may be read) *in the things of God*, but in the *things of men*. It is important to consider what *generation* we appear *wise in*, Lu. 16:8. It seems policy to shun trouble, but if with that we shun duty, it is fleshly wisdom (2 Co. 1:12), and it will be folly in the end.

III. These miracles of Christ should engage us all to *follow him*, whatever it cost us, not only as they were *confirmations* of his *mission*, but as they were *explications* of his *design*, and the tendency of that grace which he came to bring; plainly intimating that by his Spirit he would do that for our blind, deaf, lame, leprous, diseased, possessed *souls*, which he did for the *bodies* of those many who in those distresses applied themselves to him. Frequent notice had been taken of the great flocking that there was to him for help in various cases: now this is written, that we may believe that he is the great Physician of souls, and may become his patients, and submit to his *regimen*; and here he tells us upon what terms we may be admitted; and he *called all the people to him*, to hear this, who modestly stood at some distance when he was in private conversation with his disciples. This is that which all are concerned to know, and consider, if they expect Christ should heal *their souls*.

1. They must not be *indulgent* of the *ease of the body*; for (v. 34), "*Whosoever will come after me* for spiritual cures, as these people do for bodily cures, *let him deny himself*, and live a life of self-denial, mortification, and contempt of the world; let him not pretend to be his own physician, but renounce all confidence in himself and his own righteousness and strength, and let him *take up his cross*, conforming himself to the pattern of a crucified Jesus, and accommodating himself to the will of God in all the afflictions he lies under; and thus let him continue to *follow me*;" as many of those did, whom Christ healed. Those that will be Christ's patients must attend on him, converse with him, receive instruction and reproof from him, as those did that *followed* him, and must resolve they will never forsake him.

2. They must not be *solicitous*, no, not for *the life of the body*, when they cannot keep it without quitting Christ, v. 35. Are we invited by the words and works of Christ to follow him? Let us sit down, and count the cost, whether we can prefer our advantages by Christ before life itself, whether we can bear to think of losing our life *for Christ's sake and the gospel's*. When the devil is drawing away disciples and servants after him, he conceals the worst of it, tells them only of the pleasure, but nothing of the peril, of his service; *Ye shall not surely die*; but what there is of trouble and danger in the service of Christ, he tells us of it before, tells us we shall *suffer*, perhaps we shall *die*, in the cause; and represents the discouragements not *less*, but *greater*, than commonly they prove, that it may appear he *deals fairly* with us, and is not afraid that we should know the worst; because the *advantages* of his service abundantly suffice to *balance* the *discouragements*, if we will but impartially set the one over against the other. In short,

(1.) We must *not dread the loss of our lives*, provided it be *in the cause of Christ* (v. 35); *Whosoever will save his life*, by declining Christ, and refusing to come to him, or by disowning and denying him after he has in profession come to Christ, he shall *lose it*, shall lose the comfort of his natural life, the root and fountain of his spiritual life, and all his hopes of eternal life; such a bad bargain will he make for himself. But *whosoever shall lose his life*, shall be truly willing to lose it, shall venture it, shall lay it down when he cannot keep it without denying Christ, he shall *save it*, he shall be an unspeakable gainer; for the loss

of his life shall be made up to him in a better life. It is looked upon to be some kind of recompence to those who lose their lives in the service of their prince and country, to have their memories honoured and their families provided for; but what is that to the recompence which Christ makes in eternal life to all that die for him?

(2.) We must *dread the loss of our souls*, yea, though we should *gain the whole world* by it (v. 36, 37); *For what shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world*, and all the wealth, honour, and pleasure, in it, by denying Christ, and *lose his own soul*? "True it is," said Bishop Hooper, the night before he suffered martyrdom, "that *life is sweet*, and *death is bitter*, but *eternal death is more bitter*, and *eternal life is more sweet*." As the happiness of heaven with Christ, is enough to countervail the loss of life itself for Christ, so the gain of all the world *in sin*, is not sufficient to countervail the ruin of the soul *by sin*.

What that is that men do, to *save their lives*, and *gain the world*, he tells us (v. 38), and of what fatal consequence it will be to them; *Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed*. Something like this we had, Mt. 10:33. But it is here expressed more fully. Note, [1.] The disadvantage that the cause of Christ labours under this world, is, that it is to be owned and professed in an *adulterous and sinful generation*; such the generation of mankind is, gone a whoring from God, in the impure embraces of the world and the flesh, lying in wickedness; some ages, some places, are more especially adulterous and sinful, as that was in which Christ lived; in such a *generation* the cause of Christ is opposed and run down, and those that own it, are exposed to reproach and contempt, and every where ridiculed and *spoken against*. [2.] There are many, who, though they cannot but own that the cause of Christ is a righteous cause, are *ashamed* of it, because of the reproach that attends the professing of it; they are *ashamed* of their relation to Christ, and *ashamed* of the credit they cannot but give to *his words*; they cannot bear to be frowned upon and despised, and therefore throw off their profession, and go down the stream of a prevailing apostasy. [3.] There is a day coming, when the cause of Christ will appear as bright and illustrious as now it appears mean and contemptible; when the Son of man comes *in the glory of his Father with his holy angels*, as the true Shechinah, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the Lord of angels. [4.] Those that are ashamed of Christ in this world where he is despised, he will be ashamed of in that world where he is eternally adored. *They shall not share with him in his glory then, that were not willing to share with him in his disgrace now*.

## Chapter 9

The two last verses are somewhat difficult, and interpreters agree not in the sense of them; *for every one* in general, or rather every one *of them* that are cast into hell, shall be *salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt*. Therefore *have salt in yourselves*. [1.] It was appointed by the law of Moses, that every sacrifice should be *salted with salt*, not to *preserve* it (for it was to be immediately consumed), but because it was the food of God's table, and no flesh is eaten without salt; it was therefore particularly required in the meat-offerings, Lev. 2:13. [2.] The nature of man, being *corrupt*, and as such being called *flesh* (Gen. 6:3; Ps. 78:39), some way or other must be *salted*, in order to its being a sacrifice to God. The *salting* of fish (and I think of other things) they call the *curing* of it. [3.] Our chief concern is, to present ourselves *living sacrifices* to the grace of God (Rom. 12:1), and, in order to our acceptableness, we must be *salted with salt*, our corrupt affections must be subdued and mortified, and we must have in our souls a savour of grace. Thus the *offering up* or *sacrificing* of the Gentiles is said to be *acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost*, as the sacrifices were *salted*, Rom. 15:16. [4.] Those that have the salt of grace, must make it appear that they have it; that they *have salt in themselves*, a living principle of grace in their hearts, which works out all corrupt dispositions, and every thing in the soul that tends to *putrefaction*, and would *offend* our God, or our own consciences, as unsavoury meat doth. Our *speech* must be *always with grace seasoned with this salt*, that no *corrupt communication* may *proceed out of our mouth*, but we may loathe it as much as we would to put putrid meat into our mouths. [5.] As this gracious salt will keep our own consciences void of offence, so it will keep our conversation with others so, that we may not offend any of Christ's little ones, but may be *at peace one with another*. [6.] We must not only have this salt of grace, but we must always retain the relish and savour of it; for if this *salt lose its saltiness*, if a Christian revolt from his Christianity, if he loses the savour of it, and be no longer under the power and influence of it, what can recover him, or *wherewith will ye season him?* This was said Mt. 5:13. [7.] Those that present not themselves *living sacrifices* to God's grace, shall be made for ever *dying sacrifices* to his justice, and since they would not give honour to him, he will get him honour upon them; they would not be *salted with the salt* of divine grace, would not admit that to subdue their corrupt affections, no, they would not submit to the operation, could not bear the corrosives that were necessary to eat out the proud flesh, it was to them like cutting off a hand, or plucking out an eye; and therefore in hell they shall be *salted with fire*; coals of fire shall be *scattered* upon them (Eze. 10:2), as salt upon the meat, and *brimstone* (Job 18:15), as fire and brimstone were rained on Sodom; the pleasures they have lived in, *shall eat their flesh, as it were with fire*, Jam. 5:3. The pain of mortifying the flesh now is no more to be compared with the punishment for not mortifying it, than *salting with burning*. And since he had said, that the *fire* of hell *shall not be quenched*, but it might be objected, that the fuel will not last always, he here intimates, that by the power of God it shall be made to last always; for those that are *cast into hell*, will find the fire to have not only the *corroding* quality of salt, but its *preserving* quality; whence it is used to signify that which is *lasting*: a covenant of *salt* is a *perpetual* covenant, and Lot's wife being turned into a *pillar of salt*, made her a remaining monument of divine vengeance. Now since this will certainly be the doom of those that do not crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, let us, knowing this *terror of the Lord*, be *persuaded* to

do it.

## Chapter 10

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's dispute with the Pharisees concerning divorce (v. 1–12). II. The kind entertainment he gave to the little children that were brought to him to be blessed (v. 13–16). III. His trial of the rich man that enquired what he must do to get to heaven (v. 17–22). IV. His discourse with his disciples, upon that occasion, concerning the peril of riches (v. 23–27), and the advantage of being impoverished for his sake (v. 28–31). V. The repeated notice he gave his disciples of his sufferings and death approaching (v. 32–34). VI. The counsel he gave to James and John, to think of suffering with him, rather than of reigning with him (v. 15–45). VII. The cure of Bartimeus, a poor blind man (v. 46–52). All which passages of story we had the substance of before, Mt. 19 and 20.

### Verses 1-12

Our Lord Jesus was an itinerant Preacher, did not continue long in a place, for the whole land of Canaan was his parish, or diocese, and therefore he would visit every part of it, and give instructions to those in the remotest corners of it. Here we have him in the *coasts* of Judea, by the further side of Jordan eastward, as we found him, not long since, in the utmost borders westward, near Tyre and Sidon. Thus was his circuit like that of the sun, from whose light and heat nothing is hid. Now here we have him,

I. *Resorted to* by the *people*, v. 1. Wherever he was, they flocked after him in crowds; they came to him *again*, as they had done when he had formerly been in these parts, and, *as he was wont, he taught them again*. Note, Preaching was Christ's constant practice; it was what he was used to, and, wherever he came, he did *as he was wont*. In Matthew it is said, *He healed them*; here it is said, *He taught them*: his cures were to confirm his doctrine, and to recommend it, and his doctrine was to explain his cures, and illustrate them. He *taught them again*. Note, Even those whom Christ hath taught, have need to be taught *again*. Such is the fulness of the Christian doctrine, that there is still more to be learned; and such our forgetfulness, that we need to be reminded of what we do know.

II. We have him *disputed with* by the Pharisees, who envied the progress of his spiritual arms, and did all they could to obstruct and oppose it; to divert him, to perplex him, and to prejudice the people against him.

Here is, 1. A question they started concerning divorce (v. 2); *Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?* This was a good question, if it had been well put, and with a humble desire to know the mind of God in this matter; but they proposed it, *tempting him*, seeking an occasion against him, and an opportunity to expose him, which side soever he should take of the question. Ministers must stand upon their guard, lest, under pretence of being advised with, they be ensnared.

2. Christ's reply to them with a question (v. 3); *What did Moses command you?* This he asked them, to testify his respect to the law of Moses, and to show that he came not to destroy it; and to engage them to a universal impartial respect for Moses's writings and to compare one part of them with another.

3. The fair account they gave of what they found in the law of Moses, expressly concerning divorce, v. 4. Christ asked, *What did Moses command you?* They own that Moses only *suffered, or permitted*, a man to write his wife a *bill of divorce*, and to put

her away, Deu. 24:1. "If you *will* do it, you must do it *in writing*, delivered into her own hand, and so put her away, and never return to her again."

4. The answer that Christ gave to their question, in which he abides by the doctrine he had formerly laid down in this case (Mt. 5:32), *That whosoever puts away his wife, except for fornication, causeth her to commit adultery*. And to clear this he here shows,

(1.) That the reason why Moses, in his *law*, permitted divorce, was such, as that they ought not to make use of that permission; for it was only *for the hardness of their hearts* (v. 5), lest, if they were not permitted to divorce their wives, they should murder them; so that none must put away their wives but such as are willing to own that their hearts were so hard as to need this permission.

(2.) That the account which Moses, in this *history*, gives of the institution of marriage, affords such a reason against divorce, as amounts to a prohibition of it. So that if the question be, *What did Moses command?* (v. 3), it must be answered, "Though by a temporary proviso he allowed divorce to the Jews, yet by an eternal reason he forbade it to all the children of Adam and Eve, and that is it which we must abide by."

Moses tells us, [1.] That God made man *male and female, one male, and one female*; so that *Adam could not* put away his wife and take another, for there was no other to take, which was an intimation to all his sons, that they *must not*. [2.] When this male and this female were, by the ordinance of God, joined together in holy marriage, the law was, That a man must *leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife* (v. 7); which intimates not only the nearness of the relation, but the perpetuity of it; he shall so cleave to his wife as not to be separated from her. [3.] The result of the relation is, That, though they are *two*, yet they are *one*, they are *one flesh*, v. 8. The union between them is the most intimate that can be, and, as Dr. Hammond expresses it, a sacred thing that must not be violated. [4.] God himself was *joined them together*; he has not only, as Creator, fitted them to be comforts and helps meet for each other, but he has, in wisdom and goodness, appointed them who are thus joined together, to live together in love till death parts them. Marriage is not an invention of men, but a divine institution, and therefore is to be religiously observed, and the more, because it is a figure of the mystical inseparable union between Christ and his church. Now from all this he infers, that men ought not to *put* their wives *asunder* from them, whom God has put so near them. The bond which God himself has tied, is not to be lightly untied. They who are divorcing their wives for every offence, would do well to consider what would become of them, if God should in like manner deal with them. See Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:1.

5. Christ's discourse with his disciples, in private, about this matter, v. 10–12. It was an advantage to them, that they had opportunity of personal converse with Christ, not only about gospel mysteries, but about moral duties, for further satisfaction. No more is here related of this private conference, that the law Christ laid down in this case—That it is adultery for a man to put away his wife, and marry another; it is adultery *against the wife* he puts away, it is a wrong to her, a breach of his contract with her, v. 11. He adds, *If a woman shall put away her husband*, that is, elope from him, leave him by consent, and *be married to another*, she *commits adultery* (v. 12), and it will be no excuse at all for her to say that it was with the consent of her husband. Wisdom and grace, holiness and love, reigning in the heart, will make those commands easy which to the carnal

mind may be as a heavy yoke.

### Verses 13-16

It is looked upon as the indication of a kind and tender disposition to take notice of little children, and this was remarkable in our Lord Jesus, which is an encouragement not only to little children to apply themselves to Christ when they are very young, but to grown people, who are conscious to themselves of weakness and childishness, and of being, through manifold infirmities, helpless and useless, like little children. Here we have,

I. Little children brought to Christ, v. 13. Their parents, or whoever they were that had the nursing of them, brought them to him, that he should *touch them*, in token of his commanding and conferring a blessing on them. It doth not appear that they needed any bodily *cure*, nor were they capable of being *taught*: but it seems, 1. That they had the care of them were mostly concerned *about their souls*, their better part, which ought to be the principal care of all parents for their children; for that is the principal part, and it is well with them, if it be well with their souls. 2. They believed that Christ's blessing would do their souls good; and therefore to him they brought them, that he might *touch* them, knowing that he could reach their hearts, when nothing their parents could say to them, or do for them, would reach them. We may present our children to Christ, now that he is in heaven, for from thence he can reach them with his blessing, and therein we may act faith upon the fulness and extent of his grace, the kind intimations he hath always given of favour to the seed of the faithful, the tenour of the covenant with Abraham, and the promise *to us and to our children*, especially that great promise of pouring his *Spirit upon our seed*, and his *blessing upon our offspring*, Isa. 44:3.

II. The *discouragement* which the disciples gave to the bringing of children to Christ; *They rebuked them that brought them*; as if they had been sure that they knew their Master's mind in this matter, whereas he had lately cautioned them not to *despise the little ones*.

III. The *encouragement* Christ gave to it. 1. He took it very ill that his disciples should keep them off; *When he saw it, he was much displeased*, v. 14. "What do you mean? Will you hinder me from doing good, from doing good to the rising generation, to the lambs of the flock?" Christ is very angry with his own disciples, if they discountenance any in coming to him themselves, or in bringing their children to him. 2. He ordered that they should be *brought to him*, and nothing said or done to hinder them; suffer *little children*, as soon as they are capable, to *come to me*, to offer up their supplications to me, and to receive instructions from me. Little children are welcome betimes to the throne of grace with their Hosannas. 3. He owned them as members of his church, as they had been of the Jewish church. He came to set up the *kingdom of God* among men, and took this occasion to declare that that kingdom admitted *little children* to be the subjects of it, and gave them a title to the privileges of subjects. Nay, the kingdom of God is to be kept up by such: they must be taken in when they are little children, that they may be secured for hereafter, to bear up the name of Christ. 4. That there must be something of the temper and disposition of little children found in all that Christ will own and bless. We must *receive the kingdom of God as little children* (v. 15); that is, we must stand affected to Christ and his grace as little children do to their parents, nurses, and teachers. We must be *inquisitive*, as children, must learn as children (that is the learning age), and in learning must *believe*, *Oportet*

*discentem credere—A learner must believe.* The mind of a child is white paper (*tabula rose—a mere blank*), you may write upon it what you will; such must our minds be to the pen of the blessed Spirit. Children are under government; so must we be. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* We must receive the kingdom of God as the child Samuel did, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.* Little children depend upon their parents' wisdom and care, are carried in their arms, go where they send them, and take what they provide for them; and thus must we receive the *kingdom of God*, with a humble resignation of ourselves to Jesus Christ, and an easy dependence upon him, both for strength and righteousness, for tuition, provision, and a portion. 5. He received the children, and gave them what was desired (v. 16); *He took them up in his arms*, in token of his affectionate concern for them; *put his hands upon them*, as was desired, and *blessed them*. She how he out-did the desires of these parents; they begged he would touch them, but he did more. (1.) *He took them in his arms*. Now the scripture was fulfilled (Isa. 40:11), *He shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom*. Time was, when Christ himself was taken up in old Simeon's arms, Lu. 2:28. And now he took up these children, not complaining of the burthen (as Moses did, when he was bid to *carry Israel*, that peevish child, *in his bosom, as a nursing father bears the sucking child*, Num. 11:12), but pleased with it. If we in a right manner bring our children to Christ, he will take them up, not only in the arms of his power and providence, but in the arms of his pity and grace (as Eze. 16:8); underneath them are the *everlasting arms*. (2.) *He put his hands upon them*, denoting the bestowing of his Spirit upon them (for that is the hand of the Lord), and his setting them apart for himself. (3.) *He blessed them* with the spiritual blessings he came to give. Our children are happy, if they have but the *Mediator's blessing* for their portion. It is true, we do not read that he baptized these children, baptism was not fully settled as the door of admission into the church until after Christ's resurrection; but he asserted their visible church-membership, and by another sign bestowed those blessings upon them, which are now appointed to be conveyed and conferred by baptism, the seal of the promise, which is *to us* and *to our children*.

### **Verses 17-31**

I. Here is a *hopeful meeting* between Christ and a *young man*; such he is said to be (Mt. 19:20, 22), and a *ruler* (Lu. 18:18), a person of quality. Some circumstances here are, which we had not in Matthew, which makes his address to Christ very promising.

1. He came *running* to Christ, which was an indication of his humility; he laid aside the gravity and grandeur of a ruler, when he came to Christ: thus too he manifested his earnestness and importunity; he *ran* as one *in haste*, and longing to be in conversation with Christ. He had now an opportunity of consulting this great Prophet, in the things that belonged to his peace, and he would not let slip the opportunity.

2. He came to him when he was *in the way*, in the midst of company: he did not insist upon a private conference with him by night, as Nicodemus did, though like him he was a ruler, but *when he shall find him without*, will *embrace* that opportunity of advising with him, *and not be ashamed*, Cant. 8:1.

3. He *kneeled to him*, in token of the great value and veneration he had for him, as a teacher come from God, and his earnest desire to be taught by him. He bowed the knee to the Lord Jesus, as one that would not only *do obeisance* to him now, but

would *yield obedience* to him always; he *bowed the knee*, as one that meant to *bow the soul* to him.

4. His address to him was serious and weighty; *Good Master, what shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?* Eternal life was an article of his creed, though then denied by the Sadducees, a prevailing party: he asks, What shall he do now that he may be happy for ever. Most men enquire for good to be *had* in this world (Ps. 4:6), *any good*; he asks for *good to be done* in this world, in order to the enjoyment of the greatest good in the other world; not, Who will make us to *see good*? But, "Who will make us to *do good*?" He enquires for *happiness* in the way of *duty*; the *summum bonum*—*chief good* which Solomon was in quest of, was *that good for the sons of men which they do should do*, Eccl. 2:3. Now this was, (1.) A very serious question in itself; it was about eternal things, and his own concern in those things. Note, *Then* there begins to be some hope of people, when they begin to enquire solicitously, what they shall do to get to heaven. (2.) It was proposed to a right person, one that was every way fit to answer it, being himself *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, the true way to life, to eternal life; who came *from heaven* on purpose, first to *lay open for us*, and then to *lay open to us*; first to make, and then to make known, the way to *heaven*. Note, Those who would know what they shall do to be saved, must apply themselves to Christ, and enquire of him; it is peculiar to the Christian religion, both to show eternal life, and to show the way to it. (3.) It was proposed with a good design—to be instructed. We find this same question put by a lawyer, not *kneeling*, but standing up (Lu. 10:25), with a bad design, to pick quarrels with him; he *tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do?* It is not so much the good words as the good *intention* of them that Christ looks at.

5. Christ encouraged this address, (1.) *By assisting his faith*, v. 18. He called him *good Master*; Christ would have him mean thereby, that he looked upon him to be *God*, since there is none good but *one*, that is *God*, who is one, and his name one, Zec. 14:9. Our English word *God* doubtless hath affinity with *good*; as the Hebrews name God by his power, *Elohim, the strong God*; so we by his goodness, the *good God*. (2.) By directing his practice (v. 19); *Keep the commandments*; and thou knowest what they are. He mentions the six commandments of the second table, which prescribe our duty to our neighbour; he inverts the order, putting the seventh commandment before the sixth, to intimate that *adultery* is a sin no less heinous than *murder* itself. The fifth commandment is here put last, as that which should especially be remembered and observed, to keep us to all the rest. Instead of the tenth commandment, *Thou shalt not covet*, our Saviour here puts, *Defraud not. Μεμ apostereuseys*—that is, saith Dr. Hammond, "Thou shalt not rest contented with thy own, and not seek to increase it by the diminution of other men's." It is a rule of justice not to advance or enrich ourselves by doing wrong or injury to any other.

6. The young man bid fair for heaven, having been free from any open gross violations of the divine commands. Thus far he was able to same in some measure (v. 20), *Master, all these have I observed from my youth*. He thought he had, and his neighbours thought so too. Note, Ignorance of the extent and spiritual nature of the divine law, makes people think themselves in a better condition than they really are. Paul was alive *without the law*. But when he saw that to be *spiritual*, he saw himself to be *carnal*, Rom. 7:9, 14. However, he that could say he was free from scandalous sin, went further than many in the way to eternal life. But though we *know nothing by ourselves, yet are we not thereby justified*. 1 Co. 4:4.

7. Christ had a kindness for him; *Jesus, beholding him, loved him*, v. 21. He was pleased to find that he had lived inoffensively,

and pleased to see that he was inquisitive how to live better than so. Christ particularly *loves* to see young people, and rich people, *asking the way to heaven, with their faces thitherward*.

II. Here is a *sorrowful parting* between Christ and this young man.

1. Christ gave him a command of trial, by which it would appear whether he did in sincerity aim at eternal life, and press towards it: he seemed to have his heart much upon it, and if so, he is what he should be; but has he indeed his heart upon it? Bring him to the touchstone. (1.) Can he find in his heart *to part with his riches* for the service of Christ? He hath a good estate, and now, shortly, at the first founding of the Christian church, the necessity of the case will require that those who have *lands, sell them, and lay the money at the apostles' feet*; and how will he dispense with that? Acts 4:34, 35. After awhile, tribulation and persecution will arise, because of the word; and he must be forced to sell his estate, or have it taken from him, and how will he like that? Let him know the worst now; if he will not come up to these terms, let him quit his pretensions; as good as the first as at last. "*Sell whatsoever thou hast over and above what is necessary for thy support*;" probably, he had no family to provide for; let him therefore be a *father to the poor*, and make them his heirs. Every man, according to his ability, must relieve the poor, and be content, when there is occasion, to straiten himself to do it. Worldly wealth is given us, not only as *maintenance* to bear our charges through this world, according to our place in it, but as *talent*, to be used and employed for the glory of our great Master in the world, who hath so ordered it, that the poor we should have always with us as his receivers. (2.) Can he find it in his heart to go through the hardest costliest services he may be called to as a disciple of Christ, and depend upon him for a recompence *in heaven*? He asks Christ what he should do more than he has done to obtain *eternal life*, and Christ puts it to him, whether he has indeed that firm belief of, and that high value for, eternal life that he seems to have. Doth he really believe there is a true treasure in heaven sufficient to make up all he can leave, or lose, or lay out, for Christ? Is he willing to deal with Christ *upon trust*? Can he give him credit for all he is worth; and be willing to bear a present cross, in expectation of a future crown?

2. Upon this he flew off (v. 22); *He was sad at that saying*; was sorry that he could not be a follower of Christ upon any easier terms than leaving all to follow him; that he could not *lay hold* on eternal life, and *keep hold* of his temporal possessions too. But since he could not come up to the terms of discipleship, he was so fair as not to pretend to it; *He went away grieved*. Here appeared the truth of that (Mt. 6:24), *Ye cannot serve God and mammon*; while he held to mammon he did in effect *despise* Christ, as all those do who prefer the world before him. He bids for what he has a mind for in the market, yet goes away grieved, and leaves it, because he cannot have it at his own price. Two words to a bargain. Motions are not marriages. That which ruined this young man was, *he had great possessions*; thus the *prosperity of fools destroys them*, and those who spend their days in wealth are tempted to say to God, *Depart from us*; or to their hearts, *Depart from God*.

III. Here is Christ's discourse with his disciples. We are tempted to wish that Christ had *mollified* that saying which frightened this young gentleman from following him, and by an explanation taken off the harshness of it: but he knew all men's hearts; he would not court him to be his follower, because he was a *rich man* and a ruler; but, if he will go, let him go. Christ will keep no man against his will; and therefore we do not find that Christ called him back, but took this occasion to instruct his disciples in

two things.

1. The difficulty of the salvation of those who have an abundance of this world; because there are few who have *a deal to leave*, that can be persuaded to *leave it* for Christ, or to lay it out in doing good.

(1.) Christ asserts this here; *He looked about* upon his *disciples*, because he would have them all take notice of what he said, that by it they might have their judgments rightly informed, and their mistakes rectified, concerning worldly wealth, which they were apt to over-rate; *How hardly shall they who have riches enter into the kingdom of God!* v. 23. They have many temptations to grapple with, and many difficulties to get over, which lie not in the way of poor people. But he explains himself, v. 24, where he calls the disciples *children*, because as such they should be *taught* by him, and *portioned* by him with better things than this young man left Christ to cleave to; and whereas he had said, *How hardly will those who have riches get to heaven*; here he tells them, that the danger arose not so much from their *having* riches as from their *trusting to them*, and placing their confidence in them, expecting protection, provision, and a portion from them; saying that *to their gold*, which they should say only to their God, *Thou art my hope*, Job 31:24. They have such a value as this for the wealth of the world, will never be brought to put a right value upon Christ and his grace. They that *have* ever so much riches, but do not *trust in them*, that see the vanity of them, and their utter insufficiency to make a soul happy, have got over the difficulty, and can easily part with them for Christ: but they have ever so little, if they set their hearts upon that little, and place their happiness in it, it will keep them from Christ. He enforces this assertion with, v. 25, *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man, that trusts in riches, or inclines to do so, to enter into the kingdom of God*. The disproportion here seems so great (though the more it is so the more it answers the intention), that some have laboured to bring the camel and the eye of the needle a little nearer together. [1.] Some imagine there might be some wicket-gate, or door, to Jerusalem, commonly known by the name of *the needle's eye*, for its straitness, through which a camel could not be got, unless he were unloaded, and made to kneel, as those camel, Gen. 24:11. So a rich man cannot get to heaven unless he is willing to part with the burthen of his worldly wealth, and stoop to the duties of a humble religion, and so enter *at the strait gate*. [2.] Others suggest that the word we translate a *camel*, sometimes signifies a cable-rope, which, though not to be got through a needle's eye, yet is of great affinity to it. A rich man, compared with the poor, is as a cable to a single thread, stronger, but not so pliable, and it will not go through the *needle's eye*, unless it be untwisted. So the rich man must be loosed and disentangled from his riches, and then there is some hope of him, that thread by thread he may be got through the eye of the needle, otherwise he is good for nothing but to cast anchor in the earth.

(2.) This truth was very surprising to the disciples; *They were astonished at his words*, v. 24. *They were astonished out of measure, and said among themselves, Who then can be saved?* They knew what were generally the sentiments of the Jewish teachers, who affirmed that the Spirit of God chooses to reside in rich men; nay, they knew what abundance of promises there were, in the Old Testament, of temporal good things; they knew likewise that all either are rich, or fain would be so, and that they who are rich, have so much the larger opportunities of doing good, and therefore were amazed to hear that it should be so hard for rich people to go to heaven.

(3.) Christ reconciled them to it, by referring it to the almighty power of God, to help even rich people over the difficulties that lie in the way of their salvation (v. 27); He *looked upon them*, to engage their attention, and said, "*With men it is impossible; rich people cannot by their own skill or resolution get over these difficulties, but the grace of God can do it, for with him all things are possible.*" If *the righteous scarcely are saved*, much more may we say so of the *rich*; and therefore when any get to heaven, they must give all the glory to God, who worketh in them *both to will and to do*.

2. The greatness of the salvation of those that have but a little of this world, and leave it for Christ. This he speaks of, upon occasion of Peter's mentioning what he and the rest of the disciples had left to follow him; *Behold*, (saith he), *we have left all to follow thee*, v. 28. "You have *done well*," saith Christ, "and it will prove in the end that you have done well *for yourselves*; you shall be abundantly recompensed, and not only you shall be *reimbursed*, who have left but a little, but those that have ever so much, though it were so much as this young man had, that could not persuade himself to quit it for Christ; yet they shall have much more than an equivalent for it." (1.) The loss is supposed to be very great; he specifies, [1.] *Worldly wealth; houses* are here put first, and *lands* last: if a man quit his *house*, which should be for his habitation, and his *land*, which should be for his maintenance, and so make himself a beggar and an outcast. This has been the choice of suffering saints; farewell houses and lands, though ever so convenient and desirable, through the inheritance of fathers, for the house which is from heaven, and the inheritance of the saints in light, where are many mansions. [2.] *Dear relations. Father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters*. In these, as much as in any temporal blessing, the comfort of life is bound up; without these the world would be a wilderness; yet, when we must either forsake these or Christ, we must remember that we stand in nearer relation to Christ than we do to any creature; and therefore to keep in with him, we must be content to break with all the world, and to say to father and mother, as Levi did, *I have not known you*. The greatest trial of a good man's constancy is, when his love to Christ comes to stand in competition with a love that is lawful, nay, that is his duty. It is easy to such a one to forsake a *lust* for Christ, for he hath that within him, that rises against it; but to forsake a *father*, a *brother*, a *wife*, for Christ, that is, to forsake those whom he knows he must love, is hard. And yet he must do so, rather than deny or disown Christ. Thus great is the loss supposed to be; but it is *for Christ's sake*, that he may be honoured, and the *gospel's*, that it may be promoted and propagated. It is not the *suffering*, but the *cause*, that makes the *martyr*. And therefore, (2.) The advantage will be great. [1.] *They shall receive a hundred-fold in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters*; not *in specie*, but that which is equivalent. He shall have abundance of comfort while he lives, sufficient to make up for all his losses; his relation to Christ, his communion with the saints, and his title to eternal life, shall be to him *brethren*, and *sisters*, and *houses*, and all. God's providence gave Job double to what he had had, but suffering Christians shall have a *hundred-fold* in the comforts of the Spirit sweetening their creature comforts. But observe, It is added here in Mark, *with persecutions*. Even when they are gainers by Christ, let them still expect to be sufferers for him; and not be out of the reach of persecution, till they come to heaven. Nay, The *persecutions* seem to come in here among *the receivings* in this present time; for unto you it is given, not only to believe in Christ, but also to *suffer for his name*; yet this is not all, [2.] *They shall have eternal life in the world to come*. If they receive a hundred-fold in this world, one would think they should not be encouraged to expect any more. Yet, as if that were a small matter, they shall have

*life eternal* into the bargain; which is more than ten thousand-fold, ten thousand times told, for all their losses. But because they talked so much, and really more than became them, of *leaving all* for Christ, he tells them, though they were *first called*, that there should be disciples called after them, that should be preferred before them; as St. Paul, who was one *born out of due time*, and yet laboured more abundantly than all the rest of the apostles, 1 Co. 15:10. Then the *first* were *last*, and the last *first*.

### Verses 32-45

Here is, I. Christ's prediction of his own sufferings; this string he harped much upon, though in the ears of his disciples it sounded very harsh and displeasing.

1. See here how bold he was; when they were going up to Jerusalem, *Jesus went before them*, as the *captain of our salvation*, that was now to be *made perfect through sufferings*, v. 32. Thus he showed himself forward to go on with his undertaking, even when he came to the hardest part of it. Now that the time was at hand, he said, *Lo, I come*; so far was he from *drawing back*, that now, more than ever, he *pressed forward*. *Jesus went before them, and they were amazed*. They began now to consider what imminent danger they ran themselves into, when they went to Jerusalem; how very malicious the Sanhedrim which sat there was against their Master and them; and they were ready to tremble at the thought of it. To hearten them, therefore, Christ *went before them*. "Come," saith he, "surely you will venture where your Master ventures." Note, When we see ourselves entering upon sufferings, it is encouraging to see our Master go before us. Or, *He went before them*, and *therefore they were amazed*; they admired to see with what cheerfulness and alacrity he went on, though he knew he was going to suffer and die. Note, Christ's courage and constancy in going on with his undertaking for our salvation, are, and will be, the wonder of all his disciples.

2. See here how timorous and faint-hearted his disciples were; *As they followed, they were afraid*, afraid for themselves, as being apprehensive of their own danger; and justly might they be *ashamed* of their being thus *afraid*. Their Master's courage should have put spirit into them.

3. See here what method he took to silence their fears. He did not go about to make the matter better than it was, nor to feed them with hopes that he might escape the storm, but told them *again* what he had often told them before, the *things that should happen to him*. He knew the worst of it, and therefore went on thus boldly, and he will let them know the worst of it. Come, *be not afraid*; for, (1.) There is no remedy, the matter is determined, and cannot be avoided. (2.) It is only the *Son of man* that shall suffer; their time of suffering was now at hand, he will now provide for their security. (3.) He *shall rise again*; the issue of his sufferings will be glorious to himself, and advantageous to all that are his, v. 33, 34. The method and particulars of Christ's sufferings are more largely foretold here than in any other of the predictions—that he shall first be delivered up by Judas to the *chief priests and the scribes*; that they shall condemn him to death, but, not having the power to put him to death, shall *deliver him to the Gentiles*, to the Roman powers, and they shall *mock him*, and *scourge him*, and *spit upon him*, and *kill him*. Christ had a perfect foresight, not only of his own death, but of all the aggravating circumstances of it; and yet he thus went forth to meet it.

II. The check he gave to two of his disciples for their ambitious request. This story is much the same here as we had it Mt.

20:20. Only there they are said to have made their request by their mother, here they are said to make it themselves; she introduced them, and presented their petition, and then they seconded it, and assented to it.

Note, 1. As, on the one hand, there are some that do not *use*, so, on the other hand, there are some that *abuse*, the great encouragements Christ has given us in prayer. He hath said, *Ask, and it shall be given you*; and it is a commendable faith to ask for the great things he has promised; but it was a culpable presumption in these disciples to make such a boundless demand upon their Master; *We would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire*. We had much better leave it to him to do for us what he sees fit, and he will do more than we can desire, Eph. 3:20.

2. We must be cautious how we make general promises. Christ would not engage to do for them whatever they desired, but would know from them what it was they did desire; *What would ye that I should do for you?* He would have them go on with their suit, that they might be made ashamed of it.

3. Many have been led into a snare by false notions of Christ's kingdom, as if it were *of this world*, and like the kingdoms of the potentates of this world. James and John conclude, If Christ *rise again*, he must be a king, and if he be a king, his apostles must be peers, and one of these would willingly be the *Primus par regni*—*The first peer of the realm*, and the other next him, like Joseph in Pharaoh's court, or Daniel in Darius's.

4. Worldly honour is a glittering thing, with which the eyes of Christ's own disciples have many a time been dazzled. Whereas to *be good* should be more our care than to *look great*, or to have the pre-eminence.

5. Our weakness and short-sightedness appear as much in our prayers as in any thing. We cannot order our speech, when we speak to God, by reason of darkness, both concerning him and concerning ourselves. It is folly to *prescribe* to God, and wisdom to *subscribe*.

6. It is the will of Christ that we should prepare for sufferings, and leave it to him to recompense us for them. He needs not be put in mind, as Ahasuerus did, of the services of his people, nor can he forget their *work of faith and labour of love*. Our care must be, that we may have wisdom and grace to know how to suffer with him, and then we may trust him to provide in the best manner how we shall reign with him, and when, and where, and what, the degrees of our glory shall be.

III. The check he gave to the rest of the disciples, for their uneasiness at it. *They began to be much displeased*, to have *indignation about James and John*, v. 41. They were angry at them for affecting precedency, not because it did so ill become the disciples of Christ, but because each of them hoped to have it himself. When the Cynic trampled on Alexander's foot-cloth, with *Calco fastum Alexandri*—*Now I tread on Alexander's pride*, he was seasonably checked with *Sed majori fastu*—*But with a greater pride of thine own*. So these discovered their own ambition, in their displeasure at the ambition of James and John; and Christ took this occasion to warn them against it, and all their successors in the ministry of the gospel, v. 42–44. He *called them to him* in a familiar way, to give them an example of condescension, then when he was reproving their ambition, and to teach them never to bid their disciples keep their distance. He shows them,

1. That dominion was generally *abused in the world* (v. 42); *That they seemed to rule over the Gentiles*, that have the name and title of rulers, *they exercise lordship over them*, that is all they study and aim at, not so much to protect them, and provide for

their welfare, as to *exercise authority upon them*; they will be obeyed, aim to be arbitrary, and to have their will in every thing. *Sic volo, sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas—Thus I will, thus I command; my good pleasure is my law.* Their care is, what they shall get by their subjects to support their own pomp and grandeur, not what they shall do for them.

2. That therefore it ought not to be *admitted into the church*; "It shall not be so among you; those that shall be put under your charge, must be as sheep under the charge of the *shepherd*, who is to tend them and feed them, and be a servant to them, not as horses under the command of the driver, that works them and beats them, and gets his pennyworths out of them. He that affects to be great and chief, that thrusts himself into a secular dignity and dominion, *he shall be servant of all*, he shall be mean and contemptible in the eyes of all that are wise and good; *he that exalteth himself shall be abased.*" Or rather, "He that would be *truly* great and chief, he must lay out himself to do good to all, must stoop to the meanest services, and labour in the hardest services. Those not only shall be most *honoured* hereafter, but are most *honourable* now, who are most useful." To convince them of this, he sets before them his own example (v. 45); "The *Son of man* submits first to the greatest hardships and hazards, and then enters into his glory, and can you expect to come to it any other way; or to have more ease and honour than he has?" (1.) He takes upon him *the form of a servant*, comes not to be *ministered to*, and waited upon, but *to minister*, and wait to be gracious. (2.) He comes *obedient to death*, and to its dominion, for he *gives his life a ransom for many*; did he die for the benefit of good people, and shall not we study to live for their benefit?

#### **Verses 46-52**

This passage of story agrees with that, Mt. 20:29, etc. Only that there were told of *two* blind men; here, and Lu. 18:35, only of *one*: but if there were *two*, there was *one*. This one is named here, being a *blind beggar* that was much talked of; he was called *Bartimeus*, that is, *the son of Timeus*; which, some think, signifies *the son of a blind man*; he was the blind son of a blind father, which made the case worse, and the cure more wonderful, and the more proper to typify the spiritual cures wrought by the grace of Christ, on those that not only are born blind, but are born of those that are blind.

I. This blind man sat *begging*; as they do with us. Note, Those who by the providence of God are disabled to get a livelihood by their own labour, and have not any other way of subsisting, are the most proper objects of charity; and particular care ought to be taken of them.

II. He cried out to the Lord Jesus for *mercy*; *Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David*. Misery is the object of mercy, his own miserable case he recommends to the compassion of the *Son of David*, of whom it was foretold, that, when he should come to save us, *the eyes of the blind should be opened*, Isa. 35:5. In coming to Christ for help and healing, we should have an eye to him as the promised Messiah, the Trustee of mercy and grace.

III. Christ encouraged him to hope that he should find mercy; for he *stood still, and commanded him to be called*. We must never reckon it a hindrance to us in our way, to *stand still*, when it is to do a good work. Those about him, who had discouraged him at first, perhaps were now the persons that signified to him the gracious call of Christ; "*Be of good comfort, rise, he calls thee*; and if he calls thee, he will cure thee." Note, The gracious invitations Christ gives us to come to him, are great encouragements to our hope, that we shall speed well if we come to him, and shall have what we come for. Let the guilty,

the empty, the tempted, the hungry, the naked, be of good comfort, for he *calls them* to be pardoned, to be supplied, to be succoured, to be filled, to be clothed, to have all that done for them, which their case calls for.

IV. The poor man, hereupon, made the best of his way to Christ; He *cast away his* loose upper *garment*, and came to Jesus (v. 50); he cast away every thing that might be in danger of throwing him down, or might in any way hinder him in coming to Christ, or retard his motion. Those who would come to Jesus, must cast away the garment of their own sufficiency, must strip themselves of all conceit of that, and must free themselves from *every weight*, and the sin that, like long garments, doth *most easily beset them*, Heb. 12:1.

V. The particular favour he begged, was, that his *eyes might be opened*; that so he might be able to work for his living, and might be no longer burthensome to others. It is a very desirable thing to be in a capacity of earning our own bread; and where God has given men their limbs and senses, it is a shame for men by their foolishness and slothfulness to make themselves, in effect, *blind* and *lame*.

VI. This favour he received; his eyes were opened (v. 52); and two things Mark here adds, which intimate, 1. How Christ made it a double favour to him, by putting the honour of it upon his faith; "*Thy faith hath made thee whole*"; faith in Christ as the Son of David, and in his pity and power; not thy importunity, but *thy faith*, setting Christ on work, or rather Christ setting thy faith on work." Those supplies are most comfortable, that are fetched in by our faith. 2. How he made it a double favour to himself; When he had *received his sight*, he *followed Jesus by the way*. By this he made it appear that he was thoroughly cured, that he no more needed one to lead him, but could go himself; and by this he evidenced the grateful sense he had of Christ's kindness to him, that, when he had his sight, he made this use of it. It is not enough to *come to Christ* for spiritual healing, but, when we are healed, we must continue to follow him; that we may do honour to him, and receive instruction from him. Those that have spiritual eye-sight, see that beauty in Christ, that will effectually draw them to *run after him*.

## Chapter 11

We are now come to the Passion-Week, the week in which Christ died, and the great occurrences of that week. I. Christ's riding in triumph into Jerusalem (v. 1–11). II. His cursing the barren fig-tree (v. 12–14). III. His driving those out of the temple that turned it into an exchange (v. 15–19). IV. His discourse with his disciples concerning the power of faith and the efficacy of prayer, on occasion of the withering of the fig-tree he cursed (v. 20–26). V. His reply to those who questioned his authority (v. 27–33).

### Verses 1-11

We have here the story of the public entry Christ made into Jerusalem, four or five days before his death. And he came into town thus remarkably, 1. To show that he was not afraid of the power and malice of his enemies in Jerusalem. He did not steal into the city *incognito*, as one that durst not show his face; no, they needed not send spies to search for him, he comes in with observation. This would be an encouragement to his disciples that were timorous, and cowed at the thought of their enemies' power and rage; let them see how bravely their Master sets them all at defiance. 2. To show that he was not cast down or disquieted at the thoughts of his approaching sufferings. He came, not only publicly, but cheerfully, and with acclamations of joy. Though he was now but taking the field, and *girding on the harness*, yet, being fully assured of a complete victory, he thus triumphs as though he had put it off.

I. The *outside* of this triumph was very *mean*; he rode upon an ass's *colt*, which being an ass, looked contemptible, and made no figure; and, being but a *colt*, *whereon never man sat*, we may suppose, was rough and untrimmed, and not only so, but rude and ungovernable, and would disturb and disgrace the solemnity. This *colt* was borrowed too. Christ went upon the water in a *borrowed* boat, ate the passover in a *borrowed* chamber, was buried in a *borrowed* sepulchre, and here rode on a *borrowed* ass. Let not Christians scorn to be beholden one to another, and, when need is, to go a borrowing, for our Master did not. He had no rich trappings; they threw their clothes upon the colt, and so he *sat upon him*, v. 7. The persons that attended, were mean people; and all the show they could make, was, by *spreading their garments in the way* (v. 8), as they used to do at the feast of tabernacles. All these were marks of his humiliation; even when he would be taken notice of, he would be taken notice of for his meanness; and they are instructions to us, not to *mind high things*, but to *condescend to them of low estate*. How ill doth it become Christians to *take state*, when Christ was so far from affecting it!

II. The *inside* of this triumph was very *great*; not only as it was the fulfilling of the scripture (which is not taken notice of here, as it is in Matthew), but as there were several rays of Christ's glory shining forth in the midst of all this meanness. 1. Christ showed his knowledge of things distant, and his power over the wills of men, when he sent his disciples for the colt, v. 1-3. By this it appears that he can *do every thing*, and *no thought can be withholden from him*. 2. He showed his dominion over the *creatures* in riding on a *colt that was never backed*. The subjection of the inferior part of the creation to man is spoken of with application to Christ (Ps. 8:5, 6, compared with Heb. 2:8); for to him it is owing, and to his mediation, that we have any remaining benefit by the grant God made to man, of a sovereignty in this lower world, Gen. 1:28. And perhaps Christ, in riding

the ass's colt, would give a shadow of his power over the spirit of man, who is born as the *wild ass's colt*, Job 11:12. 3. The colt was brought from a place *where two ways met* (v. 4), as if Christ would show that he came to direct those into the right way, who had *two ways* before them, and were in danger of taking the wrong. 4. Christ received the joyful *hosannas* of the people; that is, both the *welcome* they gave him and their *good wishes* to the prosperity of his kingdom, v. 9. It was God that put it into the hearts of these people to cry *Hosanna*, who were not by art and management brought to it, as those were who afterward cried, *Crucify, crucify*. Christ reckons himself honoured by the faith and praises of the multitude, and it is God that brings people to do him this honour beyond their own intentions.

(1.) They *welcomed* his person (v. 9); *Blessed is he that cometh, the ho erchomenos, he that should come*, so often promised, so long expected; he comes *in the name of the Lord*, as God's Ambassador to the world; *Blessed be he*: let him have our applauses, and best affections; he is a *blessed* Saviour, and brings blessings to us, and blessed be he that sent him. Let him be *blessed in the name of the Lord*, and let all nations and ages call him *Blessed*, and think and speak highly and honourably of him.

(2.) They *wished well* to his *intent*, v. 10. They believed that, mean a figure as he made, he had a *kingdom*, which should shortly be set up in the world, that it was the kingdom of *their father David* (that father of his country), the kingdom promised to him and his seed for ever; a kingdom that came *in the name of the Lord*, supported by a divine authority. *Blessed be this kingdom*; let it take place, let it get ground, let it come in the power of it, and let all opposing rule, principality, and power, be put down; let it go on *conquering, and to conquer*. *Hosanna* to this kingdom; prosperity be to it; all happiness attend it. The proper signification of *hosanna* is that which we find, Rev. 7:10. *Salvation to our God, that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb*; success to religion, both *natural* and *revealed*, *Hosanna in the highest*. Praises be to our God, who is in the *highest heavens* over all, God blessed for ever; or, Let him be praised by his angels, that are *in the highest* heavens, let our *hosannas* be an echo to theirs.

Christ, thus *attended*, thus *applauded*, came into the city, and went directly *to the temple*. Here was no banquet of wine prepared for his entertainment, nor the least refreshment; but he immediately applied himself to his work, for that was his *meat* and *drink*. He went *to the temple*, that the scripture might be fulfilled; *"The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, without sending any immediate notice before him; he shall surprise you with a day of visitation, for he shall be like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap,"* Mal. 3:1-3. He came to the temple, and took a view of the present state of it, v. 11. He *looked round about upon all things*, but as yet said nothing. He saw many disorders there, but *kept silence*, Ps. 50:21. Though he intended to suppress them, he would not go about the doing of it all *on a sudden*, lest he should seem to have done it *rashly*; he let things be as they were for this night, intending the next morning to apply himself to the necessary reformation, and to take the day before him. We may be confident that God sees all the wickedness that is in the world, though he do not presently reckon for it, nor cast it out. Christ, having made his remarks upon what he saw in the temple, retired in the evening to a friend's house at Bethany, because there he would be more out of the noise of the town, and out of the way of being suspected, a designing to head a faction.

## Verses 12-26

Here is, I. Christ's cursing the fruitless fig-tree. He had a convenient resting-place at Bethany, and therefore thither he went at resting-time; but his work lay at Jerusalem, and thither therefore he returned in the morning, at working-time; and so intent was he upon his work, that he went out from Bethany without breakfast, which, before he was gone far, he found the want of, and *was hungry* (v. 12), for he was subject to all the sinless infirmities of our nature. Finding himself in want of food, he went to a *fig-tree*, which he saw at some distance, and which being well *adorned* with green leaves he hoped to find *enriched* with some sort of fruit. But he *found nothing but leaves*; he hoped to find some fruit, *for though the time of gathering in figs was near, it was not yet*; so that it could not be pretended that it had had fruit, but that it was gathered and gone; for the season had not yet arrived. Or, He found none, for indeed *it was not a season of figs*, it was no good fig-year. But this was worse than any fig-tree, for there was not so much as one fig to be found upon it, though it was so full of leaves. However, Christ was willing to make an example of it, not to the *trees*, but to the *men*, of that generation, and therefore cursed it with that curse which is the reverse of the first blessing, *Be fruitful*; he said unto it, *Never let any man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever*, v. 14. *Sweetness and good fruit* are, in Jotham's parable, the honour of the *fig-tree* (Jdg. 9:11), and its serviceableness therein to man, preferable to the preferment of being *promoted over the trees*; now to be deprived of that, was a grievous *curse*. This was intended to be a type and figure of the doom passed upon the Jewish church, to which he came, *seeking fruit, but found none* (Lu. 13:6, 7); and though it was not, according to the doom in the parable, immediately cut down, yet, according to this in the history, *blindness and hardness* befel them (Rom. 11:8, 25), so that they were from henceforth *good for nothing*. The *disciples heard* what sentence Christ passed on this tree, and took notice of it. Woes from Christ's mouth are to be observed and kept in mind, as well as blessings.

II. His clearing the temple of the market-people that frequented it, and of those that made it a thoroughfare. We do not find that Christ met with food elsewhere, when he missed of it on the fig-tree; but the zeal of God's house so ate him up, and made him forget himself, that he came, hungry as he was, to Jerusalem, and went straight to the temple, and began to reform those abuses which the day before he had marked out; to show that when the Redeemer came to Zion, his errand was, *to turn away ungodliness from Jacob* (Rom. 11:26), and that he came not, as he was falsely accused, *to destroy* the temple, but to purify and refine it, and reduce his church to its primitive rectitude.

1. He cast out the *buyers and sellers, overthrew the tables of the money-changers* (and threw the money to the ground, the fitter place for it), and threw down the *seats of them that sold doves*. This he did as one having authority, as *a Son in his own house*. The filth of the daughter of Zion is purged away, not by might, nor by power, but by *the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of burning*. And he did it without opposition; for what he did, was manifested to be right and good, even in the consciences of those that had connived at it, and countenanced it, because they got money by it. Note, It may be some encouragement to zealous reformers, that frequently the purging out of corruptions, and the correcting of abuses, prove an easier piece of work than was apprehended. Prudent attempts sometimes prove successful beyond expectation, and there are not those lions *found* in the way, that were feared to be.

2. He would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel, any sort of goods or wares, *through the temple*, or any of the courts of it, because it was the nearer way, and would save them the labour of going about, v. 16. The Jews owned that it was one of the instances of honour due to the temple, not to make the mountain of the house, or the court of the Gentiles, a road, or common passage, or to come into it with any bundle.

3. He gave a good reason for this; because it was written, *My house shall be called of all nations, The house of prayer*, v. 17. So it is written, Isa. 56:7. It shall pass among all people under that character. *It shall be the house of prayer to all nations*; it was so in the first institution of it; when Solomon dedicated it, it was with an eye to the sons of the strangers, 1 Ki. 8:41. And it was prophesied that it should be yet more so. Christ will have the temple, as a type of the gospel-church, to be, (1.) *A house of prayer*. After he had turned out the oxen and doves, which were things for sacrifice, he revived the appointment of it as a *house of prayer*, to teach us that when all sacrifices and offerings should be abolished, the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise should continue and remain for ever. (2.) That it should be so *to all nations*, and not to the people of the Jews only; for *whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved*, though not of the seed of Jacob, according to the flesh. It was therefore insufferable for them to *make it a den of thieves*, which would prejudice those nations against it, whom they should have invited to it. When Christ drove out the buyers and sellers at the beginning of his ministry, he only charged them with making the temple a *house of merchandise* (Jn. 2:16); but now he chargeth them with making it a *den of thieves*, because since then they had twice gone about to stone him in the temple (Jn. 8:59; 10:31), or because the traders there were grown notorious for cheating their customers, and imposing upon the ignorance and necessity of the country people, which is no better than downright thievery. Those that suffer vain worldly thoughts to lodge within them when they are at their devotions, turn the *house of prayer* into a *house of merchandise*; but they that make long prayers for pretence to devour widows' houses, turn it into a *den of thieves*.

4. The scribes and the chief priests were extremely nettled at this, v. 18. They hated him, and hated to be reformed by him; and yet they *feared him*, lest he should next overthrow *their seats*, and expel *them*, being conscious to themselves of the profaning and abusing of their power. They found that he had a great interest, that *all the people were astonished at his doctrine*, and that every thing he said, was an oracle and a law to them; and what durst *he* not attempt, what could *he* not effect, being thus supported? They therefore sought, not how he might make their peace with him, but *how they might destroy him*. A desperate attempt, and which, one would think, they themselves could not but fear was *fighting against God*. But they care not what they do, to support their own power and grandeur.

III. His discourse with his disciples, upon occasion of the fig-tree's withering away which he had cursed. At *even*, as usual, he *went out of the city* (v. 19), to Bethany; but it is probable that it was in the dark, so that they could not see the fig-tree; but the next morning, as they *passed by*, they observed the *fig-tree dried up from the roots*, v. 20. More is *included* many times in Christ's curses than is *expressed*, as appears by the effects of them. The curse was no more than that it should never bear fruit again, but the effect goes further, *it is dried up from the roots*. If it bear no fruit, it shall bear no leaves to cheat people. Now observe,

1. How the disciples were affected with it. Peter remembered Christ's words, and said, with surprise, *Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away*, v. 21. Note, Christ's curses have wonderful effects, and make those to wither presently, that flourished like the green bay-tree. *Those whom he curseth are cursed indeed*. This represented the character and state of the Jewish church; which, from henceforward, was a tree dried up from the roots; no longer fit for food, but for fuel only. The first establishment of the Levitical priesthood was ratified and confirmed by the miracle of a *dry rod*, which in *one night* budded, and blossomed, and brought forth almonds (Num. 17:8), a happy omen of the fruitlessness and flourishing of that priesthood. And now, by a contrary miracle, the expiration of that priesthood was signified by a flourishing tree dried up in a night; the just punishment of those priests that had abused it. And this seemed very strange to the disciples, and scarcely credible, that the Jews, who had been so long God's own, his only professing people in the world, should be thus abandoned; they could not imagine how that *fig-tree* should *so soon wither away*: but this comes of rejecting Christ, and being rejected by him.

2. The good instructions Christ gave them from it; for of *those* even this *withered* tree was *fruitful*.

(1.) Christ teacheth them from hence to *pray in faith* (v. 22); *Have faith in God*. They admired the power of Christ's word of command; "Why," said Christ, "a lively active faith would put as great a power into your prayers, v. 23, 24. *Whosoever shall say to this mountain, this mount of Olives, Be removed, and be cast into the sea; if he has but any word of God, general or particular, to build his faith upon, and if he shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith, according to the warrant he has from what God hath said, shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith.*" Through the strength and power of God in Christ, the greatest difficulty shall be got over, and the thing shall be effected. And therefore (v. 24), *"What things soever ye desire, when ye pray believe that ye shall receive them; nay, believe that ye do receive them, and he that has power to give them, saith, Ye shall have them. I say unto you, Ye shall, v. 24. Verily I say unto you, Ye shall," v. 23.* Now this is to be applied, [1.] To that *faith of miracles* which the apostles and first preachers of the gospel were endued with, which did wonders in *things natural*, healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out devils; these were, in effect, the removing of mountains. The apostles speak of a faith which would do that, and yet might be found where holy love was not, 1 Co. 13:2. [2.] It may be applied to that *miracle of faith*, which all true Christians are endued with, which doeth wonders in *things spiritual*. It *justifies* us (Rom. 5:1), and so removes the mountains of guilt, and casts them into the *depths of the sea*, never to rise up in judgment against us, Mic. 7:19. It *purifies* the heart (Acts 15:9), and so removes mountains of corruption, and *makes them plains* before the grace of God, Zec. 4:7. It is by faith that the world is conquered, Satan's fiery darts are quenched, a soul is crucified with Christ, and yet lives; by faith we set the Lord always before us, and see him that is invisible, and have him present to our minds; and this is effectual to remove mountains, for at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, the mountains were not only moved, but *removed*, Ps. 114:4-7.

(2.) To this is added here that necessary qualification of the prevailing prayer, that we freely forgive those who have been any way injurious to us, and be in charity with all men (v. 25, 26); *When ye stand praying, forgive*. Note, Standing is no improper posture for prayer; it was generally used among the Jews; hence they called their prayers, their *standings*; when they would say

how the world was *kept up* by prayer, they expressed it thus, *Stationibus stat mundus—The world is held up by standings*. But the primitive Christians generally used more humble and reverent gesture of kneeling, especially on fast days, though not on Lord's days. When we are at prayer, we must remember to pray for others, particularly for our enemies, and those that have wronged us; now we cannot pray sincerely that God would do them good, if we bear malice to them, and wish them ill. If we have injured others before we pray, we must go and *be reconciled to them*; Mt. 5:23, 24. But if they have injured us, we go a nearer way to work, and must immediately from our hearts *forgive* them. [1.] Because this is a *good step* towards obtaining the *pardon* of our own sins: *Forgive*, that *your Father may forgive you*; that is, "that he may be qualified to receive forgiveness, that he may forgive you without injury to his honour, as it would be, if he should suffer those to have such benefit by his mercy, as are so far from being conformable to the pattern of it." [2.] Because the want of this is a certain bar to the obtaining of the pardon of our sins; *"If ye do not forgive* those who have injured you, if he hate their persons, bear them a grudge, meditate revenge, and take all occasion to speak ill of them, *neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."* This ought to be remembered in prayer, because one great errand we have to the throne of grace, is, to pray for the pardon of our sins: and care about it ought to be our daily care, because prayer is a part of our daily work. Our Saviour often insists on this, for it was his great design to engage his disciples to love one another.

### **Verses 27-33**

We have here Christ examined by the great Sanhedrim concerning his authority; for they claimed a power to call prophets to an account concerning their mission. They came to him when he was *walking in the temple*, not for his diversion, but *teaching* the people, first one company and then another. The Peripatetic philosophers were so called from the custom they had of *walking* when they taught. The cloisters, or piazzas, in the courts of the temple, were fitted for this purpose. The great men were vexed to see him followed and heard with attention, and therefore *came to him* with some solemnity, and did as it were arraign him at the bar with this question, *By what authority doest thou these things?* v. 28. Now observe,

I. How they designed hereby to run him aground, and embarrass him. If they could make it out before the people, that he had not a *legal mission*, that he was not duly *ordained*, though he was ever so well qualified, and preached ever so profitably and well, they would tell the people that they *ought not to hear him*. This they made the last refuge of an obstinate unbelief; because they were resolved not to receive his doctrine, they were resolved to find some flaw or other in his commission, and will conclude it invalid, if it be not produced and ratified in their court. Thus the Papists resolve their controversy with us very much into the mission of our ministers, and if they have but any pretence to overthrow that, they think they have gained their point, though we have the scripture ever so much on our side. But this is indeed a question, which all that act either as magistrates or ministers, ought to be furnished with a good answer to, and often put to themselves, *By what authority do I these things?* For *how can men preach except they be sent?* Or how can they act with comfort, or confidence, or hope of success, except they be authorized? Jer. 23:32.

II. How he effectually ran them aground, and embarrassed them, with this question, "What are your thoughts concerning *the baptism of John?* *Was it from heaven, or of men?* By what authority did John preach, and baptize, and gather disciples? *Answer*

*me*, v. 30. Deal fairly and ingenuously, and give a categorical answer, one way or the other." By this resolve of *their* question into *this*, our Saviour intimates how near akin his doctrine and baptism were to John's; they had the same original, and the same design and tendency—to introduce the gospel kingdom. Christ might with the better grace put this question to *them*, because they had sent a committee of their own house to examine John, Jn. 1:19. "Now," saith Christ, "what was the result of your enquiries concerning him?"

They knew what they *thought* of this question; they could not but think that *John Baptist* was a man sent of God. But the difficulty was, what they should *say to it* now. Men that oblige not themselves to speak *as they think* (which is a certain rule) cannot avoid perplexing themselves thus.

1. If they own the baptism of John to be *from heaven*, as really it was, they *shame themselves*; for Christ will presently turn it upon them, *Why did ye not then believe him*, and receive his baptism? They could not bear that Christ should say this, but they could bear it that their own consciences should say so, because they had an art of stifling and silencing them, and because what conscience said, though it might gall and grate them a little, would not *shame them*; and then *they* would do well enough, who looked no further than Saul's care, when he was convicted, *Honour me now before this people*, 1 Sa. 15:30.

2. If they say, "*It is of men*, he was not sent of God, but his doctrine and baptism were inventions of his own," they *expose themselves*, the people will be ready to do them a mischief, or a least clamour upon them; for *all men counted John that he was a prophet indeed*, and therefore they could not bear that he should be reflected on. Note, There is a carnal slavish fear, which not only wicked subjects but wicked rulers likewise are liable to, which God makes use of as a means to keep the world in some order, and to suppress *violence*, that it shall not always *grow up into a rod of wickedness*. Now by this dilemma to which Christ brought them, (1.) They were confounded and baffled, and forced to make a dishonourable retreat; to pretend ignorance—*We cannot tell* (and that was mortification enough to those proud men), but really to discover the greatest malice and wilfulness. What Christ did by his wisdom, we must labour to do by our well doing—*put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*, 1 Pt. 2:15. (2.) Christ came off with honour, and justified himself in refusing to give them an answer to their imperious demand; *Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things*. They did not deserve to be told; for it was plain that they contended not for truth, but victory; nor did *he* need to *tell them*, for the works which he did, told them plainly that he had authority from God to do what he did; since no man could do those miracles which he did unless God were with him. Let them wait but three or four days, and his resurrection shall tell them who gave him his authority, for by that he will be *declared to be the Son of God with power*, as by their rejecting of him, notwithstanding, they will be declared to be the enemies of God.

## Chapter 12

In this chapter, we have, I. The parable of the vineyard let out to unthankful husbandmen, representing the sin and ruin of the Jewish church (v. 1–12). II. Christ's silencing those who thought to ensnare him with a question about paying tribute Caesar (v. 13–17). III. His silencing the Sadducees, who attempted to perplex the doctrine of the resurrection (v. 18–27). IV. His conference with a scribe about the first and great command of the law (v. 28–34). V. His puzzling the scribes with a question about Christ's being the Son of David (v. 35–37). VI. The caution he gave the people, to take heed of the scribes (v. 38–40). VII. His commendation of the poor widow that cast her two mites into the treasury (v. 41–44).

### Verses 1-12

Christ had formerly in parables showed how he designed to set up the gospel church; now he begins in parables to show how he would lay aside the Jewish church, which it might have been grafted into the *stock of*, but was built upon the *ruins of*. This parable we had just as we have it here, Mt. 21:33. We may observe here,

I. They that enjoy the privileges of the visible church, have a vineyard let out to them, which is capable of great improvement, and from the occupiers of which rent is justly expected. When God *showed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel* (Ps. 147:19), when he set up his temple among them, his priesthood, and his ordinances, then he *let out* to them the *vineyard* he had *planted*; which he *hedged*, and in which he *built a tower*, v. 1. Members of the church are God's tenants, and they have both a good Landlord and a good bargain, and may live well upon it, if it be not their own fault.

II. Those whom God lets out his vineyard to, he sends his servants to, to put them in mind of his just expectations from them, v. 2. He was not *hasty* in his demands, nor *high*, for he did not send for the rent till they could make it, *at the season*; nor did he put them to the trouble of making money of it, but was willing to take it *in specie*.

III. It is sad to think what base usage God's faithful ministers have met with, in all ages, from those that have enjoyed the privileges of the church, and have not brought forth fruit answerable. The Old-Testament prophets were persecuted even by those that went under the name of the Old-Testament church. They *beat them*, and *sent them empty away* (v. 3); that was bad: they *wounded them*, and *sent them away shamefully entreated* (v. 4); that was worse: nay, at length, they came to such a pitch of wickedness, that they *killed them*, v. 5.

IV. It was no wonder if those who abused the prophets, abused Christ himself. God did at length send them his Son, his *well-beloved*; it was therefore so much the greater kindness in him to send him; as in Jacob to send Joseph to visit his brethren, Gen. 37:14. And it might be expected that he whom their Master *loved*, they also should respect and love (v. 6); "*They will reverence my son*, and, in reverence to him, will pay their rent." But, instead of *reverencing* him because he was the son and heir, they *therefore* hated him, v. 7. Because Christ, in calling to repentance and reformation, made his demands with more authority than the prophets had done, they were the more enraged against him, and determined to put him to death, that they might engross all church power to themselves, and that all the respect and obedience of the people might be paid to them only; "*The inheritance shall be ours*, we will be lords paramount, and bear all the sway." There is an *inheritance*, which, if they had

duly *reverenced the Son*, might have been theirs, a heavenly inheritance; but they slighted that, and would have their inheritance in the wealth, and pomp, and powers, of this world. So they *took him, and killed him*; they had not done it yet, but they would do it in a little time; and they *cast him out of the vineyard*, they refused to admit his gospel when he was gone; it would by no means agree with their scheme, and so they threw it out with disdain and detestation.

V. For such sinful and shameful doings nothing can be expected but a fearful doom (v. 9); *What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do?* It is easy to say what, for nothing could be done more provoking.

1. He will *come, and destroy the husbandmen*, whom he would have saved. When they only denied the fruit, he did not *distrain* upon them for rent, nor *disseize* them and *dispossess* them for *non-payment*; but when they killed his servants, and his Son, he determined to *destroy* them; and this was fulfilled when Jerusalem was laid waste, and the Jewish nation extirpated and made a desolation.

2. He will *give the vineyards to others*. If he have not the rent from them, he will have it from another people, for God will be no loser by any. This was fulfilled in the taking in of the Gentiles, and the abundance of fruit which the *gospel brought forth in all the world*, Col. 1:6. If some from whom we expected well, prove bad, it doth not follow but that others will be better. Christ encouraged himself with this in his undertaking; *Though Israel be not gathered*, not gathered to him, but gathered against him, *yet shall I be glorious* (Isa. 49:5, 6), as a *Light to lighten the Gentiles*.

3. Their opposition to Christ's exaltation shall be no obstruction to it (v. 10, 11); *The stone which the builders rejected*, notwithstanding that, is become *the Head of the corner*, is highly advanced as the *Head-stone*, and of necessary use and influence as the *Corner-stone*. God will set Christ as *his King*, upon his *holy hill of Zion*, in spite of *their* project, who would *break his bands asunder*. And all the world shall see and own this to *be the Lord's doing*, in justice to the Jews, and in compassion to the Gentiles. The exaltation of Christ *was the Lord's doing*, and it is *his doing* to exalt him in our hearts, and to set up his throne there; and if it be done, it cannot but be marvellous in our eyes.

Now what effect had this parable upon the chief priests and scribes, whose conviction was designed by it? They knew *he spoke this parable against them*, v. 12. They could not but see their own faces in the glass of it; and one would think it showed them their sin so very heinous, and their ruin so certain and great, that it should have frightened them into a compliance with Christ and his gospel, should have prevailed to bring them to repentance, at least to make them desist from their malicious purpose against him: but, instead of that, (1.) They *sought to lay hold on him*, and make him their prisoner immediately, and so to fulfil what he had just now said they would do to him, v. 8. (2.) Nothing restrained them from it but the awe they stood in of the people; they did not *reverence* Christ, nor had an *fear of God* before their eyes, but were afraid, if they should publicly lay hold on Christ, the mob would rise, and lay hold on them, and rescue them. (3.) They *left him, and went their way*; if they could not do hurt to him, they resolved he should not do good to them, and therefore they got out of the hearing of his powerful preaching, *lest they should be converted and healed*. Note, If men's prejudices be not conquered by the evidence of truth, they are but confirmed; and if the corruptions of the heart be not subdued by faithful reproofs, they are but enraged and exasperated. If the gospel be not a *savour of life unto life*, it will be a *savour of death unto death*.

### Verses 13-17

When the enemies of Christ, who thirsted for his blood, could not find occasion against him from what he said against them, they tried to ensnare him by putting questions to him. Here we have him tempted, or *attempted* rather, with a question about the lawfulness of paying tribute to Caesar. We had this narrative, Mt. 22:15.

I. The persons they employed were the *Pharisees* and the *Herodians*, men that in this matter were contrary to one another, and yet concurred against Christ, v. 13. The Pharisees were great sticklers for the liberty of the Jews, and, if he should say, It is lawful to give tribute to Caesar, they would incense the common people against him, and the Herodians would, underhand, assist them in it. The Herodians were great sticklers for the Roman power, and, if he should discountenance the paying of tribute to Caesar, they would incense the governor against him, yea, and the Pharisees, against their own principles, would join with them in it. It is no new thing for those that are at variance in other things, to join in a confederacy against Christ.

II. The pretence they made was, that they desired him to resolve them a case of conscience, which was of great importance in the present juncture; and they take on them to have a high opinion of his ability to resolve it, v. 14. They complimented him at a high rate, called him *Master*, owned him for a Teacher of the *way of God*, a Teacher of it *in truth*, one who taught what was good, and upon principles of truth, who would not be brought by smiles or frowns to depart a step from the rules of equity and goodness; "*Thou carest for no man, nor regardest the person of men*, thou art not afraid of offending either the jealous prince on one hand, or the jealous people on the other; *thou art right*, and always in the right, and dost in a right manner declare good and evil, truth and falsehood." If they spoke as they thought concerning Christ, when they said, *We know that thou art right*, their persecuting him, and putting him to death, as a deceiver, was sin against knowledge; they knew him, and yet crucified him. However, a man's testimony shall be taken most strongly against himself, and *out of their own mouths are they judged*; they knew that he taught the way of God in truth, and yet rejected the counsel of God against themselves. The professions and pretences of hypocrites will be produced in evidence against them, and they will be self-condemned. But if they did not know or believe it, they *lied unto God with their mouth, and flattered him with their tongue*.

III. The question they put was, *Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?* They would be thought desirous to know their duty. *As a nation that did righteousness, they ask of God the ordinances of justice*, when really they desired nothing but to know what he would say, in hopes that, which side soever he took of the question, they might take occasion from it to accuse him. Nothing is more likely to ensnare ministers, than bringing them to meddle with controversies about civil rights, and to settle land-marks between the prince and the subject, which it is fit should be done, while it is not at all fit that they should have the doing of it. They seemed to refer the determining of this matter to Christ; and he indeed was fit to determine it, for *by him kings reign, and princes decree justice*; they put the question fairly, *Shall we give, or shall we not give?* They seemed resolved to stand to his award; "If thou sayest that we must pay tribute, we will do it, thou we be made beggars by it. If thou sayest that we must not, we will not, though we be made traitors for it." Many seemed desirous to do it; as those proud men, Jer. 42:20.

IV. Christ determined the question, and evaded the snare, by referring them to their national concessions already made, by

which they were precluded from disputing this matter, v. 15–17. He *knew their hypocrisy*, the malice that was in their hearts against him, while *with their mouth they showed all this love*. Hypocrisy, though ever so artfully managed, cannot be concealed from the Lord Jesus. He sees the *potsherd* that is *covered* with the *silver dross*. He knew they intended to ensnare him, and therefore contrived the matter so as to ensnare them, and to oblige them by their own words to do what they were unwilling to do, which was, to pay their taxes honestly and quietly, and yet at the same time to screen himself against their exceptions. He made them acknowledge that the current money of their nation was Roman money, had the emperor's image on one side, and his *superscription* on the reverse; and if so, 1. Caesar might command their money for the public benefit, because he had the custody and conduct of the state, wherein he ought to have his charges borne; *Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's*. The circulation of the money is from him as the fountain, and therefore it must return to him. As far as it is *his*, so far it must be rendered to him; and how far it is *his*, and may be commanded by him, is to be judged by the constitution of the government, according as it is, and hath settled the prerogative of the prince and the property of the subject. 2. Caesar might not command their consciences, nor did he pretend to it; he offered not to make any alteration in their religion. "Pay your tribute, therefore, without murmuring or disputing, but be sure to *render to God the things that are God's*." Perhaps he referred to the parable he had just now put forth, in which he had condemned them for not *rendering* the fruits to the Lord of the vineyard, v. 2. Many that seem careful to give to men their due, are in no care to give God *the glory due to his name*; whereas our hearts and best affections are as much due to him as ever rent was to a landlord, or tribute to a prince. All that heard Christ, *marvelled* at the discretion of his answer, and how ingenuously he avoided the snare; but I doubt none were brought by it, as they ought to be, to render to God themselves and their devotions. Many will commend the wit of a sermon, that will not be commanded by the divine laws of a sermon.

### **Verses 18-27**

The Sadducees, who were the deists of that age, here attack our Lord Jesus, it should seem, not as the scribes, and Pharisees, and chief-priests, with any malicious design upon his person; they were not bigots and persecutors, but sceptics and infidels, and their design was upon his doctrine, to hinder the spreading of that: they denied that there was any resurrection, and world of spirits, any state of rewards and punishments on the other side of death: now those great and fundamental truths which they denied, Christ had made it his business to establish and prove, and had carried the notion of them much further than ever it was before carried; and therefore they set themselves to perplex his doctrine.

I. See here the method they take to entangle it; they quote the ancient law, by which, if a man died without issue, his brother was obliged to marry his widow, v. 19. They suppose a case to happen that, according to that law, seven brothers were, successively, the husbands of one woman, v. 20. Probably, these Sadducees, according to their wonted profaneness, intended hereby to ridicule that law, and so to bring the whole frame of the Mosaic institution into contempt, as absurd and inconvenient in the practice of it. Those who deny divine truths, commonly set themselves to disparage divine laws and ordinances. But this was only by the by; their design was to expose the doctrine of the resurrection; for they suppose that if there be a future state, it must be such a one as this, and then the doctrine, they think, is clogged either with this invincible absurdity, that a woman in

that state must have seven husbands, or else with this insolvable difficulty, whose wife must she be. See with what subtlety these heretics *undermine* the truth; they do not *deny* it, nor say, *There can be* no resurrection; nay, they do not seem to doubt of it, nor say, *If there be a resurrection*, whose wife shall she be? as the devil to Christ, *If thou be the Son of God*. But, as though these beasts of the field were more subtle than the serpent himself, they pretend to own the truth, as if they were not Sadducees, no not they; who said that they denied the resurrection? They take it for granted that there is a resurrection, and would be thought to desire instruction concerning it, when really they are designing to give a fatal stab, and think that they shall do it. Note, It is the common artifice of heretics and Sadducees to perplex and entangle the truth, which they have not the impudence to deny.

II. See here the method Christ takes to clear and establish this truth, which they attempted to darken, and give a shock to. This was a matter of moment, and therefore Christ does not pass it over lightly, but enlarges upon it, that, if they should not be reclaimed, yet others might be confirmed.

1. He charges the Sadducees with *error*, and charges that upon their *ignorance*. They who banter the doctrine of the resurrection as some do in our age, would be thought the only knowing men, because the only *free thinkers*, when really they are the fools in Israel, and the most *enslaved* and, prejudiced thinkers in the world. *Do ye not therefore err?* Ye cannot but be sensible of it yourselves, and that the cause of your error is, (1.) Because ye do not *know the scriptures*. Not but that the Sadducees had read the scriptures, and perhaps were ready in them; yet they might be truly said not to *know the scriptures*, because they did not know the sense and meaning of them, but put false constructions upon them; or they did not receive the scriptures as the word of God, but set up their own corrupt reasonings in opposition to the scripture, and would believe nothing but what they could see. Note, A right knowledge of the scripture, as the fountain whence all revealed religion now flows, and the foundation on which it is built, is the best preservative against error. Keep the truth, the scripture-truth, and it shall keep thee. (2.) Because ye *know not the power of God*. They could not but know that God is almighty, but they would not apply that doctrine to this matter, but gave up the truth to the objections of the impossibility of it, which would all have been answered, if they had but stuck to the doctrine of God's omnipotence, to which *nothing is impossible*. This therefore which God hath spoken once, we are concerned to hear twice, to hear and believe, to hear and apply—that *power belongs to God*, Ps. 62:11; Rom.

4:19–21. The same power that made soul and body and preserved them while they were together, can preserve the body safe, and the soul active, when they are parted, and can unite them together again; for *behold, the Lord's arm is not shortened*. The power of God, seen in the return of the spring (Ps. 104:30), in the reviving of the corn (Jn. 12:24), in the restoring of an abject people to their prosperity (Eze. 37:12–14), in the raising of so many to life, miraculously, both in the Old Testament and in the New, and especially in the resurrection of Christ (Eph. 1:19, 20), are all earnest of our resurrection by the same power (Phil. 3:21); *according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself*.

2. He sets aside all the force of their objection, by setting the doctrine of the future state in a true light (v. 25); *When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage*. It is a folly to ask, *Whose wife shall she be of the seven?* For the relation between husband and wife, though instituted in the earthly paradise, will not be known in the heavenly one. Turks

and infidels expect sensual pleasures in their fools' paradise, but Christians *know* better things—that *flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God* (1 Co. 15:50); and *expect* better things—even a full satisfaction in God's love and likeness (Ps. 17:15); they are *as the angels of God in heaven*, and we know that they have neither wives nor children. It is no wonder if we confound ourselves with endless absurdities, when we measure our ideas of the world of spirits by the affairs of this world of sense.

III. He builds the doctrine of the future state, and of the blessedness of the righteous in that state, upon the covenant of God with Abraham, which God was pleased to own, being after Abraham's death, v. 26, 27. He appeals to the scriptures; *Have ye not read in the book of Moses?* We have some advantage in dealing with those that have *read the scriptures*, though many that have read them, *wrest them*, as these Sadducees did, to *their own destruction*. Now that which he refers them to is, what God says to Moses at the bush, *I am the God of Abraham*; not only, *I was* so, but *I am* so; I am the portion and happiness of Abraham, a God all-sufficient to him. Note, It is absurd to think that God's relation to Abraham should be continued, and thus solemnly recognised, if Abraham was annihilated, or that the *living God* should be the portion and happiness of a man that is dead, and must be for ever so; and therefore you must conclude, 1. That Abraham's soul exists and acts as a state of separation from the body. 2. That therefore, some time or other, the body must rise again; for there is such an innate inclination in a human soul towards its body, as would make a total and everlasting separation inconsistent with the ease and repose, much more with the bliss and joy of those souls that have the Lord for their God. Upon the whole matter, he concludes, *Ye therefore do greatly err*. Those that deny the resurrection, greatly err, and ought to be told so.

#### **Verses 28-34**

The scribes and Pharisees were (however bad otherwise) enemies to the Sadducees; now one would have expected that, when they heard Christ argue so well against the Sadducees, they would have countenanced him, as they did Paul when he appeared against the Sadducees (Acts 23:9); but it had not the effect: because he did not fall in with them in the ceremonials of religion, he agreeing with them in the essentials, gained him no manner of respect with them. Only we have here an account of *one* of them, a scribe, who had so much civility in him as to take notice of Christ's answer to the Sadducees, and to own that he had *answered well*, and much to the purpose (v. 28); and we have reason to hope that he did not join with the other scribes in persecuting Christ; for here we have his application to Christ for instruction, and it was such as became him; not tempting Christ, but desiring to improve his acquaintance with him.

I. He enquired, *Which is the first commandment of all?* v. 28. He doth not mean the first in *order*, but the first in *weight* and *dignity*; "Which is that command which we ought to have in a special manner an eye to, and our obedience to which will lay a foundation for our obedience to all the rest?" Not that any commandment of God is little (they are all the commands of a great God), but some are greater than others, moral precepts than rituals, and of some we may say, They are the *greatest of all*.

II. Christ gave him a direct answer to this enquiry, v. 29–31. Those that sincerely desire to be instructed concerning their duty, Christ will *guide in judgment*, and *teach his way*. He tells him,

1. That the great commandment of all, which is indeed inclusive of all, is, that of *loving God with all our hearts*. (1.) Where

there is a commanding principle in the soul, there is a disposition to every other duty. Love is the leading affection of the soul; the love of God is the leading grace in the renewed soul. (2.) Where this is not, nothing else that is good is done, or done aright, or accepted, or done long. Loving God with all our heart, will effectually take us off from, and arm us against, all those things that are rivals with him for the throne in our souls, and will engage us to every thing by which he may be honoured, and with which he will be pleased; and no commandment will be grievous where this principle commands, and has the ascendant. Now here in, Mark, our Saviour prefixes to this command the great doctrinal truth upon which it is built (v. 29); *Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord*; if we firmly believe this, it will follow, that we shall love him *with all our heart*. He is Jehovah, who has all amiable perfections in himself; he is *our God*, to whom we stand related and obliged; and therefore we ought to *love him*, to set our affections on him, let out own desire toward him, and take a delight in him; and he is *one Lord*, therefore he must be loved with our *whole heart*; he has the sole *right to us*, and therefore ought to have the sole *possession of us*. If he be one, our hearts must be one with him, and since there is no God besides, no rival must be admitted with him upon the throne.

2. That the second great commandment is, to *love our neighbour as ourselves* (v. 31), as truly and sincerely as we love ourselves, and in the same instances, and we must show it by *doing as we would be done by*. As we must therefore love God better than ourselves, because he is Jehovah, a being infinitely better than we are, and must love him with *all our heart*, because he is *one Lord*, and there is no other like him; so we must *love our neighbour as ourselves*, because he is of the same nature with ourselves; our hearts are fashioned alike, and my neighbour and myself are of one body, of one society, that of the world of mankind; and if a fellow-Christian, and of the same sacred society, the obligation is the stronger. *Hath not one God created us?* Mal. 2:10. Has not one Christ redeemed us? Well might Christ say, *There is no other commandment greater than these*; for in these all the law is fulfilled, and if we make conscience of obedience to these, all other instances of obedience will follow of course.

III. The scribe consented to what Christ said, and descanted upon it, v. 32, 33. 1. He commends Christ's decision of this question; *Well, Master, thou hast said the truth*. Christ's assertions needed not the scribe's attestations; but this scribe, being a man in authority, thought it would put some reputation upon what Christ said, to have it commended by him; and it shall be brought in evidence against those who persecuted Christ, as a deceiver, that one of themselves, even a scribe of their own, confessed that he *said the truth*, and said it *well*. And thus must we subscribe to Christ's sayings, must set to our seal that they are true. 2. He comments upon it. Christ had quoted that great doctrine, that *the Lord our God is one Lord*; and this he not only assented to, but added, *"There is none other but he*; and therefore we must have no other God besides." This excludes all rivals with him, and secures the throne in the heart entire for him. Christ had laid down that great law, of loving God *with all our hearts*; and this also he explains—that it is loving him *with the understanding*, as those that know what abundant reason we have to love him. Our love to God, as it must be an *entire*, so it must be an *intelligent*, love; we must love him with *all the understanding*, *ex holems tejs syneseous*—*out of the whole understanding*; our rational powers and faculties must all be set on work to lead out the affections of our souls toward God. Christ has said, "To love God and our neighbour is the greatest

commandment of all;" "Yea," saith the scribe, "it is better, it is *more than all whole-burnt-offerings and sacrifices*, more acceptable to God, and will turn to a better account to ourselves." There were those who held, that the law of *sacrifices* was the *greatest commandment* of all; but this scribe readily agreed with our Saviour in this—that the law of love to God and our neighbour is greater than that of *sacrifice*, even than that of *whole-burnt-offerings*, which were intended purely for the honour of God.

IV. Christ approved of what he said, and encouraged him to proceed in his enquiries of him, v. 34. 1. He owned that he understood well, as far as he went; so far, so good. *Jesus saw that he answered discreetly*, and was the more pleased with it, because he had of late met with so many even of the scribes, men of letters, that answered *indiscreetly*, as those that had *no understanding*, nor desired to have any. He answered *nounechops*—*as one that had a mind*; as a rational intelligent man, as one that had his wits about him; as one whose reason was not blinded, whose judgment was not biassed, and whose forethought was not fettered, by the prejudices which other scribes were so much under the power of. He answered as one that allowed himself liberty and leisure to consider, as one that had considered. 2. He owned that he stood fair for a further advance; "*Thou art not far from the kingdom of God*, the kingdom of grace and glory; thou art in a likely way to be a Christian, a disciple of Christ. For the doctrine of Christ insists most upon these things, and is designed, and has a tendency direct, to bring thee to this." Note, There is hope of those who make a good use of the light they have, and go as far as that will carry them, that by the grace of God they will be led further, by the clearer discoveries God has to make to them. What became of this scribe we are not told, but would willingly hope that he took the hint Christ hereby gave him, and that, having been told by him, so much to his satisfaction, what was the great commandment of the law, he proceeded to enquire of him, or his apostles, what was the great commandment of the gospel too. Yet, if he did not, but took, up here, and went no further, we are not to think it strange; for there are many who are *not far from the kingdom of God*, and yet never come thither. Now, one would think, this should have invited many to consult him: but it had a contrary effect; *No man, after that, durst ask him any question*; every thing he said, was spoken with such authority and majesty, that every one stood in awe of him; those that desired to *learn*, were *ashamed* to ask, and those that designed to *cavil*, were *afraid* to ask.

#### **Verses 35-40**

Here, I. Christ shows the people how weak and defective the scribes were in their preaching, and how unable to solve the difficulties that occurred in the scriptures of the Old Testament, which they undertook to expound. Of this he gives an instance, which is not so fully related here as it was in Matthew. Christ was *teaching in the temple*: many things he said, which were not written; but notice is taken of this, because it will stir us up to enquire *concerning Christ*, and to enquire *of him*; for none can have the right knowledge of him but *from himself*; it is not to be had from *the scribes*, for they will soon be run aground.

1. They told the people that the Messiah was to be the *Son of David* (v. 35), and they were in the right; he was not only to descend from his loins, but to fill his throne (Lu. 1:32); *The Lord shall give him the throne of his father David*. The scripture said it often, but the people took it as what the scribes said; whereas the truths of God should rather be quoted from our Bibles than from our ministers, for there is the original of them. *Dulcius ex ipso fonte bibuntur aquae*—*The waters are sweetest when*

*drawn immediately from their source.*

2. Yet they could not tell them how, notwithstanding that it was very proper for David, in spirit, the spirit of prophecy, to call him *his Lord*, as he doth, Ps. 110:1. They had taught the people that concerning the Messiah, which would be for the honour of their nation—that he should be a branch of their royal family; but they had not taken care to teach them that which was for the honour of the Messiah himself—that he should be the Son of God, and, as such, and not otherwise, *David's Lord*. Thus they *held the truth in unrighteousness*, and were *partial* in the gospel, as well as in the law, of the Old Testament. They were able to say it, and prove it—that Christ was to be David's son; but if any should object, *How then doth David himself call him Lord?* they would not know how to avoid the force of the objection. Note, Those are unworthy to sit in Moses's seat, who, though they are able to preach the truth, are not in some measure able to defend it when they have preached it, and to convince gainsayers.

Now this galled the scribes, to have their ignorance thus exposed, and, no doubt, incensed them more against Christ; but the *common people heard him gladly*, v. 37. What he preached was surprising and affecting; and though it reflected upon the scribes, it was instructive to them, and they had never heard such preaching. Probably there was something more than ordinarily commanding and charming in his voice and way of delivery, which recommended him to the affections of the common people; for we do not find that any were wrought upon to *believe* in him, and to *follow* him, but he was to them as a *lovely song of one that could play well on an instrument*; as Ezekiel was to his hearers, Eze. 33:32. And perhaps some of these cried, *Crucify him*, as Herod heard John Baptist gladly, and yet cut off his head.

II. He cautions the people to take heed of suffering themselves to be imposed upon by the scribes, and of being infected with their pride and hypocrisy; *He said unto them in his doctrine, "Beware of the scribes (v. 38); stand upon your guard, that you neither imbibe their peculiar opinions, nor the opinions of the people concerning them."* The charge is long as drawn up against them in the parallel place (Mt. 23); it is here contracted.

1. They affect to appear *very great*; for they go in *long clothing*, with vestures *down to their feet*, and in those they walk *about the streets*, as princes, or judges, or gentlemen of the long robe. Their going in such clothing was not sinful, but their *loving* to go in it, priding themselves in it, valuing themselves on it, commanding respect by it, saying to their long clothes, as Saul to Samuel, *Honour me now before this people*, this was a product of pride. Christ would have his disciples go with *their loins girt*.

2. They affect to appear *very good*; for they pray, they make *long prayers*, as if they were very intimate with heaven, and had a deal of business there. They took care it should be known that they prayed, that they prayed long, which, some think, intimates that they prayed not for themselves only, but for others, and therein were very particular and very large; this they did *for a pretence*, that they might seem to love prayer, not only for God's sake, whom hereby they pretended to glorify, but for their neighbour's sake, whom hereby they pretended to be serviceable to.

3. They here aimed to *advance* themselves: they coveted applause, and were fond of it; they loved *salutations in the marketplaces*, and the *chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts*; these pleased a vain fancy; to have

these given them, they thought, expressed the value *they* had for them, who did know them, and gained them respect for those who did not.

4. They herein aimed to *enrich* themselves. They *devoured widows' houses*, made themselves masters of their estates by some trick or other; it was to screen themselves from the suspicion of dishonesty, that they put on the mask of piety; and that they might not be thought as bad as the worst, they were studious to seem as good as the best. Let fraud and oppression be thought the worse of for their having *profaned* and *disgraced* long prayers; but let not prayers, no nor *long prayers*, be thought the worse of, if made in humility and sincerity, for their having been by some thus abused. But as iniquity, thus disguised with a show of piety, is *double* iniquity, so its doom will be doubly heavy; *These shall receive great damnation*; greater than those that live without prayer, greater than they would have received for the wrong done to the poor widows, if it had not been thus disguised. Note, The damnation of hypocrites will be of all others the greatest damnation.

#### **Verses 41-44**

This passage of story was not in Matthew, but is here and in Luke; it is Christ's commendation of the poor widow, that cast *two mites* into the treasury, which our Saviour, busy as he was in preaching, found leisure to take notice of. Observe,

I. There was a *public fund* for charity, into which contributions were brought, and out of which distributions were made; a poor's-box, and this in *the temple*; for works of charity and works of piety very fitly go together; where God is honoured by our worship, it is proper he should be honoured by the relief of his poor; and we often find *prayers* and *alms* in conjunction, as Acts 10:2, 4. IT is good to erect public receptacles of charity for the inviting and directing of private hands in giving to the poor; nay it is good for those who are of ability to have funds of their own, to *lay by as God has prospered them* (1 Co. 16:2), that they might have something ready to give when an object of charity offers itself, which is before dedicated to such uses.

II. Jesus Christ had *an eye* upon it; *He sat over against the treasury, and beheld now the people cast money into it*; not grudging either that he had none to cast in, or had not the disposal of that which was cast in, but observing what was cast in. Note, Our Lord Jesus takes notice of what we contribute to pious and charitable uses; whether we give liberally or sparingly; whether cheerfully or with reluctance and ill-will; nay, he looks at the heart; he observes what principles we act upon, and what our views are, in giving alms; and whether we do it as unto the Lord, or only to be seen of men.

III. He saw *many that were rich cast in much*: and it was a good sight to see rich people charitable, to see *many* rich people so, and to see them not only cast in, but cast in *much*. Note, Those that are rich, ought to give richly; if God give abundantly to us, he expects we should give abundantly to the poor; and it is not enough for those that are rich, to say, that they give as much as others do, who perhaps have much less of the world than they have, but they must give in proportion to their estates; and if objects of charity do not present themselves, that require so much, they ought to enquire them out, and to *devise liberal things*.

IV. There was a *poor widow that cast in two mites, which make a farthing* (v. 42); and our Lord Jesus highly commended her; *called his disciples* to him, and bid them take notice of it (v. 43); told them that she could very ill spare that which she gave, she had scarcely enough for herself, it was *all her living*, all she had to live upon for that day, and perhaps a great part of what she had earned by her labour the day before; and that forasmuch as he knew she did it from a truly charitable disposition, he

reckoned it more than all that put together, which the rich people threw in; for they did *cast in of their abundance, but she of her want*, v. 44. Now many would have been ready to censure this *poor widow*, and to think she did ill; why should she give to others, when she had little enough for herself? Charity begins at home; or, if she would give it, why did she not bestow it upon some poor body that she knew? What occasion was there for her bringing it to the *treasury* to be disposed of by the chief priests, who, we have reason to fear, were partial in the disposal of it? It is so rare a thing to find any that would not blame this widow, that we cannot expect to find any that will imitate her; and yet our Saviour commends her, and therefore we are sure that she did very well and wisely. If Christ saith, *Well-done*, no matter who saith otherwise; and we must hence learn, 1. That *giving alms*, is an excellent good thing, and highly pleasing to the Lord Jesus; and if we be humble and sincere in it, he will graciously accept of it, though in some circumstances there may not be all the discretion in the world. 2. Those that have but a *little*, ought to give alms out of *their little*. Those that live by their labour, from hand to mouth, must *give to those that need*, Eph. 4:28. 3. It is very good for us to straiten and deny ourselves, that we may be able to give the more to the poor; to deny ourselves not only superfluities, but even conveniences, for the sake of charity. We should in many cases pinch ourselves, that we may supply the necessities of others; this is loving our neighbours as ourselves. 4. Public charities should be encouraged, for they bring upon a nation public blessings; and though there may be some mismanagement of them, yet that is not a good reason why we should not bring in our *quota* to them. 5. Though we can give but a *little* in charity, yet if it be according to our ability, and be given with an upright heart, it shall be accepted of Christ, who requires *according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not*; two mites shall be put upon the score, and brought to account, if given in a right manner, as if they had been two pounds. 6. It is much to the praise of charity, when we give not only *to our power*, but *beyond our power*, as the Macedonian churches, whose *deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality*, 2 Co. 8:2, 3. When we can cheerfully provide for others, out of our own necessary provision, as the widow of Sarepta for Elijah, and Christ for his five thousand guests, and trust God to provide for us some other way, *this is thank-worthy*.

## Chapter 13

We have here the substance of that prophetic sermon which our Lord Jesus preached, pointing at the destruction of Jerusalem, and the consummation of all things; it was one of the last of his sermons, and not *ad populum*—to the people, but *ad clerum*—to the clergy; it was private, preached only to four of his disciples, with whom his secret was. Here is, I. The occasion of his prediction—his disciples' admiring the building of the temple (v. 1, 2), and their enquiry concerning the time of the desolation of them (v. 3, 4). II. The predictions themselves, 1. Of the rise of deceivers (v. 5, 6, 21–23). 2. Of the wars of the nations (v. 7, 8). 3. Of the persecution of Christians (v. 9–13). 4. Of the destruction of Jerusalem (v. 14–20). 5. Of the end of the world (v. 24–27). III. Some general intimations concerning the time of them (v. 28–32). IV. Some practical inferences from all (v. 33–37).

### Verses 1-4

We may here see,

I. How apt many of Christ's own disciples are to idolize things that look *great*, and have been long looked upon as *sacred*.

They had heard Christ complain of those who had made the temple a *den of thieves*; and yet, when he quitted it, for the wickedness that remained in it, they court him to be as much in love as they were with the stately structure and adorning of it. One of them said to him, "Look, Master, *what manner of stones, and what buildings are here*, v. 1. We never saw the like in Galilee; O do not leave this fine place."

II. How little Christ values external pomp, where there is not real purity; "*Seest thou these great buildings*" (saith Christ), "and admirest thou them? I tell thee, the time is at hand when *there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down*," v. 2. And the sumptuousness of the fabric shall be no security to it, no nor move any compassion in the Lord Jesus towards it. He looks with *pity* upon the ruin of precious souls, and weeps over them, for on them he has put great value; but we do not find him look with any pity upon the ruin of a magnificent house, when he is driven out of it by sin, for that is of small value with him. With what little concern doth he say, *Not one stone shall be left on another!* Much of the strength of the temple lay in the largeness of the stones, and if these be thrown down, no footstep, no remembrance, of it will remain. While any part remained standing, there might be some hopes of the repair of it; but what hope is there, when not one stone is *left upon another*?

III. How natural it is to us to desire to know things to come, and the times of them; more inquisitive we are apt to be about that than about our duty. His disciples knew not how to *digest* this doctrine of the ruin of the temple, which they thought must be their Master's royal palace, and in which they expected their preferment, and to have the posts of honour; and therefore they were in pain till they got him alone, and got more out of him concerning this matter. As he was returning to Bethany therefore, he *sat upon the mount of Olives, over against the temple*, where he had a full view of it; and there four of them agreed to *ask him privately*, what he meant by the destroying of the temple, which they understood no more than they did the predictions of his own death, so inconsistent was it with their scheme. Probably, though these four proposed the question, yet Christ's

discourse, in answer to it, was in the hearing of the rest of the disciples, yet *privately*, that is, apart from the multitude. Their enquiry is, *When shall these things be?* They will not question, at least not seem to question, whether they shall be or no (for their Master has said that they shall), but are willing to hope it is a great way off. Yet they ask not precisely the day and year (therein they were modest), but say, "Tell us *what shall be the sign, when all these things shall be fulfilled?* What presages shall there be of them, and how may we prognosticate their approach?"

### Verses 5-13

Our Lord Jesus, in reply to their question, sets himself, not so much to satisfy their curiosity as to direct their consciences; leaves them still in the dark concerning the *times* and *seasons*, which the father has *kept in his own power*, and which *it was not for them to know*; but gives them the cautions which were needful, with reference to the events that should now shortly come to pass.

I. They must take heed that they be not *deceived* by the *seducers* and *imposters* that should now shortly arise (v. 5, 6); "*Take heed lest any man deceive you*, lest, having found the *true Messiah*, you lose him again in the crowd of *pretenders*, or be inveigled to embrace others in rivalry with him. Many shall come *in my name* (not in the name of *Jesus*), but saying, *I am the Christ*, and so claiming the dignities which I only an entitled to." After the Jews had rejected the true Christ, they were imposed upon, and so exposed by many false Christs, but never before; those false Christs *deceived many*; Therefore *take heed lest they deceive you*. Note, When many are deceived, we should thereby be awakened to look to ourselves.

II. They must take heed that they be not *disturbed* at the noise of wars, which they should be alarmed with, v. 7, 8. Sin introduced *wars*, and they come *from men's lusts*. But at some times the nations are more distracted and wasted with wars than at other times; so it shall be now; Christ was born into the world when there was a general peace, but soon after he went out of the world there were general wars; *Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom*. And what will become of them then who are to preach the gospel to every nation? *Inter arma silent leges—Amidst the clash of arms, the voice of law is not heard*. "But *be not troubled at it*." 1. "Let it be no *surprise* to you; you are bid to expect it, and *such things must needs be*, for God has appointed them, in order to further accomplishment of his purposes, and by the *wars of the Jews*" (which Josephus has given us a large account of) "God will punish the *wickedness of the Jews*." 2. "Let it be no *terror* to you, as if your interest were in danger of being overthrown, or your work obstructed by these wars; you have no concern in them, and therefore need not be apprehensive of any damage by them." Note, Those that despise the smiles of the world, and do not court and covet them, may despise the frowns of the world, and need not fear them. If we seek not to rise with them that *rise in the world*, why should we dread falling with them that fall in the world? 3. "Let it not be looked upon as an omen of the approaching period of the world, for the *end is not yet*, v. 7. Think not that these *wars* will bring the world to a period; no, there are other intermediate counsels to be fulfilled betwixt that end and the end of all things, which are designed to prepare you for the end, but not to hasten it out of due time." 4. "Let it not be looked upon as if in them God has done his worst; no, he has more arrows in his quiver, and they are *ordained against the persecutors*; be not troubled at the wars you shall hear of, for they are but *the beginnings of sorrows*, and therefore, instead of being disturbed at *them*, you ought to *prepare for worse*; for there shall also be

*earthquakes in divers places*, which shall bury multitudes in the ruins of their own houses, and there *shall be famines*, by which many of the poor shall perish for want of bread, and *troubles* and commotions; so that there shall be no peace to him that *goes out* or *comes in*. The world shall be full of *troubles*, but *be not ye troubled*; without are *fightings*, within are *fears*, but *fear not ye their fear*." Note, The disciples of Christ, if it be not their own fault, may enjoy a holy security and serenity of mind, when all about them is in the greatest disorder.

III. They must take heed that they be not *drawn away* from Christ, and from their duty to him, by the sufferings they should meet with for Christ's sake. Again, he saith, "*Take heed to yourselves*, v. 9. Though you may escape the *sword of war*, better than some of your neighbours, because you interest not yourselves in the public quarrels, yet be not secure; you will be exposed to the *sword of justice* more than others, and the parties that contend with one another, will unite against you. *Take heed* therefore lest you *deceive* yourselves with the hopes of outward prosperity, and such a temporal kingdom as you have been dreaming of, when it is *through many tribulations* that *you must enter into the kingdom of God*. Take heed lest you needlessly expose yourselves to trouble, and pull it upon your own head. *Take heed* what you say and do, for you will have many eyes upon you." Observe,

1. What the trouble is which they must expect.

(1.) They shall be *hated of all men*; trouble enough! The thoughts of *being hated* are grievous to a tender spirit, and the fruits of that hatred must needs be a constant vexation; those that are *malicious*, will be *mischievous*. It was not for any thing amiss in them, or done amiss by them, that they were *hated*, but for Christ's name sake, because they were called by his name, called upon his name, preached his name, and wrought miracles in his name. The world hated them because he loved them.

(2.) Their own *relations* shall *betray them*, those to whom they were most nearly allied, and on whom therefore they depended for protection; "*They shall betray you*, shall inform against you, and be your prosecutors." If a father has a child that is a Christian, he shall become void of natural affection, it shall be swallowed up in bigotry, and he shall betray his own child to the persecutors, as if he were a worshipper of other gods, Deu. 13:6–10.

(3.) Their *church-rulers* shall inflict *their censures* upon them; "You shall be *delivered up* to the great Sanhedrim at Jerusalem, and to the inferior courts and consistories in other cities, and shall be *beaten in the synagogues* with forty stripes at a time, as offenders against the law which was read in the synagogue." It is no new thing for the church's artillery, through the treachery of its officers, to be turned against some of its best friends.

(4.) *Governors* and *kings* shall use their power against them. Because the Jews have not power to put them to death, they shall incense the Roman powers against them, as they did Herod against James and Peter; and they shall *cause you to be put to death*, as enemies to the empire. They must resist unto blood, and still resist.

2. What they shall have to comfort themselves with, in the midst of these great and sore troubles.

(1.) That the work they were called to should be carried on and prosper, notwithstanding all this opposition which they should meet with in it (v. 10); "*The gospel* shall, for all this, be *published among all nations*, and before the destruction of Jerusalem the *sound* of it shall *go forth into all the earth*; not only through all the nation of the Jews, but to all the nations of the earth." It

is comfort to those who suffer for the gospel, that, though they may be crushed and borne down, the gospel cannot; it shall keep its ground, and carry the day.

(2.) That their sufferings, instead of obstructing their work, should forward it; "Your being *brought before governors and kings* shall be for *a testimony of them* (so some read it, v. 9); it shall give you an opportunity of preaching the gospel to those before whom you are brought as criminals, to whom otherwise you could not have access." Thus St. Paul's being brought before Felix, and Festus, and Agrippa, and Nero, was a testimony to them concerning Christ and his gospel. Or, as we read it, It shall be for a testimony *against them*, against both the judges and the prosecutors, who pursue those with the utmost rage that appear, upon examination, to be not only innocent but excellent persons. The gospel is a testimony to us concerning Christ and heaven. If we receive it, it will be a testimony for us: it will justify and save us; if not, it will be a testimony *against* us in the great day.

(3.) That, when they were brought before kings and governors for Christ's sake, they should have special assistance from heaven, to plead Christ's cause and their own (v. 11); "*Take no thought before-hand what he shall speak*, be not solicitous how to address yourselves to great men, so as to obtain their favour; your cause is just and glorious, and needs not be supported by premeditated speeches and harangues; but *whatsoever shall be given you in that hour*, whatsoever shall be suggested to you, and put into your minds, and into your mouths" (*pro re natâ—on the spur of the occasion*), "*that speak ye*, and fear not the success of it, because it is *off-hand*, for *it is not ye that speak*, purely by the strength of your own wisdom, consideration, and resolution, but it is *the Holy Ghost*." Note, Those whom Christ calls out to be advocates for him, shall be furnished with full instructions: and when we are engaged in the service of Christ, we may depend upon the aids of the Spirit of Christ.

(4.) That heaven at last would *make amends for all*; "You will meet with a great deal of hardship in your way, but have a good heart on it, your warfare will be accomplished, and your testimony finished, and *he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved*," v. 13. Perseverance gains the crown. The salvation here promised is more than a deliverance from evil, it is an everlasting blessedness, which shall be an abundant recompence for all their services and sufferings. All this we have, Mt. 10:17, etc.

### **Verses 14-23**

The Jews, in rebelling against the Romans, and in persecuting the Christians, were hastening to their own ruin apace, both efficiently and meritoriously, were setting both God and man against them; see 1 Th. 2:15. Now here we have a prediction of that ruin which came upon them within less than forty years after this: we had it before, Mt. 24:15, etc. Observe,

I. What is here foretold concerning it.

1. That the Roman *armies* should make a descent upon Judea, and invest Jerusalem, the holy city. These were the *abomination of desolation*, which the Jews did *abominate*, and by which they should be made *desolate*. The country of thine enemy is called *the land which thou abhorrest*, Isa. 7:16. *Therefore* it was an abomination, because it brought with it nothing but desolation. They had rejected Christ as an *abomination*, who would have been their *salvation*; and now God brought upon them an abomination that would be their *desolation*, thus spoken of by Daniel *the prophet* (ch. 9:27), as that by which this sacrifice and offering should be made to cease. This army stood *where it ought not*, in and about the *holy city*, which the heathen ought not

to have approached, nor would have been suffered to approach, if Jerusalem had not first profaned the crown of their holiness. This the church complains of, Lam. 1:10, *The heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command that they should not enter into the congregation; but sin made the breach, at which the glory went out, and the abomination of desolation broke in, and stood where it ought not.* Now, let *him that readeth this, understand it,* and endeavor to take it right. Prophecies should not be too plain, and yet intelligible to those that search them; and they are best understood by comparing them first with one another, and at last with the event.

2. That when the Roman *army* should come into the country, there would be no safety any where but by quitting the country, and that with all possible expedition. It will be in vain to *fight*, the enemies will be too hard for them; in vain to *abscond*, the enemies will find them out; and in vain to *capitulate*, the enemies will give them no quarter; a man cannot have so much as his life given him for a prey, but by *fleeing to the mountains* out of Judea; and let him take the first alarm, and make the best of his way. If he be *on the house-top*, trying from thence to discover the motions of the enemy, and spies them coming, let him not *go down, to take any thing out of the house*, for it will occasion his losing of time, which is more precious than his best goods, and will but encumber him, and embarrass his flight. If he be in the field, and there discover the approach of the enemy, let him get away as he is, and not *turn back again, to take up his garment*, v. 16. If he can save his life, let him reckon it is a good bargain, though he can save nothing else, and be thankful to God, that, though he is cut short, he is not cut off.

3. That it would go very hard at that time with poor mothers and nurses (v. 17); *"Woe to them that are with child, that dare not go into strange places, that cannot shift for themselves, nor make haste as others can. And woe to them that give suck, that know not how either to leave the tender infants behind them, or to carry them along with them."* Such is the vanity of the creature, that the time may often be, when the greatest comforts may prove the greatest burthens. It would likewise be very uncomfortable, if they should be forced to flee *in the winter* (v. 18), when the *weather* and *ways* were bad, when the roads would be scarcely passable, especially in the mountains to which they must flee. If there be no remedy but that trouble must come, yet we may desire and pray that, if it be God's will, the circumstances of it may be so ordered as to be a mitigation of the trouble; and when things are bad, we ought to consider they might have been worse. It is bad to be forced to flee, but it would have been worse if it had been *in the winter*.

4. That throughout all the country of the Jews, there should be such destruction and desolation made, as could not be paralleled in any history (v. 19); *In those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of time; that is, of the creation which God created, for time and the creation are of equal date, unto this day, neither shall be to the end of time; such a complication of miseries, and of such continuance.* The destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans was very terrible, but this exceeded it. It threatened a universal slaughter of all the people of the Jews; so barbarously did they devour one another, and the Romans devour them all, that, if their wars had continued a little longer, *no flesh could have been saved*, not one Jew could have been left alive; but in the midst of wrath God remembered mercy; and, (1.) He *shortened the days*; he let fall his controversy before he had *made a full end*. As a church and nation the ruin was complete, but many particular persons had their lives given them for a prey, by the storm's subsiding when it did. 2. It was *for the elects' sake* that those days were

shortened; *many* among them fared the better for the sake of the *few* among them that believed in Christ, and were faithful to him. There was a promise, that *a remnant* should be saved (Isa. 10:22), and that God would not, for his servants' sakes, *destroy them all* (Isa. 65:8); and these promises must be fulfilled. God's own *elect cry day and night to him*, and their prayers must be answered, Lu. 18:7.

II. What directions are given to the disciples with reference to it.

1. They must shift for the safety of *their lives*; "When you see the country invaded, and the city invested, flatter not yourselves with thoughts that the enemy will retire, or that you may be able to make your part good with them; but, without further deliberation or delay, *let them that are in Judea, flee to the mountains*, v. 14. Meddle not with the strife that *belongs not to you; let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth*, but do you go out of the ship when you see it sinking, that you die not the *death of the uncircumcised* in heart."

2. They must provide for the safety of *their souls*; "*Seducers* will be busy at that time, for they love to fish in troubled waters, and therefore then you must double your guard; *then, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ*, or, *Lo, he is there*, you know he is in heaven, and will come again at the end of time, to judge the world, and therefore *believe them not*; having received *Christ*, be not drawn into the snares of any *antichrist*; for *false Christs*, and *false prophets, shall arise*," v. 22. When the gospel kingdom was in the setting up, Satan mustered all his force, to oppose it, and made use of all his wiles; and God permitted it, for the trial of sincerity of some, and the discovery of the hypocrisy of others, and the confusion of those who rejected Christ, when he was offered to them. *False Christs* shall *rise*, and false prophets that shall preach them up; or such, as, though they pretend not to be Christs, set up for *prophets*, and undertake to foretel things to come, and they shall *show signs* and lying *wonders*; so early did the *mystery of iniquity* begin to *work*, 2 Th. 2:7. They shall *seduce, if it were possible, the very elect*; so plausible shall their pretences be, and so industrious shall they be to impose upon people, that they shall drawn away many that were forward and zealous professors of religion, many that were very likely to have persevered; for nothing will be effectual to secure men but that foundation of God which stands immovably sure, *The Lord knoweth them that are his*, who shall be preserved when the faith of some is overthrown, 2. Tim. 2:18, 19. They shall *seduce, if it were possible, the very elect*; but it is not possible to seduce them; the *election shall obtain*, whoever are *blinded*, Rom. 11:7. But, in consideration hereof, let the disciples be cautious whom they give credit to (v. 23); But *take ye heed*. Christ knew that they were of the *elect*, who could not possibly be *seduced*, and yet he said to them, *Take heed*. An assurance of persevering, and cautions against apostasy, will very well consist with each other. Though Christ said to them, *Take heed*, it doth not therefore follow, that their perseverance was doubtful, for they were kept by the power of God; and though their perseverance was secured, yet it doth not therefore follow, that this caution was needless, because they must be kept in the use of proper means. God will keep them, but they must keep themselves. "*I have foretold you all things*; have foretold you of this danger, that, being *fore-warned*, you may be *fore-armed*; I have foretold *all things* which you needed to have foretold to you, and therefore take heed of hearkening to such as pretend to be prophets, and to foretel more than I have foretold." The sufficiency of the scripture is good argument against listening to such as pretend to inspiration.

### Verses 24-27

These verses seem to point at Christ's second coming, to judge the world; the disciples, in their question, had confounded the *destruction* of Jerusalem and the *end of the world* (Mt. 24:3), which was built upon a mistake, as if the temple must needs stand as long as the world stands; this mistake Christ rectifies, and shows that the *end of the world in those days*, those other days you enquire about, the day of Christ's coming, and the day of judgment, shall be *after that tribulation*, and not coincident with it. Let those who live to see the Jewish nation destroyed, take heed of thinking that, because the Son of man doth not visibly come in the clouds *then*, he will never *so* come; no, he will come *after that*. And here he foretels,

1. The final dissolution of the present frame and fabric of the world; even of that part of it which seems least liable to change, the upper part, the pure and more refined part; *The sun shall be darkened*, and the *moon shall no more give her light*; for they shall be quite outshone by the glory of the Son of man, Isa. 24:23. The *stars of heaven*, that from the beginning had kept their place and regular motion, shall fall as leaves in autumn; and the *powers that are in heaven*, the heavenly bodies, the fixed stars, *shall be shaken*.

2. The visible appearance of the Lord Jesus, to whom the judgment of that day shall be committed (v. 26); *Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds*. Probably he will come over that very place where he sat when he said this; for the clouds are in the lower region of the air. He shall come with *great power and glory*, such as will be suited to the errand on which he comes. *Every eye shall then see him*.

3. The gathering together of all the elect to him (v. 27); He shall *send his angels*, and *gather together his elect* to him, to *meet him in the air*, 1 Th. 4:17. They shall be fetched from one end of the world to the other, so that none shall be missing from that *general assembly*; they shall be fetched *from the uttermost part of the earth*, most remote from the places where Christ's tribunal shall be set, and shall be brought to the *uttermost part of heaven*; so sure, so swift, so easy, shall their conveyance be, that there shall none of them miscarry, though they were to be brought from the uttermost part of the earth one way, to the uttermost part of the heaven another way. A faithful Israelite shall be carried safely, though it were from the utmost border of the land of bondage to the utmost border of the land of promise.

### Verses 28-37

We have here the application of this prophetic sermon; *now learn* to look forward in a right manner.

I. "As to the *destruction* of Jerusalem, *expect* it to come very *shortly*; as when the *branch of the fig-tree becomes soft*, and the *leaves sprout forth*, ye expect that summer will come shortly, v. 28. When second causes begin to work, ye expect their effects in their proper order and time. So when *ye see these things come to pass*, when ye see the Jewish nation embroiled in wars, distracted by false Christs and prophets, and drawing upon them the displeasure of the Romans, especially when ye see them persecuting you for your Master's sake, and thereby standing to what they did when they put him to death, and repeating it, and so filling up the measure of their iniquity, then say that their *ruin is nigh, even at the door*, and provide for yourselves accordingly." The disciples themselves were indeed all of them, except John, taken away from the evil to come, but the next generation whom they were to train up, would live to see it; and by these instructions which Christ left behind him would be

kept from sharing in it; *"This generation* that is now rising up, shall not all be worn off before *all these things* come to pass, which I have told you of, relating to Jerusalem, and they shall begin to take effect now shortly. And as this destruction is near and within ken, so it is sure. The decree is gone forth, it is a *consummation determined*," Dan. 9:27. Christ doth not speak these things, merely to frighten them; no, they are declarations of God's fixed purpose; *"Heaven and earth shall pass away*, at the end of time; but *my words shall not pass away* (v. 31), not one of these predictions shall fail of a punctual accomplishment."

II. "As to the *end of the world*, do not enquire when it will come, for it is not a question fit to be asked, for of *that day*, and *that hour*, *knoweth no man*; it is a thing at a great distance; the exact time is fixed in the counsel of God, but is not revealed by any word of God, either to *men* on earth, or to *angels in heaven*; the angels shall have timely notice to prepare to attend in that day, and it shall be published, when it comes to the children of men, with sound of trumpet; but, at present, *men* and *angels* are kept in the dark concerning the precise time of it, that they may both attend to their proper services in the present day." But it follows, *neither the Son*; but is there any thing which the Son is ignorant of? We read indeed of a book which was sealed, till the Lamb opened the seals; but did not he know what was in it, before the seals were opened? Was not he privy to the writing of it? There were those in the primitive times, who taught from this text, that there were some things that Christ, as man, was *ignorant* of; and from these were called *Agnoetae*; they said, "It was no more absurd to say so, than to say that his human soul suffered grief and fear;" and many of the orthodox fathers approved of this. Some would evade it, by saying that Christ spoke this in a way of prudential economy, to divert the disciples from further enquiry: but to this one of the ancients answers, *It is not fit to speak too nicely in this matter—ou dei pany akribologein*, so Leontius in Dr. Hammond, "It is certain (says Archbishop Tillotson) that Christ, as God, could not be ignorant of any thing; but the divine wisdom which dwelt in our Saviour, did communicate itself to his human soul, according to the divine pleasure, so that his human nature might sometimes not know some things; therefore Christ is said to grow in wisdom (Lu. 2:52), which he could not be said to do, if the human nature of Christ did necessarily know all things by virtue of its union with the divinity." Dr. Lightfoot explains it thus; Christ calls himself the Son, as Messiah. Now the Messiah, as such, was the father's servant (Isa. 42:1), sent and deputed by him, and as such a one he refers himself often to his Father's will and command, and owns he *did nothing of himself* (Jn. 5:19); in like manner he might be said to *know nothing of himself*. The revelation of Jesus Christ was what *God gave unto him*, Rev. 1:1. He thinks, therefore, that we are to distinguish between those excellencies and perfections of his, which resulted from the personal union between the divine and human nature, and those which flowed from the anointing of the Spirit; from the former flowed the infinite dignity of his perfect freedom from all sin; but from the latter flowed his power of working miracles, and his foreknowledge of things to come. What therefore (saith he) was to be revealed by him to his church, he was pleased to take, not from the union of the human nature with the divine, but from the revelation of the Spirit, by which he yet knew not this, but *the Father* only knows it; that is, God only, the Deity; for (as Archbishop Tillotson explains it) it is not used here *personally*, in distinction from the Son and the Holy Ghost, but as the Father is, *Fons et Principium Deitatis—The Fountain of Deity*.

III. "As to both, your duty is to *watch and pray*. Therefore the time is kept a secret, that you may be engaged to stand always upon your guard (v. 33); *Take ye heed* of every thing that would indispose you for your Master's coming, and would render

your accounts *perplexed*, and your spirits so too; *watch* for his coming, that it may not at any time be a surprise to you, and *pray* for that grace which is necessary to qualify you for it, for *ye know not when the time is*; and you are concerned to be ready for that *every day*, which may come *any day*." This he illustrates, in the close, by a parable.

1. Our Master is gone away, and left us something in trust, in charge, which we must give account of, v. 34. He is *as a man taking a far journey*; for he is gone to be away a great while, he has *left his house* on earth, and left his servants in their offices, given *authority* to some, who are to be overseers, and *work* to others, who are to be labourers. They that have *authority* given them, in that had *work* assigned them, for those that have the greatest *power* have the most *business*; and to them to whom he gave *work*, he gave some sort of *authority*, to do that work. And when he took his last leave, he *appointed the porter to watch*, to be sure to be ready to open to him at his return; and in the mean time to take care to whom he opened his gates, not to thieves and robbers, but only to his Master's friends and servants. Thus our Lord Jesus, when he *ascended on high*, left something for all his servants to do, expecting they should all do him service in his absence, and be ready to receive him at his return. *All* are appointed to work, and some authorized to rule.

2. We ought to be always upon our watch, in expectation of his return, v. 35–37. (1.) Our Lord *will come*, and will come as the *Master of the house*, to take account of his servants, of their work, and of the improvement they have made. (2.) We know not *when he will come*; and he has very wisely kept us at uncertainty, that we might all be always ready. We know not *when he will come*, just at what precise time; the *Master of the house* perhaps will come *at even*, at nine at night; or it may be *at midnight*, or a *cock-crowing*, at three in the morning, or perhaps not until six. This is applicable to his coming to us in particular, at our death, as well as to the general judgment. Our present life is a *night*, a dark night, compared with the other life; we know not in which watch of the night our Master will come, whether in the days of youth, or middle age, or old age; but, as soon as we are born, we begin to die, and therefore, as soon as we are capable of expecting any thing, we must expect death. (3.) Our great care must be, that, whenever our Lord comes, he do not *find us sleeping*, secure in ourselves, off our guard, indulging ourselves in ease and sloth, mindless of our work and duty, and thoughtless of our Lord's coming; *ready* to say, He will not come, and *unready* to meet him. (4.) His coming will indeed be *coming suddenly*; it will be a great *surprise* and *terror* to those that are careless, and asleep, it will come upon them as a thief in the night. (5.) It is therefore the indispensable duty of all Christ's disciples, to *watch*, to be awake, and keep awake; "*What I say unto you* four (v. 37), *I say unto all* the twelve, or rather to *you* twelve, *I say unto all* my disciples and followers; what *I say to you* of this generation, *I say to all* that shall believe in men, through your word, in every age, *Watch, watch*, expect my second coming, prepare for it, that you may be found in peace, without spot, and blameless."

## Chapter 14

In this chapter begins the account which this evangelist gives of the death and sufferings of our Lord Jesus, which we are all concerned to be acquainted, not only with the history of, but with the mystery of. Here is, I. The plot of the chief priests and scribes against Christ (v. 1, 2). II. The anointing of Christ's head at a supper in Bethany, two days before his death (v. 3-9). III. The contract Judas made with the chief priests, to betray him (v. 10, 11). IV. Christ's eating the passover with his disciples, his instituting the Lord's supper, and his discourse with his disciples, at and after supper (v. 12-31). V. Christ's agony in the garden (v. 32-42). VI. The betraying of him by Judas, and the apprehending of him by the chief priests' agents (v. 43-52). VII. His arraignment before the high priest, his conviction, and the indignities done him at that bar (v. 53-65). VIII. Peter's denying him (v. 66-72). Most of which passages we had before, Mt. 26.

### Verses 1-11

We have here instances,

I. Of the *kindness of Christ's friends*, and the provision made of respect and honour for him. Some friends he had, even in and about Jerusalem, that loved him, and never thought they could do enough for him, among whom, though Israel be not gathered, he is, and will be, glorious.

1. Here was *one friend*, that was so kind as to *invite him to sup with him*; and he was so kind as to accept the invitation, v. 3. Though he had a prospect of his death approaching, yet he did not abandon himself to a melancholy retirement from all company, but conversed as freely with his friends as usual.

2. Here was *another friend*, that was so kind as to *anoint his head* with very precious ointment as he *sat at meat*. This was an extraordinary piece of respect paid him by a good woman that thought nothing too good to bestow upon Christ, and to do him honour. Now the scripture was fulfilled, *When the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof*, Cant. 1:12. Let us *anoint* Christ as our *Beloved*, kiss him with a kiss of *affection*; and anoint him as our *Sovereign*, kiss him with a kiss of *allegiance*. Did he pour out his soul unto death for us, and shall we think any box of ointment too precious to pour out upon him? It is observable that she took care to pour it all out upon Christ's head; she *broke the box* (so we read it); but because it was an *alabaster box*, not easily broken, nor was it necessary that it should be broken, to get out the ointment, some read it, she *shook* the box, or *knocked it to the ground*, to loosen what was in it, that it might be got out the better; or, she *rubbed* and *scraped* out all that stuck to the sides of it. Christ must have been honoured with *all we have*, and we must not think to keep back any part of the price. Do we give him the *precious ointment* of our best affections? Let him have them *all*; love him *with all the heart*.

Now, (1.) There were those that put a *worse construction* upon this than it *deserved*. They called it a *waste of the ointment*, v.

4. Because they could not have found their hearts to put themselves to such an expense for the honouring of Christ, they thought that she was *prodigal*, who did. Note, As the *vile person* ought to be called *liberal*, nor the *churl* said to be *bountiful* (Isa. 32:5); so the *liberal* and *bountiful* ought not to be called *wasteful*. They pretend it might have been *sold*, and *given to the*

*poor*, v. 5. But as a *common piety* to the *corban* will not excuse from a *particular charity* to a poor parent (ch. 7:11), so a common charity to the poor will not excuse from a particular act of piety to the Lord Jesus. What thy hand finds to do, that is good, *do it with thy might*.

(2.) Our Lord Jesus put a *better construction* upon it than, for aught that appears, was *designed*. Probably, she intended no more, than to show the great honour she had for him, before all the company, and to complete his entertainment. But Christ makes it to be an act of *great faith*, as well as *great love* (v. 8); "*She is come aforehand, to anoint my body to the burying, as if she foresaw that my resurrection would prevent her doing it afterward.*" This funeral rite was a kind of presage of, or prelude to, his death approaching. See how Christ's heart was filled with the thoughts of his death, how every thing was construed with a reference to that, and how familiarly he spoke of it upon all occasions. It is usual for those who are *condemned to die*, to have their coffins prepared, and other provision made for their funerals, while they are yet alive; and *so* Christ accepted *this*. Christ's death and burial were the lowest steps of his humiliation, and therefore, though he cheerfully submitted to them, yet he would have some marks of honour to attend them, which might help to take off the *offence of the cross*, and be an intimation how *precious in the sight of the Lord the death of his saints is*. Christ never rode in triumph into Jerusalem, but when he came thither to suffer; nor had ever his head anointed, but for *his burial*.

(3.) He recommended this piece of heroic piety to the applause of the church in all ages; *Wherever this gospel shall be preached, it shall be spoken of, for a memorial of her*, v. 9. Note, The honour which attends well-doing, even in this world, is sufficient to balance the reproach and contempt that are cast upon it. *The memory of the just is blessed*, and they that had *trial of cruel mockings, yet obtained a good report*, Heb. 11:6, 39. Thus was this good woman repaid for her box of ointment, *Nec oleum perdidit nec operam—She lost neither her oil nor her labour*. She got by it that good name which is *better than precious ointment*. Those that *honour Christ he will honour*.

II. Of the *malice of Christ's enemies*, and the preparation made by them to do him mischief.

1. The chief priests, his *open enemies*, consulted how they might *put him to death*, v. 1, 2. The feast of the *passover* was now at hand, and at *that* feast he must be crucified, (1.) That his death and suffering might be the more public, and that all *Israel*, even those *of the dispersion*, who came from all parts to the feast, might be witnesses of it, and of the wonders that attended it. (2.) That the Anti-type might answer to the type. Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us, and brought us out of the house of bondage, at the same time that the paschal lamb was sacrificed, and Israel's deliverance out of Egypt was *commemorated*. Now see, [1.] How *spiteful* Christ's enemies were; they did not think it enough to banish or imprison him, for they aimed not only to *silence* him, and *stop* his progress for the future, but to be revenged on him for all the good he had done. [2.] How *subtle* they were; *Not on the feast-day*, when the people are together; they do not say, Lest they should be disturbed in their devotions, and diverted from them, but, *Lest there should be an uproar* (v. 2); lest they should rise, and rescue him, and *fall foul* upon those that *attempt* any thing against him. They who *desired* nothing more than the *praise* of men, dreaded nothing more than the rage and displeasure of men.

2. Judas, his *disguised enemy*, contracted with them for the betraying of him, v. 10, 11. He is said to be *one of the twelve* that

were Christ's family, intimate with him, trained up for the service of the kingdom; and he *went to the chief priests*, to tender his service in this affair.

(1.) That which he proposed to them, was, to *betray Christ* to them, and to give them notice when and where they might find him, and seize him, without making an *uproar among the people*, which they were afraid of, if they should seize him when he appeared *in public*, in the midst of his admirers. Did he know then what help it was they wanted, and where they were run aground in their counsels? It is probable that he did not, for the debate was held in their close *cabal*. Did they know that he had a mind to serve them, and make court to him? No, they could not imagine that any of his intimates should be so base; but Satan, who was entered into Judas, knew what occasion they had for him, and could guide him to be *guide to them*, who were contriving to *take Jesus*. Note, The spirit that works in all the children of disobedience, knows how to bring them in to the assistance one of another in a wicked project, and then to harden them in it, with the fancy that Providence favours them.

(2.) That which he proposed to himself, was, to *get money* by the bargain; he had what he aimed at, when *they promised to give him money*. Covetousness was Judas's master-lust, *his own iniquity*, and that betrayed him to the sin of betraying his Master; the devil suited his temptation to *that*, and so conquered him. It is not said, They promised him *preferment* (he was not ambitious of that), but, they promised him *money*. See what need we have to double our guard against the sin that *most easily besets us*. Perhaps it was Judas's covetousness that brought him at first to *follow Christ*, having a promise that he should be cash-keeper, or purser, to the society, and he loved in his heart to be fingering money; and now that there was money to be got on the other side, he was as ready to betray him as ever he had been to follow him. Note, Where the principle of men's profession of religion is carnal and worldly, and the serving of a secular interest, the very same principle, whenever the wind turns, will be the bitter root of a vile and scandalous apostasy.

(3.) Having secured the money, he set himself to make good his bargain; he sought *how he might conveniently betray him*, how he might *seasonably deliver him up*, so as to answer the intention of those who had hired him. See what need we have to be careful that we do not ensnare ourselves in sinful engagements. If at any time we be so ensnared in the words of our mouths, we are concerned to deliver ourselves by a speedy retreat, Prov. 6:1-5. It is a rule in our law, as well as in our religion, that an *obligation to do an evil thing is null and void*; it binds to repentance, not to performance. See how the way of sin is downhill—when men are *in*, they must be *on*; and what *wicked* contrivances many have in their sinful pursuits, to compass their designs *conveniently*; but such conveniences will prove mischiefs in the end.

### **Verses 12-31**

In these verses we have,

I. Christ's eating the passover with his disciples, the night before he died, with the joys and comforts of which ordinance he prepared himself for his approaching sorrows, the full prospect of which did not indispose him for that solemnity. Note, No apprehension of trouble, come or coming, should put us by, or put us out of frame for, our attendance on holy ordinances, as we have opportunity for it.

1. Christ ate the passover at the *usual time* when the other Jews did, as Dr. Whitby had fully made out, and not, as Dr.

Hammond would have it, the night before. It was on the first day of that feast, which (taking in all the eight days of the feast) was called, *The feast of unleavened bread*, even that day when they *killed the passover*, v. 12.

2. He directed his disciples how to find the place where he intended to eat the passover; and hereby gave such another proof of his infallible knowledge of things distant and future (which to us seem altogether *contingent*), as he had given when he sent them for the ass on which he rode in triumph (ch. 11:6); "*Go into the city* (for the *passover* must be *eaten* in Jerusalem), and *there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water* (a servant sent for water to clean the rooms in his master's house); *follow him, go in where he goes*, enquire for his master, *the good man of the house* (v. 14), and desire him to show you a room." No doubt, the inhabitants of Jerusalem had rooms fitted up to be *let out*, for this occasion, to those that came out of the country to keep the passover, and one of those Christ made use of; not any friend's house, nor any house he had formerly frequented, for then he would have said, "Go to such a friend," or, "You know where we used to be, go thither and prepare." Probably he went where he was not known, that he might be *undisturbed* with his disciples. Perhaps he notified it by *a sign*, to conceal it from Judas, that he might not know till he came to the place; and by *such a sign* to intimate that he will dwell in the *clean heart*, that is, *washed* as with *pure water*. Where he designs to come, a pitcher of water must go before him; see Isa. 1:16–18.

3. He ate the passover in an *upper room furnished, estroümenon—laid with carpets* (so Dr. Hammond); it would seem to have been a very handsome *dining-room*. Christ was far from affecting any thing that looked stately in eating his common meals; on the contrary, he chose that which was homely, sat down on the grass: but, when he was to keep a sacred feast, in honour of that he would be at the expense of as good a room as he could get. God looks not at *outward pomp*, but he looks at the tokens and expressions of *inward reverence* for a divine institution, which, it is to be feared, those want, who, to save charges, deny themselves decencies in the worship of God.

4. He ate it *with the twelve*, who were his family, to teach those who have the charge of families, not only families of *children*, but families of *servants*, or families of *scholars*, or *pupils*, to keep up religion among them, and worship God with them. If Christ came *with the twelve*, then Judas was with them, though he was at this time contriving to betray his Master; and it is plain by what follows (v. 20), that he was there: he did not absent himself, lest he could have been suspected; had his *seat* been *empty* at this feast, they would have said, as Saul of David, *He is not clean, surely he is not clean*, 1 Sa. 20:26. Hypocrites, though they know it is at their peril, yet crowd into special ordinances, to keep up their repute, and palliate their secret wickedness. Christ did not *exclude* him from the feast, though he *knew* his wickedness, for it was not as yet become public and scandalous. Christ, designing to put the *keys of the kingdom of heaven* into the hands of men, who can judge only according to outward appearance, would hereby both direct and encourage them in their admissions to his table, to be satisfied with a justifiable profession, because they cannot discern the *root of bitterness* till it *springs up*.

II. Christ's discourse with his disciples, as they were *eating* the passover. It is probable that they had discourse, according to the custom of the feast, of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and the preservation of the first-born, and were as pleasant as they used to be together on this occasion, till Christ told them that which would mix *trembling* with their *joys*.

1. They were *pleasing* themselves with the society of *their Master*; but he tells them that they must now presently lose him;

*The Son of man is betrayed*; and they knew, for he had often told them, what followed—If he be *betrayed*, the next news you will hear of him, is, that he is *crucified* and *slain*; God hath determined it concerning him, and he agrees to it; *The Son of man goes, as it is written of him*, v. 21. It was *written* in the counsels of God, and *written* in the prophecies of the Old Testament, not one jot or tittle of either of which can *fall to the ground*.

2. They were *pleasing* themselves with the society *one of another*, but Christ casts a damp upon the joy of that, by telling them, *One of you that eateth with me shall betray me*, v. 18. Christ said this, if it might be, to startle the conscience of Judas, and to awaken him to repent of his wickedness, and to draw back (for it was not too late) from the brink of the pit. But for aught that appears, he who was *most concerned* in the warning, was *least concerned* at it. All the rest were affected with it. (1.) They began to be *sorrowful*. As the remembrance of our former falls into sin, so the fear of the like again, doth often much embitter the comfort of our spiritual feasts, and damp our joy. Here were the *bitter herbs*, with which this *passover-feast* was taken. (2.) They began to be *suspicious* of themselves; they said *one by one, Is it I? And another said, Is it I?* They are to be commended for their *charity*, that they were more jealous of themselves than of *one another*. It is the law of charity, to *hope the best* (1 Co. 13:5-7), because we assuredly *know*, therefore we may justly *suspect*, more evil by ourselves than by our brethren. They are also to be commended for their acquiescence in what Christ said; they trusted more to *his words* than to *their own hearts*; and therefore do not say, "I am sure *it is not I*," but, "*Lord, is it I?*" see if there be such a *way of wickedness in us*, such a *root of bitterness*, and discover it to us, that we may pluck up that *root*, and stop up that *way*."

Now, in answer to their enquiry, Christ saith that, [1.] Which would make them easy; "It is not *you*, or *you*; it is this that now *dips with me in the dish*; the adversary and enemy is this wicked Judas." [2.] Which, one would think, should make Judas very *uneasy*. If he go on in his undertaking, it is upon the sword's point, for *woe to that many by whom the Son of man is betrayed*; he is undone, for every undone; his sin will soon *find him out*; and it were *better for him that he had never been born*, and had never had a being than such a miserable one as he must have. It is very probable that Judas encouraged himself in it with *this* thought, that his Master had often said he must be betrayed; "And if it must be done, surely God *will not find fault* with him that doth it, for who *hath resisted his will?*" As that objector argues, Rom. 9:19. But Christ tells him that this will be no shelter or excuse to him; *The Son of man indeed goes; as it is written of him*, as a lamb to the slaughter; but *woe to that man by whom he is betrayed*. God's decree to permit the sins of men, and bring glory to himself out of them, do neither necessitate their sins, nor determine to them, nor will they be any *excuse* of the sin, or *mitigation* of the punishment. Christ was delivered indeed by *the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God*; but, notwithstanding that, it is *with wicked hands that he is crucified and slain*, Acts 2:23.

III. The institution of the Lord's supper.

1. It was instituted in the close of a *supper*, when they were sufficiently fed with the *paschal lamb*, to show that in the Lord's supper there is no *bodily repast* intended; to preface it with such a thing, is to revive Moses again. But it is food for *the soul* only, and therefore a very little of that which is for the body, as much as will serve for a *sign*, is enough. It was at the close of the *passover-supper*, which by this was evangelized, and then superseded and set aside. Much of the doctrine and duty of the

eucharist is illustrated to us by the law of the passover (Ex. 12); for the Old-Testament institutions, though they do not *bind us*, yet *instruct* us, by the help of a gospel-key to them. And these two ordinances lying here so near together, it may be good to compare them, and observe how much shorter and plainer the institution of the Lord's supper is, than that of the passover was. Christ's yoke is easy in comparison with that of the ceremonial law, and his ordinances are more spiritual.

2. It was instituted by the *example* of Christ himself; not with the ceremony and solemnity of a law, as the ordinance of baptism was, after Christ's resurrection (Mt. 28:19), with, *Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid*, by a power given to Christ *in heaven and on earth* (v. 18); but by the practice of our Master himself, because intended for those who are already his disciples, and taken into covenant with him: but it has the obligation of the law, and was intended to remain in full force, power, and virtue, till his second coming.

3. It was instituted with *blessing* and *giving of thanks*; the gifts of common providence are to be so received (1 Tim. 4:4, 5), much more than the gifts of special grace. He *blessed* (v. 22), and *gave thanks*, v. 23. At his other meals, he was wont to *bless*, and *give thanks* (ch. 6:41; 8:7) so remarkably, that he was known by it, Lu. 24:30, 31. And he did the same at this meal.

4. It was instituted to be a *memorial* of his *death*; and therefore he *broke* the bread, to show how it pleased the Lord to *bruise him*; and he called the *wine*, which is the blood of the grape, the *blood of the New Testament*. The death Christ died was a *bloody death*, and frequent mention is made of the *blood*, the *precious* blood, as the price of our redemption; for the blood is *the life*, and made *atonement for the soul*, Lev. 17:11–14. The pouring out of the blood was the most sensible indication of the *pouring out of his soul*, Isa. 53:12. Blood has a *voice* (Gen. 4:10); and *therefore* blood is so often mentioned, because it was to *speak*, Heb. 12:24. It is called the *blood of the New Testament*; for the covenant of grace became a *testament*, and of force by the death of Christ, the testator, Heb. 9:16. It is said to be *shed for many*, to justify *many* (Isa. 53:11), to bring *many* sons to glory, Heb. 2:10. It was sufficient for *many*, being of infinite value; it has been of use to *many*; we read of a great multitude which no man could number, that had all *washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb* (Rev. 7:9–14); and still it is a *fountain opened*. How comfortable is this to poor repenting sinners, that the blood of Christ is *shed for many!* And if for *many*, why not for *me*? If for sinners, sinners of the Gentiles, the chief of sinners, then *why not for me?*

5. It was instituted to be a *ratification* of the covenant made with us in him, and a sign of the conveyance of those benefits to us, which were purchased for us by his death; and therefore he broke the bread *to them* (v. 22), and said, *Take, eat* of it: he gave the cup *to them*, and ordered them to *drink of it*, v. 23. Apply the doctrine of Christ crucified to yourselves, and let it be *meat* and *drink* to your souls, strengthening, nourishing, and refreshing, to you, and the support and comfort of your spiritual life.

6. It was instituted with an eye to the happiness of heaven, and to be an earnest and fore-taste of that, and thereby to put our mouths out of taste for all the pleasures and delights of sense (v. 25); *I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine*, as it is a bodily refreshment. I have done with it. *No one, having tasted spiritual* delights, *straightway desires* sensitive ones, for he saith, The *spiritual* is better (Lu. 5:39); but *every one* that hath tasted *spiritual* delights, straightway desires *eternal* ones, for he saith, Those are *better still*; and therefore let me *drink no more of the fruit of the vine*, it is dead and flat to those that have been

made to *drink* of the *river* of God's pleasures; but, Lord, hasten the day, when I shall *drink* it new and fresh *in the kingdom of God*, where it shall be for ever new, and in perfection.

7. It was closed with a *hymn*, v. 26. Though Christ was in the midst of his enemies, yet he did not, for fear of them, omit this sweet duty of singing psalms. Paul and Silas sang, when the *prisoners heard them*. This was an *evangelical song*, and gospel times are often spoken of in the Old Testament, as times of rejoicing, and praise is expressed by *singing*. This was Christ's *swan-like* song, which he sung just before he entered upon his agony; probably, that which is usually sung, Ps. 113 to 118.

IV. Christ's discourse with his disciples, as they were returning to Bethany by moonlight. When they had *sung the hymn*, presently they *went out*. It was now near bedtime, but our Lord Jesus had his heart so much upon his suffering, that he would not *come into the tabernacle of his house*, nor *go up into his bed*, nor *give sleep to his eyes*, when that work was to be done, Ps. 132:3, 4. The Israelites were forbidden to go out of their houses the night that they ate the passover, for fear of the sword of the destroying angel, Ex. 12:22, 23. But because Christ, the *great shepherd*, was to be *smitten*, he *went out* purposely to expose himself to the sword, as a champion; they *evaded* the destroyer, but Christ *conquered* him, and brought *destructions to a perpetual end*.

1. Christ here foretels that in his sufferings he should be *deserted* by all his disciples; "*You will all be offended because of me, this night. I know you will* (v. 27), and what I tell you now, is no other than what the scripture has told you before; *I will smite the shepherd*, and then *the sheep will be scattered*." Christ knew this before, and yet welcomed them at his table; he sees the falls and miscarriages of his disciples, and yet doth not refuse them. Nor should we be discouraged from coming to the Lord's supper, by the fear of relapsing into sin afterward; but, the greater of our danger is, the more need we have to fortify ourselves by the diligent conscientious use of holy ordinances. Christ tells them that they would be *offended in him*, would begin to question whether he were the Messiah or no, when they saw him *overpowered* by his enemies. Hitherto, they had *continued with him in his temptations*; though they had sometimes offended him, yet they had not been *offended in him*, nor turned the back upon him; but now the storm would be so great, that they would all *slip their anchors*, and be in danger of *shipwreck*. Some trials are more particular (as Rev. 2:10, *The devil shall cast some of you into prison*); but others are more general, an *hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world*, Rev. 3:10. The *smiting* of the shepherd is often the *scattering* of the sheep: magistrates, ministers, masters of families, if these are, as they should be, *shepherds* to those under their charge, when any thing comes amiss to them, the whole flock suffers for it, and is endangered by it.

But Christ encourages them with a promise that they shall rally again, shall return both to their duty and to their comfort (v. 28); "*After I am risen, I will gather you in from all the places whither you are scattered*, Eze. 34:12. *I will go before you into Galilee*, will see our friends, and enjoy one another there."

2. He foretels that he should be *denied* particularly by Peter. When they *went out* to go to the mount of Olives, we may suppose that they dropped Judas (he stole away from them), whereupon the rest began to think *highly* of themselves, that they *stuck* to their Master, when Judas quitted him. But Christ tells them, that though they should be kept by his grace from Judas's apostasy, yet they would have no reason to boast of their constancy. Note, Though God keeps us from being as bad as the worst, yet we

may well be ashamed to think that we are not better than we are.

(1.) Peter is confident that he should not *do so ill* as the rest of his disciples (v. 29); *Though all should be offended*, all his brethren here present, *yet will not I*. He supposes himself not only stronger than others, but so much stronger, as to be able to receive the shock of a temptation, and bear up against it, *all alone*; to *stand*, though nobody stood *by him*. It is bred in the bone with us, to *think well* of ourselves, and *trust* to *our own hearts*.

(2.) Christ tells him that he will *do worse* than any of them. They will all *desert* him, but he will *deny* him; not once, but *thrice*; and that presently; *"This day, even this night before the cock crow twice*, thou wilt *deny* that ever thou hadst any knowledge of me, or acquaintance with me, as one ashamed and afraid to own me."

(3.) He stands to his promise; *"If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee*; I will adhere to thee, though it cost me my life:" and, no doubt, he thought as he said. Judas said nothing like this, when Christ told him he would betray him. He sinned by contrivance, Peter by surprise; he *devised the wickedness* (Mic. 2:1), Peter was *overtaken in this fault*, Gal. 6:1. It was ill done of Peter, to contradict his Master. If he had said, with fear and trembling, "Lord, give me grace to keep me from denying thee, lead me not into this temptation, deliver me from this evil," it might have been prevented: but they were all thus confident; they who said, *Lord, is it I?* now said, *It shall never be me*. Being acquitted from their fear of betraying Christ, they were now secure. But he that thinks he stands, must learn to take heed lest he fall; and he that *girdeth on the harness*, not boast *as though he had put it off*.

#### **Verses 32-42**

Christ is here entering upon his sufferings, and begins with those which were the sorest of all his sufferings, those in his *soul*. Here we have him in his *agony*; this melancholy story we had in Matthew; this *agony* in soul was the *wormwood and the gall* in the *affliction and misery*; and thereby it appeared that no sorrow was *forced upon him*, but that it was what he *freely* admitted.

I. He retired for prayer; *Sit ye here* (saith he to his disciples), while I go a little further, and *pray*. He had lately prayed *with them* (Jn. 17); and now he appoints them to withdraw while he goes to his Father upon an errand peculiar to himself. Note, Our praying with our families will not excuse our neglect of secret worship. When Jacob entered into his agony, he first *sent over all that he had*, and was *left alone*, and then *there wrestled a man with him* (Gen. 32:23, 24), though he had been at prayer before (v. 9), it is likely, with his family.

II. Even into that retirement he took with him *Peter, and James, and John* (v. 33), three competent witnesses of this part of his humiliation; and though great spirits care not how few know any thing of their agonies, he was not ashamed that they should see. These three had boasted most of their ability and willingness to suffer with him; Peter here, in this chapter, and James and John (ch. 10:39); and therefore Christ takes them to stand by, and see what a struggle he had with the *bloody baptism* and the *bitter cup*, to convince them that they knew not what they said. It is fit that they who are most confident, should be *first* tried, that they may be made sensible of their folly and weakness.

III. There he was in a tremendous agitation (v. 33); *He began to be sore amazed*—*ekthambeisthai*, a word not used in

Matthew, but very significant; it bespeaks something like that *horror of great darkness*, which *fell upon Abraham* (Gen. 15:12), or, rather, something much worse, and more frightful. The *terrors of God set themselves in array against him*, and he allowed himself the actual and intense contemplation of them. Never was *sorrow* like unto *his* at that time; never any had such experience as he had from eternity of divine favours, and therefore never any had, or could have, such a sense as he had of divine favours. Yet there was not the least disorder or irregularity in this commotion of his spirits; his affections rose not tumultuously, but under direction, and as they were called up, for he had no corrupt nature to mix with them, as we have. If water have a sediment at the bottom, though it may be clear while it stands still, yet, when shaken, it grows muddy; so it is with our affections: but pure water in a clean glass, though ever so much stirred, continues clear; and so it was with Christ. Dr. Lightfoot thinks it very probable that the devil did now appear to our Saviour in a visible shape, in his *own shape* and *proper colour*, to terrify and affright him, and to drive him from his hope in God (which he aimed at in persecuting Job, a type of Christ, to make him *curse God, and die*), and to deter him from the further prosecution of his undertaking; whatever hindered him from that, he looked upon as coming from Satan, Mt. 16:23. When the devil had tempted him in the wilderness, it is said, He departed *from him for a season* (Lu. 4:13), intending another grapple with him, and in another way; finding that he could not by his flatteries *allure* him into sin, he would try by his terrors to *affright* him into it, and so *make void* his design.

IV. He made a sad complaint of this agitation. He said, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful*. 1. He was *made sin for us*, and therefore was thus *sorrowful*; he fully knew the *malignity* of the *sins* he was to *suffer for*; and having the highest degree of love to God, who was *offended* by them, and of love to *man*, who was damaged and endangered by them, now that those were set in order before him, no marvel that *his soul was exceeding sorrowful*. Now was he made to *serve with our sins*, and was thus *wearied with our iniquities*. 2. He was *made a curse* for us; the curses of the law were transferred to him as our surety and representative, not as originally *bound with us*, but a *bail to the action*. And when his soul was thus exceeding sorrowful, he did, as it were, yield to them, and lie down under the load, until by his death he had satisfied for sin, and so for ever abolished the curse. He now *tasted death* (as he is said to do, Heb. 2:9), which is not an extenuating expression, as if he did *but* taste it; no, he *drank up* even the dregs of the cup; but it is rather *aggravating*; it did not go down by wholesale, but he *tasted* all the bitterness of it. This was that *fear* which the apostle speaks of (Heb. 5:7), a natural fear of pain and death, which it is natural to human nature to startle at.

Now the consideration of Christ's sufferings in *his soul*, and his *sorrows* for us, should be of use to us,

(1.) To *embitter our sins*. Can we ever entertain a *favourable* or so much as a *slight* thought of sin, when we see what impression sin (though but imputed) made upon the Lord Jesus? Shall that *sit light* upon our souls, which sat *so heavy* upon his? Was Christ in such an agony for our sins, and shall we never be in an agony about them? How should we look upon him whom we have *pressed*, whom we have *pierced*, and *mourn*, and be *in bitterness*! It becomes us to be *exceeding sorrowful* for sin, because Christ was so, and never to *make a mock* at it. If Christ thus suffered for sin, let us *arm ourselves with the same mind*.

(2.) To *sweeten our sorrows*; if our souls be at any time *exceeding sorrowful*, through the afflictions of this present time, let us

remember that our Master was so before us, and the *disciple is not greater than his Lord*. Why should we affect to *drive away* sorrow, when Christ for our sakes courted it, and submitted to it, and thereby not only took out the *sting* of it, and made it *tolerable*, but put *virtue* into it, and made it *profitable* (for *by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better*), nay, and put *sweetness* into it, and made it comfortable. Blessed Paul was *sorrowful*, and yet *always rejoicing*. If we be *exceeding sorrowful*, it is but *unto death*; that will be the period of all our sorrows, if Christ be *ours*; when the *eyes* are closed, all tears are *wiped away* from them.

V. He ordered his disciples to keep with him, not because he needed their help, but because he would have them to *look upon him and receive instruction*; he said to them, *Tarry ye here and watch*. He had said to the other disciples nothing but, Sit ye here (v. 32); but these three he bids to tarry *and watch*, as expecting more from them than from the rest.

VI. He addressed himself to God by prayer (v. 35); He *fell on the ground, and prayed*. It was but a little before this, that in prayer he *lifted up his eyes* (Jn. 17:1); but here, being in an agony, he *fell upon his face*, accommodating himself to his present humiliation, and teaching us thus to abase ourselves before God; it becomes us to *be low*, when we come into the presence of the *Most High*. 1. As *Man*, he *deprecat*ed his sufferings, that, *if it were possible, the hour might pass from him* (v. 35); "This *short, but sharp* affliction, that which I am now *this hour* to enter upon, let man's salvation be, *if possible*, accomplished without it." We have his very words (v. 36), *Abba, Father*. The Syriac word is here retained, which Christ used, and which signifies *Father*, to intimate what an emphasis our Lord Jesus, in his *sorrows*, laid upon it, and would have us to lay. It is with an eye to this, that St. Paul retains this word, putting it into the mouths of all that have the *Spirit of adoption*; they are taught to cry, *Abba, Father*, Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6. *Father, all things are possible to thee*. Note, Even that which we cannot expect to be done for us, we ought yet to believe that God is *able to do*: and when we submit to his will, and refer ourselves to his wisdom and mercy, it must be with a believing acknowledgment of his power, that *all things are possible to him*. 2. As *Mediator*, he *acquiesced* in the will of God concerning them; "*Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt*. I know the matter is settled, and cannot be altered, *I must suffer* and die, and I bid it welcome."

VII. He roused his disciples, who were dropped asleep while he was at prayer, v. 37, 38. He comes to look after them, since they did not look after him; and he *finds them asleep*, so little affected were they with his sorrows, his complaints, and prayers. This carelessness of theirs was a presage of their further offence in deserting him; and it was an aggravation of it, that he had so lately commended them for *continuing with him in his temptations*, though they had not been without their faults. Was he so willing to make the best of them, and were they so indifferent in approving themselves to him? They had lately promised not to be *offended in him*; what! and yet mind him so little? He particularly upbraided Peter with his drowsiness; *Simon, sleepest thou? Kai sy teknon*;—"What thou, my son? Thou that didst so positively promise thou wouldest not deny me, dost thou slight me thus? From thee I expected better things. *Couldst thou not watch one hour?*" He did not require him to watch *all night* with him, only for *one hour*. It aggravates our faintness and short continuance in Christ's service, that he doth not overtask us, nor weary us with it, Isa. 43:23. He puts upon us *no other burthen* than to *hold fast till he comes* (Rev. 2:24, 25); and behold, *he comes quickly*, Rev. 3:11.

As those whom Christ *loves* he *rebukes* when they do amiss, so those whom he *rebukes* he counsels and comforts. 1. It was a very wise and faithful word of advice which Christ here gave to his disciples; *Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation*, v. 38. It was bad to *sleep* when Christ was in his agony, but they were entering into further temptation, and if they did not stir up themselves, and fetch in grace and strength from God by prayer, they would *do worse*; and so they did, when they all forsook him, and fled. 2. It was a very kind and tender excuse that Christ made for them; "*The spirit truly is willing*; I know it is, it is *ready*, it is *forward*; you would willingly *keep awake*, but you cannot." This may be taken as a reason for that exhortation, "*Watch and pray*; because, though *the spirit is willing*, I grant it is (you have sincerely resolved never to be *offended in me*), yet *the flesh is weak*, and if you do not *watch and pray*, and use the means of perseverance, you may be overcome, notwithstanding." The consideration of the *weakness* and infirmity of *our flesh* should engage and quicken us to *prayer* and *watchfulness*, when we are entering into temptation.

VIII. He *repeated* his address to his Father (v. 39); *He went again, and prayed*, saying, *ton auton logon*—*the same word*, or matter, or business; he spoke to the same purport, and again *the third time*. This teaches us, that *men ought to pray, and not to faint*, Lu. 18:1. Though the answers to our prayers do not come quickly, yet we must renew our requests, and *continue instant in prayer*; for *the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and not lie*, Hab. 2:3. Paul, when he was *buffeted by a messenger of Satan, besought the Lord thrice*, as Christ did here, before he obtained an answer of peace, 2 Co. 12:7, 8. A little before this, when Christ, in the *trouble of his soul*, prayed, *Father, glorify thy name*, he had an immediate answer by a voice from heaven, *I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again*; but now he must come a second and third time, for the visits of God's grace, in answer to prayer, come sooner or later, according to the pleasure of his will, that we may be kept depending.

IX. He *repeated* his visits to his disciples. Thus he gave a specimen of his continued care for his church on earth, even when it is *half asleep*, and not duly concerned for itself, while he ever lives making intercession with his Father *in heaven*. See how, as became a *Mediator*, he passes and repasses between both. He came the *second time* to his disciples, and *found them asleep again*, v. 40. See how the infirmities of Christ's disciples *return* upon them, notwithstanding their resolutions, and *overpower* them, notwithstanding their resistance; and what clogs those bodies of ours are to our souls, which should make us long for that blessed state in which they shall be no more our encumbrance. This second time he spoke to them as before, but *they wist not what to answer him*; they were ashamed of their drowsiness, and had nothing to say in excuse for it. Or, They were so overpowered with it, that, like men between sleeping and waking, they knew not where they were, or what they said. But, the *third time*, they were bid to *sleep* if they would (v. 41); "*Sleep on now, and take your rest*. I have now no more occasion for your watching, you may sleep, if you will, for me." *It is enough*; we had not that word in Matthew. "You have had warning enough to keep awake, and would not take it; and now you shall see what little reason you have to be secure." *Apekei, I discharge you from any further attendance*; so some understand it; "Now *the hour is come*, in which I knew you would all forsake me, even take your course;" as he said to Judas, *What thou doest, do quickly*. The *Son of man* is now *betrayed into the hands of sinners*, the chief priests and elders; those *worst* of sinners, because they made a profession of sanctity. "Come, *rise*

up, do not lie dozing there. *Let us go* and meet the enemy, for *lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand*, and I must not now think of making an escape." When we see trouble at the door, we are concerned to stir up ourselves to get ready for it.

### Verses 43-52

We have here the *seizing* of our Lord Jesus by the officers of the chief priests. This was what his enemies had long aimed at, they had often sent to *take him*; but he had escaped out of their hands, because *his hour was not come*, nor could they now have taken him, had he not freely surrendered himself. He began first to suffer *in his soul*, but afterward suffered in his body, that he might satisfy for sin, which begins in the heart, but afterwards makes the members of the body *instruments of unrighteousness*.

I. Here is a band of rude miscreants employed to *take* our Lord Jesus and make him a prisoner; *a great multitude with swords and staves*. There is no wickedness so black, no villany so horrid, but there may be found among the children of men fit tools to be made use of, that will not scruple to be employed; so miserably depraved and vitiated is mankind. At the head of this rabble is Judas, *one of the twelve*, one of those that had been many years intimately conversant with our Lord Jesus, had prophesied in his name, and in his name cast out devils, and yet *betrayed* him. It is no new thing for a very fair and plausible profession to end in a shameful and fatal apostasy. *How art thou fallen, O Lucifer!*

II. Men of no less figure than the *chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders*, sent them, and set them on work, who pretended to expect the Messiah, and to be ready to welcome him; and yet, when he *is come*, and has given undeniable proofs that it is he that *should come*, because he doth not make court to them, nor countenance and support their pomp and grandeur, because he appears not as a temporal prince, but sets up a spiritual kingdom, and preaches repentance, reformation, and a holy life, and directs men's thoughts, and affections, and aims, to another world, they set themselves against him, and, without giving the credentials he produces an impartial examination, resolve to run him down.

III. Judas betrayed him *with a kiss*; abusing the freedom Christ used to allow his disciples of kissing his cheek at their return when they had been any time absent. He called him, *Master, Master, and kissed him*; he said, *Rabbi, Rabbi*, as if he had been now more respectful to him than ever. It is enough to put one for ever out of conceit with being called of men *Rabbi, Rabbi* (Mt. 23:7), since it was with this compliment that Christ was betrayed. He bid them take him, and *lead him away safely*. Some think that he spoke this *ironically*, knowing that they could not secure him unless he pleased, that this Samson could break their bonds asunder as threads of tow, and make his escape, and then he should get the money, and Christ the honour, and no harm done; and I should think so too, but that Satan was *entered into him*, so that the worst and most malicious intention of this action is not too black to be supposed. Nay, he had often heard his Master say, that, being *betrayed*, he should be *crucified*, and had no reason to think otherwise.

IV. They arrested him, and made him their prisoner (v. 46); *They laid their hands on him*, rude and violent hands, and *took him* into custody; triumphing, it is likely, that they had done that which has been often before attempted in vain.

V. Peter laid about him in defence of his Master, and wounded one of the assailants, being for the present mindful of his promise, to venture his life with his Master. He was *one of them that stood by*, of them that *were with him* (so the word

signifies), of *those three* disciples that were *with him* in the garden; he *drew a sword*, and aimed, it is likely, to cut off the head, but missed his blow, and only *cut off the ear*, of a servant of the high priest, v. 47. It is easier to *fight* for Christ, than to *die* for him; but Christ's good soldiers overcome, not by taking other people's lives, but by laying down their own, Rev. 12:11.

VI. Christ argues with them that had seized him, and shows them the absurdity of their proceedings against him. 1. That they came out *against him*, as against a *thief*, whereas he was *innocent* of any crime; he *taught daily in the temple*, and if he had any wicked design, there it would some time or other have been discovered; nay, these officers of the *chief priests*, being *retainers* to the temple, may be supposed to have heard his sermons there (I was *with you* in the temple); and had he not taught them excellent doctrine, even his enemies themselves being judges? Were not *all the words of his mouth in righteousness*? Was there any thing *froward or perverse in them*? Prov. 8:8. By his fruits he was known to be a good tree; why then did they come out against him *as a thief*? 2. That they came to take him thus *privately*, whereas he was neither *ashamed* nor *afraid* to appear *publicly* in the temple. He was none of those *evil-doers* that *hate the light*, neither come *to the light*, Jn. 3:20. If their masters had any thing to say to him, they might meet him any day in the temple, where he was ready to answer all challenges, all charges; and there they might do as they pleased with him, for the priests had the custody of the temple, and the command of the guards about it: but to come upon him thus at midnight, and in the place of his retirement, was base and cowardly. This was to do as David's enemy, that *sat in the lurking places of the villages, to murder the innocent*, Ps. 10:8. But this was not all. 3. They came *with swords and staves*, as if he had been in arms against the government, and must have the *posse comitatus* raised to reduce him. There was no occasion for those weapons; but they made this ado, (1.) To secure themselves from the rage of some; they came armed, because they *feared the people*; but thus *were they in great fear, where no fear was*, Ps. 53:5. (2.) To expose him to the rage of others. By coming *with swords and staves to take him*, they represented him to the people (who are apt to take impressions this way) as a dangerous turbulent man, and so endeavored to incense them against him, and make them cry out, *Crucify him, crucify him*, having no other way to gain their point.

VII. He reconciled himself to all this injurious, ignominious treatment, by referring himself to the Old-Testament predictions of the Messiah. I am hardly used, *but I submit, for the scriptures must be fulfilled*, v. 49. 1. See here what a regard Christ had to the *scriptures*; he would bear any thing rather than that the least jot or tittle of the word of God should fall to the ground; and as he had an eye to them in his sufferings, so he has in his glory; for what is Christ doing in the government of the world, but *fulfilling the scriptures*? 2. See what use we are to make of the Old Testament; we must search for Christ, the true *treasure hid in that field*: as the history of the New Testament expounds the prophecies of Old, so the prophecies of the Old Testament illustrate the history of the New.

VIII. All Christ's disciples, hereupon, deserted him (v. 50); *They all forsook him, and fled*. They were very confident that they should adhere to him; but even good men know not what they will do, till they are tried. If it was such a comfort to him as he had lately intimated, that they had hitherto *continued with him* in his lesser trials (Lu. 22:28), we may well imagine what a grief it was to him, that they deserted him now in the greatest, when they might have done him some service—when he was abused, to protect him, and when accused, to witness for him. Let not those that suffer for Christ, think it strange, if they be

thus deserted, and if all the herd shun the wounded deer; they are not better than their Master, nor can expect to be better used either by their enemies or by their friends. When St. Paul was in peril, none *stood by him*, but *all men forsook him*, 2 Tim. 4:16. IX. The noise disturbed the neighbourhood, and some of the neighbours were brought into danger by the riot, vi. 51, 52. This passage of story we have not in any other of the evangelists. Here is an account of a *certain young man*, who, as it should seem, was no disciple of Christ, nor, as some have imagined, a servant of the house wherein Christ had eaten the passover, who *followed him* to see what would become of him (as the *sons of the prophets*, when they understood that Elijah was to be *taken up*, went to *view afar off*, 2 Ki. 2:7), but some young man that lived near the garden, perhaps in the house to which the garden belonged. Now observe concerning him,

1. How he was *frightened out of his bed*, to be a *spectator* of Christ's sufferings. Such a *multitude*, so armed, and coming with so much fury, and in the dead of night, and in a quiet village, could not but produce a great stir; this alarmed our *young man*, who perhaps thought they was some tumult or rising in the city, some *uproar among the people*, and had the curiosity to go, and see what the matter was, and was in such haste to inform himself, that he could not stay to dress himself, but threw a sheet about him, as if he would appear like a walking ghost, in grave clothes, to frighten those who had frightened him, and ran among the thickest of them with this question, *What is to do here?* Being told, he had a mind to see the issue, having, no doubt, heard much of the fame of this Jesus; and therefore, when all his disciples had quitted him, he continued to *follow him*, desirous to *hear* what he would say, and *see* what he would do. Some think that his having no other garment than this *linen cloth* upon his naked body, intimates that he was one of those Jews who made a great profession of piety that their neighbours, in token of which, among other instances of austerity and mortification of the body, they used no clothes but one linen garment, which, though contrived to be modest enough, was thin and cold. But I rather think that this was not his constant wear.

2. See how he was *frightened into his bed* again, when he was in danger of being made a *sharer* in Christ's sufferings. His own disciples had run away from him; but this young man, having no concern for him, thought he might securely attend him, especially being so far from being armed, that he was not so much as clothed; but *the young men*, the Roman soldiers, who were called to assist, *laid hold of him*, for all was fish that came to their net. Perhaps they were now vexed at themselves, that they had suffered the disciples to *run away*, and they being got out of their reach they resolved to seize the first they could *lay their hands on*; though this young man was perhaps one of the *strictest sect* of the Jewish church, yet the Roman soldiers made no conscience of abusing him upon this occasion. Finding himself in danger, he *left the linen cloth* by which they had *caught hold of him*, and *fled away naked*. This passage is recorded to show what a barbarous crew this was, that was sent to seize Christ, and what a narrow escape the disciples had of falling into their hands, out of which nothing could have kept them but their Master's care of them; *If ye seek me, let these go their way*, Jn. 18:8. It also intimates that there is *no hold* of those who are led by curiosity only, and not by faith and conscience, to follow Christ.

### **Verses 53-65**

We have here Christ's arraignment, trial, conviction, and condemnation, in the *ecclesiastical* court, before the great sanhedrim,

of which the *high priest* was president, or judge of the court; the same Caiaphas that had lately adjudged it expedient he should be put to death, guilty or not guilty (Jn. 11:50), and who therefore might justly be excepted against as partial.

I. Christ is hurried away to his *house*, his *palace* it is called, such state did he live in. And there, though, in the dead of the night, *all the chief priests, and elders, and scribes*, that were in the secret, were *assembled*, ready to receive the prey; so sure were they of it.

II. *Peter followed* at a distance, such a degree of cowardice was his late courage dwindled into, v. 54. But when he came to the high priest's palace, he *sneakingly* went, and *sat with the servants*, that he might not be suspected to belong to Christ. The high priest's fire side was no proper place, nor his servants proper company, for Peter, but it was his *entrance into a temptation*.

III. Great diligence was used to procure, for love or money, false witnesses against Christ. They had seized him as a malefactor, and now they had him they had no indictment to prefer against him, no crime to lay to his charge, but they *sought for witnesses against him*; pumped some with ensnaring questions, offered bribes to others, if they *would accuse him*, and endeavored to frighten others, if they *would not*, v. 55, 56. The chief priests and elders were by the law entrusted with the prosecuting and punishing of *false witnesses* (Deu. 19:16, 17); yet those were now ringleaders in a crime that tends to overthrow of all justice. It is time to cry, *Help, Lord*, when the physicians of a land are its troublers, and those that should be the conservators of peace and equity, are the corrupters of both.

IV. He was at length charged with words spoken some years ago, which, as they were represented, seemed to threaten *the temple*, which they had made no better than an idol of (v. 57, 58); but the witnesses to this matter did not agree (v. 59), for one swore that he said, *I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days* (so it is in Matthew); the other swore that he said, *I will destroy this temple, that is made with hands, and within three days, I will build not it, but another made without hands*; now these two differ much from each other; *oude iseu eun heu martyria*—*their testimony was not sufficient*, nor equal to the charge of a capital crime; so Dr. Hammond: they did not accuse him of that upon which a *sentence of death* might be founded, no not by the utmost stretch of their law.

V. He was urged to be his own accuser (v. 60); The *high priest stood up* in a heat, and said, *Answerest thou nothing?* This he said under pretence of justice and fair dealing, but really with a design to ensnare him, that they might *accuse him*, Lu. 11:53, 54; 20:20. We may well imagine with what an air of haughtiness and disdain this proud high priest brought our Lord Jesus to this question; "Come you, the prisoner at the bar, you hear what is sworn against you; what have you now to say for yourself?" Pleased to think that *he* seemed silent, who had so often silenced those that picked quarrels with him. Still Christ *answered nothing*, that he might set us an example, 1. Of *patience* under calumnies and false accusations; when we are *reviled*, let us not *revile again*, 1 Pt. 2:23. And, 2. Of *prudence*, when a man shall be made an *offender for a word* (Isa. 29:21), and our defence made our *offence*; it is an evil time indeed when the prudent shall *keep silence* (lest they make bad worse), *and commit their cause to him that judgeth righteously*. But,

VI. When he was asked *whether he was the Christ*, he confessed, and denied not, that *he was*, v. 61, 62. He asked, *Art thou the Son of the Blessed?* that is the Son of God? for, as Dr. Hammond observes, the Jews, when they named *God*, generally added,

*blessed for ever*; and thence *the Blessed* is the title of *God*, a peculiar title, and applied to Christ, Rom. 9:5. And for the proof of his being the *Son of God*, he binds them over to his second coming; "*Ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power*; that *Son of man* that now appears so mean and despicable, whom ye *see* and trample upon (Isa. 53:2, 3), you shall shortly see and *tremble before*." Now, one would think that such a word as this which our Lord Jesus seems to have spoken with a grandeur and majesty not agreeable to his present appearance (for through the thickest cloud of his humiliation some rays of glory were still darted forth), should have startled the court, and at least, in the opinion of some of them, should have amounted to a *demurrer*, or *arrest of judgment*, and that they should have stayed process till they had considered further of it; when Paul at the bar reasoned of the *judgment to come*, the judge *trembled*, and adjourned the trial, Acts 24:25. But these chief priests were so miserably blinded with malice and rage, that, like the horse rushing into the battle, they *mocked at fear*, and *were not affrighted*, neither *believed they that it was the sound of the trumpet*, Job 39:22, 24. And see Job 15:25, 26.

VII. The high priest, upon this confession of his, convicted him as a *blasphemer* (v. 63); He *rent his clothes*—*chitounas autou*. Some think the word signifies his pontifical vestments, which, for the greater state, he had put on, though in the night, upon this occasion. As before, in his enmity to Christ, he said he knew not what (Jn. 11:51, 52), so now he did he knew not what. If Saul's rending Samuel's mantle was made to signify the rending of the kingdom from him (1 Sa. 15:27, 28), much more did Caiaphas's rending his own clothes signify the rending of the priesthood from him, as the rending of the veil, at Christ's death, signified the throwing of all open. Christ's clothes, even when he was crucified, were kept entire, and not rent: for when the Levitical priesthood was rent in pieces and done away, *This Man, because he continues ever, has an unchangeable priesthood*.

VIII. They agreed that he was a blasphemer, and, as such, was guilty of a capital crime, v. 64. The question *seemed* to be put fairly, *What think ye?* But it was really *prejudged*, for the high priest had said, *Ye have heard the blasphemy*; he gave judgment first, who, as president of the court, ought to have voted last. So they *all condemned him to be guilty of death*; what friends he had in the great sanhedrim, did not appear, it is probable that they had not notice.

IX. They set themselves to abuse him, and, as the Philistines with Samson, to make sport with him, v. 65. It should seem that some of the priests themselves that had condemned him, so far forgot the dignity, as well as duty, of their place, and the gravity which became them, that they helped their servants in playing the fool with a condemned prisoner. This they made their diversion, while they *waited for the morning*, to complete their villany. That *night of observations* (as the passover-night was called) they *made a merry night of*. If they did not think it below them to abuse Christ, shall we think any thing below us, by which we may do him honour?

### **Verses 66-72**

We have here the story of Peter's denying Christ.

1. It began in *keeping at a distance* from him. Peter had followed *afar off* (v. 54), and now was *beneath in the palace*, at the lower end of the hall. Those that are *shy* of Christ, are in a fair way to *deny* him, that are shy of attending on holy ordinances, shy of the communion of the faithful, and loth to be seen on the side of despised godliness.

2. It was occasioned by his associating with the high priest's servants, and sitting among them. They that think it dangerous to be in company with Christ's disciples, because thence they may be drawn in to *suffer for him*, will find it much more dangerous to be in company with his enemies, because there they may be drawn in to *sin against him*.

3. The temptation was, his being charged as a disciple of Christ; *Thou also wert with Jesus of Nazareth*, v. 67. *This is one of them* (v. 69), *for thou art a Galilean*, one may know that by thy speaking broad, v. 70. It doth not appear that he was *challenged* upon it, or in danger of being *prosecuted* as a criminal for it, but only *bantered* upon it, and in danger of being ridiculed as a fool for it. While the chief priests were abusing the Master, the servants were abusing the disciples. Sometimes the cause of Christ seems to fall so much on the losing side, that every body has a stone to throw at it, and even the *objects gather themselves together against* it. When Job was on the dunghill, he was had in derision of those that were the *children of base men*, Job 30:8. Yet, all things considered, the temptation could not be called *formidable*; it was only a *maid* that casually cast her eye upon him, and, for aught that appears, without design of giving him any trouble, said, *Thou art one of them*, to which he needed not to have made any reply, or might have said, "And if I be, I hope that is no treason."

4. The sin was very great; he *denied Christ before men*, at a time when he ought to have confessed and owned him, and to have appeared in court a witness for him. Christ had often given notice to his disciples of his own sufferings; yet, when they came, they were to Peter as great a surprise and terror as if he had never heard of them before. He had often told them that they must *suffer for him*, must *take up their cross*, and follow him; and yet Peter is so terribly afraid of suffering, upon the very first alarm of it, that he will lie and swear, and do any thing, to avoid it. When Christ was admired and flocked after, he could readily own him; but now that he is deserted, and despised, and run down, he is ashamed of him, and will own no relation to him.

5. His repentance was very speedy. He repeated his denial thrice, and the third was worst of all, for then he *cursed and swore*, to confirm his denial; and that the third blow, which, one would think, should have *stunned him*, and knocked him down, *startled him*, and roused him up. Then the *cock crew* the second time, which put him in mind of his Master's words, the warning he had given him, with that particular circumstance of the *cock crowing twice*; by recollecting that, he was made sensible of his sin and the aggravations of it; and when he thought thereon, he wept. Some observe that this evangelist, who wrote, as some have thought, by St. Peter's direction, speaks as fully of Peter's sin as any of them, but more briefly of his *sorrow*, which Peter, in modesty, would not have to be magnified, and because he thought he could never sorrow enough for great a sin. His repentance here is thus expressed, *ἐπιβόησεν ἐκλαίει*, where something must be supplied. He *added to weep*, so some; making it a Hebraism; he wept, and the more he thought of it, the more he wept; he continued weeping; he *flung out*, and wept; *burst out* into tears; *threw himself down*, and wept; he *covered his face*, and wept, so some; cast his garment about his head, that he might not be seen to weep; he *cast his eyes* upon his Master, who turned, and looked upon him; so Dr. Hammond supplies it, and it is a probable conjecture. Or, as we understand it, *fixing his mind upon it*, he wept. It is not a transient thought of that which is humbling, that will suffice, but we must dwell upon it. Or, what if this word should mean his *laying a load* upon himself, throwing a confusion into his own face? he did as the *publican* that smote his breast, in sorrow for

sin; and this amounts to his weeping bitterly.

## Chapter 15

What we read of the sufferings of Christ, in the foregoing chapter, was but the prologue or introduction; here we have the completing of them. We left him condemned by the chief priests; but they could only show their teeth, they could not bite. Here we have him, I. Arraigned and accused before Pilate the Roman governor (v. 1-5). II. Cried out against by the common people, at the instigation of the priests (v. 6-14). III. Condemned to be crucified immediately (v. 15). IV. Bantered and abused, as a mock-king, by the Roman soldiers (v. 16-19). V. Led out to the place of execution with all possible ignominy and disgrace (v. 20-24). VI. Nailed to the cross between two thieves (v. 25-28). VII. Reviled and abused by all that passed by (v. 29-32). VIII. Forsaken for a time by his father (v. 33-36). IX. Dying, and rending the veil (v. 37, 38). X. Attested and witnessed to by the centurion and others (v. 39-41). XI. Buried in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea (v. 42-47).

### Verses 1-14

Here we have, I. A *consultation* held by the great Sanhedrim for the effectual prosecution of our Lord Jesus. They met *early in the morning* about it, and went into a grand committee, to find out *ways and means* to get him put to death; they lost no time, but followed their blow in good earnest, lest there should be an *uproar among the people*. The unwearied industry of wicked people in doing that which is evil, should shame us for our backwardness and slothfulness in that which is good. They that *war* against Christ and thy soul, are up early; *How long then wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?*

II. The delivering of him up a prisoner to Pilate; they *bound him*. He was to be the great sacrifice, and sacrifices must be bound with cords, Ps. 118:27. Christ was bound, to make bonds easy to us, and enable us, as Paul and Silas, to sing in bonds. It is good for us often to *remember the bonds* of the Lord Jesus, as bound with him who was *bound for us*. They led him through the streets of Jerusalem, to expose *him* to contempt, who, while he taught in the temple, but a day or two before, was had in veneration; and we may well imagine how miserably he looked after such a night's usage as he had had; so buffeted, spit upon, and abused. Their delivering him to the Roman power was a type of ruin of their church, which hereby they merited, and brought upon themselves; it signified that the promise, the covenant, and the oracles, of God, and the visible state church, which were the glory of Israel, and had been so long in their possession, should now be delivered up to the Gentiles. By delivering up the *king* they do, in effect, deliver up the *kingdom of God*, which is therefore, as it were, by their own consent, taken from them, and given to another nation. If they had delivered up Christ, to gratify the desires of the Romans, or to satisfy and jealousies of theirs concerning him, it had been another matter; but they voluntarily betrayed him that was *Israel's crown*, to them that were *Israel's yoke*.

III. The examining of him by Pilate upon interrogatories (v. 2); *"Art thou the king of the Jews? Dost thou pretend to be so, to be that Messiah whom the Jews expect as a temporal prince?"—"Yea," saith Christ, "it is as thou sayest, I am that Messiah, but not such a one as they expect."* He is the king that rules and protects his Israel according to the spirit, who are Jews inwardly by the circumcision of the spirit, and the king that will restrain and punish the carnal Jews, who continue in unbelief.

IV. The articles of impeachment exhibited against him, and his silence under the charge and accusation. The chief priests

forgot the dignity of their place, when they turned informers, and did in person *accuse Christ of many things* (v. 3), and witness against him, v. 4. Many of the Old-Testament prophets charge the priests of their times with great wickedness, in which *well did they prophesy* of these priests; see Eze. 22:26; Hos. 5:1; 6:9; Mic. 3:11; Zep. 3:4; Mal. 1:6; 2:8. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans is said to be for the *iniquity of the priests that shed the blood of the just*, Lam. 4:13. Note, Wicked priests are generally the worst of men. The better any thing is, the worse it is when it is corrupted. Lay persecutors have been generally found more compassionate than ecclesiastics. These priests were very eager and noisy in their accusation; but Christ *answered nothing*, v. 3. When Pilate urged him to clear himself, and was desirous he should (v. 4), yet still he stood mute (v. 5), he *answered nothing*, which Pilate thought very strange. He gave Pilate a direct answer (v. 2), but would not answer the prosecutors and witnesses, because the things they alleged, were notoriously false, and he knew Pilate himself was convinced they were so. Note, As Christ *spoke* to admiration, so he *kept silence* to admiration.

V. The proposal Pilate made to the people, to have Jesus released to them, since it was the custom of the feast to grace the solemnity with the release of one prisoner. The people expected and demanded that he should do *as he had ever done to them* (v. 8); it was not an ill usage, but they would have it kept up. Now Pilate perceived that the chief priests delivered up Jesus *for envy*, because he had got such a reputation among the people as eclipsed theirs, v. 10. It was easy to see, comparing the eagerness of the prosecutors with the slenderness of the proofs, that it was not his *guilt*, but his *goodness*, not any thing *mischievous* or *scandalous*, but something *meritorious* and *glorious*, that they were provoked at. And therefore, hearing how much he was the darling of the crowd, he thought that he might safely appeal from the priests to the people, and that they would be proud of rescuing him out of the priests' hands; and he proposed an expedient for their doing it without danger of an *uproar*; let them demand him to be *released*, and Pilate will be ready to do it, and stop the mouths of the priests with this—that the people insisted upon his release. There was indeed another prisoner, *one Barabbas*, that had an interest, and would have some votes; but he questioned not but Jesus would out-poll him.

VI. The unanimous outrageous clamours of the people have *Christ put to death*, and particularly to have him *crucified*. It was a great surprise to Pilate, when he found the people so much under the influence of the priests, that they all agreed to desire that Barabbas might be *released*, v. 11. Pilate opposed it all he could; "*What will ye that I shall do to him whom ye call the King of the Jews? Would not ye then have him released too?*" v. 12. No, say they, *Crucify him*. The priests having put that in their mouths, the insist upon it; when Pilate objected, *Why, what evil has he done?* (a very material question in such a case), they did not pretend to answer it, but *cried out more exceedingly*, as they were more and more instigated and irritated by the priests, *Crucify him, crucify him*. Now the priests, who were very busy dispersing themselves and their creatures among the mob, to keep up the cry, promised themselves that it would influence Pilate two ways to condemn him. 1. It might incline him to believe Christ *guilty*, when there was so general an out-cry against him. "Surely," might Pilate think, "he must needs be a bad man, whom all the world is weary of." He would now conclude that he had been *misinformed*, when he was told what an interest he had in the people, and that the matter was not so. But the priest had hurried on the prosecution with so much expedition, that we may suppose that they who were Christ's friends, and would have opposed this cry, were at the other end of

the town, and knew nothing of the matter. Note, It has been the common artifice of Satan, to put Christ and his religion into an ill name, and so to run them down. When once this sect, as they called it, comes to be *every where spoken against*, though *without cause*, then that is looked upon as *cause enough* to condemn it. But let us *judge* of persons and things by their merits, and the standard of God's word, and not prejudice by common fame and the cry of the country. 2. It might induce him to condemn Christ, to *please* the people, and indeed for *fear of displeasing* them. Though he was not so *weak* as to be governed by their opinion, to believe him guilty, yet he was so *wicked* as to be swayed by their outrage, to condemn him, though he believed him innocent; induced thereunto by reasons of state, and the wisdom of the world. Our Lord Jesus dying as a *sacrifice* for the *sins of many*, he fell a sacrifice to the *rage of many*.

### Verses 15-21

Here, I. Pilate, to gratify the Jews' malice, delivers Christ to be *crucified*, v. 15. *Willing to content the people*, to *do enough* for them (so the word is), and make them easy, that he might keep them quiet, he *released Barabbas unto them*, who was the scandal and plague of their nation, and *delivered Jesus to be crucified*, who was the glory and blessing of their nation. Though he *had scourged him* before, hoping that would *content* them, and then not designing to crucify him, yet he went on to that; for no wonder that he who could persuade himself to *chastise* one that was innocent (Lu. 23:16), could by degrees persuade himself to *crucify* him.

Christ was *crucified*, for that was, 1. A *bloody* death, and *without blood no remission*, Heb. 9:22. The blood is *the life* (Gen. 9:4); it is the *vehicle* of the *animal* spirits, which *connect* the soul and body, so that the exhausting of the blood is the exhausting of the life. Christ was to lay down *his life* for us, and therefore *shed his blood*. Blood *made atonement for the soul* (Lev. 17:11), and therefore in every sacrifice of propitiation special order was given for the *pouring out* of the blood, and the *sprinkling* of that before the Lord. Now, that Christ might answer all these types, he *shed his blood*. 2. It was a *painful* death; the pains were exquisite and acute, for death made its assaults upon the vitals by the exterior parts, which are *quickest of sense*. Christ died, so as that he might *feel himself die*, because he was to be both the priest and the sacrifice; so that he might be *active* in dying; because he was to *make his soul an offering* for sin. Tully calls crucifixion, *Teterrimum supplicium—A most tremendous punishment*: Christ would meet death in its greatest terror, and so conquer it. 3. It was a *shameful* death, the death of slaves, and the vilest malefactors; so it was accounted among the Romans. The *cross* and the *shame* are put together. God having been injured in his honour by the sin of man, it is *in his honour* that Christ makes him *satisfaction*, not only by denying himself in, and divesting himself of, the honours due to his divine nature, for a time, but by submitting the greatest reproach and ignominy the human nature was capable of being loaded with. Yet this was not the worst. 4. It was a *curled* death; thus it was branded by the Jewish law (Deu. 21:23); *He that is hanged, is accursed of God*, is under a particular mark of God's displeasure. It was the death that Saul's sons were put to, when the guilt of their father's bloody house was to be expiated, 2 Sa. 21:6. Haman and his sons were *hanged*, Esth. 7:10; 9:13. We do not read any of the prophets of the Old Testament that were *hanged*; but now that Christ has submitted to be *hanged upon a tree*, the reproach and curse of that kind of death are quite rolled away, so that it ought to be any hindrance to the comfort of those who die either innocently or penitently, nor any

diminution from, but rather an addition to, the glory of those who die martyrs for Christ, to be as he was, hanged upon a tree.

II. Pilate, to gratify the gay humour of the Roman soldiers, delivered him to them, to be abused and spitefully treated, while they were preparing for the execution. They called together *the whole regiment* that was then in waiting, and they went into an inner hall, where they ignominiously abused our Lord Jesus, as a king, just as in the high priest's hall his servants had ignominiously abused him as a Prophet and Saviour. 1. Do kings wear robes of purple or scarlet? They *clothed him with purple*. This abuse done to Christ in his apparel should be an intimation to Christians, not to make the putting on of apparel *their adorning*, 1 Pt. 3:4. Shall a purple or scarlet robe be matter of pride to a Christian, which was matter of reproach and shame to Christ. 2. Do kings wear *crowns*? They *platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head*. A crown of straw, or rushes, would have been banter enough; but this was pain also. He wore the crown of thorns which we had deserved, that we might wear the crown of glory which he merited. Let us be *taught* by these *thorns*, as Gideon taught the men of Succoth, to hate sin, and be uneasy under it, and to be in love with Jesus Christ, who is here a lily among thorns. If we be at any time afflicted with a *thorn in the flesh*, let it be our comfort, that our high priest is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, having himself known what *thorns in the flesh* meant. 3. Are kings attended with the acclamations of their subjects, *O king, live for ever*? That also is mimicked; they saluted him with "*Hail, King of the Jews*;" such a prince, and such a people, even good enough for one another." 4. Kings have *sceptres* put into their hand, marks of dominion, as the crown is of dignity; to imitate this, they put a *reed in his right hand*. Those that despise the authority of Jesus Christ, as not to be observed and obeyed, who regard not either the precepts of his word, or the threatenings of his wrath, do, in effect, *put a reed in his hand*; nay, and, as these here, *smite him on the head* with it, such is the indignity they do him. 5. Subjects, when they swear allegiance, were wont to *kiss* their sovereign; and this they offered to do, but, instead of that, *spit upon him*. 6. Kings used to be addressed upon the *knee*; and this also they brought into the jest, they *bowed the knee, and worshipped him*; this they did in scorn, to make themselves and one another laugh. We were by sin become liable to *everlasting shame and contempt*, to deliver us from which, our Lord Jesus submitted to this shame and contempt for us. He was thus mocked, not in *his own clothes*, but in another's, to signify that he suffered not for his own sin; the crime was ours, the shame his. Those who pretend subjection to Christ, but at the same time give themselves up to the service of the world and the flesh, do, in effect, the same that they did, who bowed the knee to him in mockery, and abused him with, *Hail, king of the Jews*, when they said, *We have no king but Caesar*. Those that bow the knee to Christ, but do not bow the soul, that *draw nigh to him with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him*, put the same affront upon him that these here did.

III. The soldiers, at the hour appointed, led him away from Pilate's judgment-hall to the place of execution (v. 20), as a sheep to the slaughter; he was *led forth with the workers of iniquity*, though he did no sin. But lest his death, under the load of his cross, which he was to carry, should prevent the further cruelties they intended, they compelled one Simon of Cyrene to carry his cross for him. He *passed by, coming out of the country* or out of the *fields*, not thinking of any such matter. Note, We must not think it strange, if crosses come upon us suddenly, and we be surprised by them. The cross was a very troublesome unwieldy load: but he that carried it a few minutes, had the honour to have his name upon the record in the book of God, though

otherwise an obscure person; so that, wherever this gospel is preached; so that, wherever this gospel is preached, there shall this be told for a memorial to him: in like manner, though *no affliction*, no cross, *for the present, be joyous, but grievous*, yet afterward it yields a crown of glory to them that are exercised thereby.

### Verses 22-32

We have here the *crucifixion* of our Lord Jesus.

I. The *place where* he was crucified; it was called *Golgotha—the place of a scull*: some think, because of the heads of malefactors that were there cut off: it was the common place of execution, as Tyburn, for he was in all respects numbered with the transgressors. I know not how to give any credit to it, but divers of the ancients mention it as a current tradition, that in this place our first father Adam was buried, and they think it highly congruous that there Christ should be crucified; for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. Tertullian, Origen, Chrysostom, and Epiphanius (great names), take notice of it; nay, Cyprian adds, *Creditur âpiis—Many good people believe* that the blood of Christ crucified did trickle down upon the scull of Adam, who was buried in the same place. Something more credible is the tradition, that this mount Calvary was *that mountain in the land of Moriah* (and in the land of Moriah it certainly was, for so the country about Jerusalem was called), on which Isaac was to be offered; and the ram was offered instead of him; and then Abraham had an eye to *this day* of Christ, when he called the place *Jehovah-jireh—The Lord will provide*, expecting that so it would be seen in the *mount of the Lord*.

II. The *time when* he was crucified; it was the *third hour*, v. 25. He was brought before Pilate about the sixth hour (Jn. 19:14), according to the Roman way of reckoning, which John uses, with which ours at this day agrees, that is at six o'clock in the morning; and then, at the *third hour*, according to the Jews' way of reckoning, that is, about nine of the clock in the morning, or soon after, they nailed him to the cross. Dr. Lightfoot thinks the *third hour* is here mentioned, to intimate an aggravation of the wickedness of the priests, they were here prosecuting Christ to the death, though it was after the *third hour*, when they ought to have been attending the service of the temple, and offering the peace-offerings; it being the first day of the *feast of unleavened bread*, when there was to be a *holy convocation*. At that very time, when they should have been, according to the duty of their place, presiding in the public devotions, were they here venting their malice against the Lord Jesus; yet these were the men that seemed so zealous for the temple, and condemned Christ for speaking against it. Note, There are many who pretend to be *for the church*, who yet care not how seldom they *go to church*.

III. The indignities that were done him, when he was nailed to the cross; as if that had not been ignominious enough, they added several things to the ignominy of it.

1. It being the custom to give *wine* to persons that were to be *put to death*, they *mingled* his with *myrrh*, which was *bitter*, and made it *nauseous*; he *tasted* it, but would not drink it; was willing to admit the bitterness of it, but not the benefit of it.
2. The garments of those that were crucified, being, as with us, the executioners' fee, the soldiers *cast lots* upon his garments (v. 24), threw dice (as our soldiers do upon a drum-head), for them: so making themselves merry with his misery, and sitting at their sport while he was hanging in pain.
3. They set up a superscription over his head, by which they intended to reproach him, but really did him both justice and

honour, *The king of the Jews*, v. 26. Here was no crime alleged, but his sovereignty owned. Perhaps Pilate meant to cast disgrace upon Christ as a baffled king, or upon the Jews, who by their importunity had forced him, against his conscience, to condemn Christ, as a people that deserved no better a king than he seemed to be: however, God intended it to be the proclaiming even of Christ upon the cross, the *king of Israel*; though Pilate know not what he wrote, any more than Caiaphas what he said, Jn. 11:51. Christ crucified is king of his church, his spiritual Israel; and even then when he hung on the cross, he was like a king, *conquering* his and his people's enemies, and *triumphing* over them, Col. 2:15. Now he was writing his laws in his own blood, and preparing his favours for his subjects. Whenever we look unto Christ crucified, we must remember the inscription over his head, that he is a king, and we must give up ourselves to be his subjects, as Israelites indeed.

4. They crucified *two thieves* with him, *one on his right hand, the other on his left*, and him in the midst as the worst of the three (v. 27); so great a degree of dishonour did they hereby intend him. And, no doubt, it gave him *disturbance* too. Some that have been imprisoned in the common gaols, for the testimony of Jesus, have complained of the company of cursing, swearing prisoners, more than any other of the grievances of their prison. Now, in the midst of such our Lord Jesus was *crucified*; while he lived he had, and there was occasion, *associated* with sinners, to do them good; and now when he died, he was for the same purpose joined with them, for he *came into the world*, and went out of it, to *save sinners*, even the chief. But this evangelist takes particular notice of the fulfilling of the scriptures in it, v. 28. In that famous prediction of Christ's sufferings (Isa. 53:12), it was foretold that he should be numbered with the *transgressors*, because he was made *sin for us*.

5. The spectators, that is, the generality of them, instead of condoling with him in his misery, added to it by insulting over him. Surely never was such an instance of barbarous inhumanity toward the vilest malefactor: but thus the devil showed the utmost rage against him, and thus he submitted to the greatest dishonours that could be done him.

(1.) Even they that *passed by*, that were no way concerned, *railed on him*, v. 29. If their hearts were so hardened, that their compassions were not moved with such a spectacle, yet they should have thought it enough to have their curiosity gratified; but that will not serve: as if they were not only divested of all humanity, but were devils in human shape, they taunted him, and expressed themselves with the utmost detestation of him, and indignation at him, and shot thick at him their arrows, even *bitter words*. The chief priests, no doubt, put these sarcasms into their mouths, *Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, now, if thou canst, save thyself, and come down from the cross*. They triumph as if now that they had got him to the cross, there were no danger of his *destroying the temple*; whereas the *temple* of which *he* spoke, he was now *destroying*, and did within *three days build it up*; and the temple of which *they* spoke, he did by men, that were *his sword* and *his hand*, destroy not many years after. When secure sinners think the danger is over, it is then most ready to seize them: the day of the Lord *comes as a thief* upon those that *deny* his coming, and say, Where is the promise of it? much more upon those that *defy* his coming, and say, *Let him make speed, and hasten his work*.

(2.) Even the chief priests, who, being *taken from among men* and ordained for men, should have compassion even on those that are out of the way, should be tender of those that are suffering and dying (Heb. 5:1, 2), yet they poured vinegar instead of oil into his wounds, they *talked to the grief* of him *whom God had smitten* (Ps. 69:26), they *mocked him*, they said, *He saved*

*others*, healed and helped them, but now it appears that it was not by his own power, for *himself he cannot save*. They challenged him to *come down from the cross*, if he could, v. 32. Let them but *see* that, and they would *believe*; whereas they would not believe, when he gave them a more convincing sign than that, when he came up from the grave. These chief priests, one would think, might now have found themselves *other work* to do: if they would not go to do their duty in *the temple*, yet they might have been employed in an office not foreign to their profession; though they would not offer any counsel or comfort to the Lord Jesus, yet they might have given some help to the thieves in their dying moments (the monks and priests in Popish countries are very officious about criminals broken upon the wheel, a death much like that of the cross); but they do not think that their business.

(3.) Even they that were crucified with him, reviled him (v. 32); one of them did, so wretchedly was his heart hardened even in the depth of misery, and at the door of eternity.

### **Verses 33-41**

Here we have an account of Christ's dying, how his enemies abused him, and God honoured him at his death.

I. There was a thick *darkness* over *the whole land* (some think over the whole earth), for three hours, from noon till three of the clock. Now the scripture was fulfilled (Amos 8:9), *I will cause the sun to go down at noon*, and I will *darken the earth in the clear day*; and Jer. 15:9, *Her sun is gone down while it is yet day*. The Jews have often demanded of Christ a *sign from heaven*; and now they had one, but such a one as signified the blinding of their eyes. It was a sign of the darkness that was come, and coming, upon the Jewish church and nation. They were doing their utmost to extinguish the Sun of righteousness, which was now setting, and the rising again of which they would never own; and what then might be expected among them but a worse than Egyptian darkness? This intimated to them, that the things which belonged to their peace, were now *hid from their eyes*, and that the day of the Lord was at hand, which should be to them a *day of darkness and gloominess*, Joel 2:1, 2. It was the power of darkness that they were now under, the works of darkness that they were now doing; and such as this should their doom justly be, who *loved darkness rather than light*.

II. Toward the close of this darkness, our Lord Jesus, in the agony of his soul, cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* v. 34. The darkness signified the present cloud which the human soul of Christ was under, when he was making it an *offering for sin*. Mr. Fox, in his *Acts and Monuments* (vol. 3, p. 160), tells of one Dr. Hunter, a martyr in queen Mary's time, who, being fastened to the stake, to be burnt, put up this short prayer, *Son of God, shine upon me*; and immediately the sun in the firmament shone out of the dark cloud, so full in his face, that he was forced to look another way, which was very comfortable to him. But our Lord Jesus, on the contrary, was denied the light of the sun, when he was in his sufferings, to signifying the withdrawing of the light of God's countenance. And this he complained of more than any thing; he did not complain of his disciples' forsaking him, but of his Father's, 1. Because this *wounded his spirit*; and that is a thing *hard to bear* (Prov. 18:14); brought the waters into his soul, Ps. 69:1-3. 2. Because in this especially he was *made sin for us*; our iniquities had deserved *indignation and wrath* upon the soul (Rom. 2:8), and therefore, Christ, being made a *sacrifice*, underwent as much of it as he was capable of; and it could not but bear hard indeed upon him who had lain *in the bosom* of the Father from

eternity, and was *always his light*. These symptoms of divine wrath, which Christ was under in his sufferings, were like that fire from heaven which had been sent sometimes, in extraordinary cases, to consume the sacrifices (as Lev. 9:24; 2 Chr. 7:1; 1 Ki. 18:38); and it was always a token of God's acceptance. The fire that should have fallen upon the *sinner*, if God had not been *pacified*, fell upon the *sacrifice*, as a token that he was so; therefore it now fell upon Christ, and extorted him from this *loud and bitter cry*. When Paul was to be *offered* as a sacrifice for the *service of saints*, he could *joy and rejoice* (Phil. 2:17); but it is another thing to be offered as a sacrifice for *the sin of sinners*. Now, at the *sixth hour*, and so to the *ninth*, the *sun* was *darkened* by an extraordinary eclipse; and if it be true, as some astronomers compute, that in the evening of this day on which Christ died there was an eclipse of the moon, that was natural and expected, in which seven digits of the moon were darkened, and it continued from five o'clock till seven, it is remarkable, and yet further significant of the darkness of the time that then was. When the *sun* shall be *darkened*, the *moon* also shall *not give her light*.

III. Christ's prayer was bantered by them that stood by (v. 35, 36); because he cried, *Eli, Eli*, or (as Mark has it, according to the Syriac dialect) *Eloi, Eloi*, they said, *He calls for Elias*, though they knew very well what he said, and what it signified, *My God, My God*. Thus did they represent him as *praying to saints*, either because he had abandoned God, or God had abandoned him; and hereby they would make him more and more odious to the people. One of them *filled a sponge with vinegar*, and reached it up to him upon a reed; "Let him cool his mouth with that, it is a drink good enough for him," v. 36. This was intended for a further affront and abuse to him; and whoever it was that checked him who did it, did but add to the reproach; "*Let him alone; he has called for Elias: let us see whether Elias will come take him down; and if not, we may conclude that he also hath abandoned him.*"

IV. Christ did again *cry with a loud voice*, and so *gave up the ghost*, v. 37. He was now commending his soul into his Father's hand; and though God is not moved with any *bodily exercise*, yet this loud voice signified the great strength and ardency of affection wherewith he did it; to teach us, in every thing wherein we have to do with God, to put forth our utmost vigour, and to perform all the duties of religion, particularly that of *self-resignation*, with our whole heart and whole soul; and then, though speech fails, that we cannot *cry with a loud voice*, as Christ did, yet if God be the *strength of the heart*, that will not fail. Christ was really and truly *dead*, for he *gave up the ghost*; his human soul departed to the world of spirits, and left his body a breathless clod of clay.

V. Just at that instant that Christ died upon *mount Calvary*, the veil of the *temple* was *rent in twain from the top to the bottom*, v. 38. This bespoke a great deal, 1. Of the terror of the unbelieving Jews; for it was a presage of the utter destruction of their church and nation, which followed not long after; it was like the cutting asunder of the *staff of beauty* (for this veil was exceedingly splendid and glorious, Ex. 26:31), and that was done at the same time when they gave for his price *thirty pieces of silver* (Zec. 11:10, 12), to *break the covenant which he had made with that people*. Now it was time to cry, *Ichabod, The glory is departed from Israel*. Some think that the story which Josephus relates, of the temple door opening of its own accord, with that voice, *Let us depart hence*, some years before the destruction of Jerusalem, is the same with this; but that is not probable: however, this had the same signification, according to that (Hos. 5:14), *I will tear, and go away*. 2. It bespeaks a great deal of

comfort to all believing Christians, for it signifies the consecrating and laying open to us of a *new and living way into the holiest* by the *blood of Jesus*.

VI. The centurion who commanded the detachment which had the oversight of the execution was convinced, and confessed that this Jesus was the *Son of God*, v. 39. One thing that satisfied him, was, that he *so cried out, and gave up the ghost*: that one who was ready to give up the ghost, should be able to cry out so, was very surprising. Of all the sad spectacles of this kind he never observed the like; and that one who had strength to cry so loud, should yet immediately give up the ghost, this also made him wonder; and he said, to the honour of Christ, and the shame of those that abused him, *Truly this man was the Son of God*. But what reason had he to say so? I answer, 1. He had reason to say that he suffered *unjustly*, and had a great deal of wrong done him. Note, He suffered for saying that he was *the Son of God*; and it was true, he did say so, so that if he suffered unjustly, as it was plain by all the circumstances of his suffering that he did, then what he said was true, and he was indeed the *Son of God*. 2. He had reason to say that he was a *favourite of heaven*, and one for whom the almighty power was particularly engaged, seeing how Heaven did him honour at his death, and frowned upon his persecutors. "Surely," thinks he, "this must be some divine person, highly beloved of God." This he expresses by such words as denote his eternal generation as God, and his special designation to the office of Mediator, though he meant not so. Our Lord Jesus, even in the depth of his sufferings and humiliation, was the Son of God, and was declared to be so *with power*.

VII. There were some of his friends, the good women especially, that attended him (v. 40, 41); *There were women looking on afar off*: the *men* durst not be seen at all, the mob was so very outrageous; *Currenti cede furori—Give way to the raging torrent*, they thought, was good counsel now. The women durst not come near, but stood at a distance, overwhelmed with grief. Some of these women are here named. *Mary Magdalene* was one; she had been his patient, and owed all her comfort to his power and goodness, which rescued her out of the possession of seven devils, in gratitude for which she thought she could never do enough for him. *Mary* also was there, *the mother of James the little, Jacobus parvus*, so the word is; probably, he was so called because he was, like Zaccheus, little of stature. This *Mary* was the wife of Cleophas or Alpheus, sister to the virgin *Mary*. These women had followed Christ *from Galilee*, though they were not required to attend the feast, as the males were; but it is probably that they came, in expectation that his temporal kingdom would now shortly be set up, and big with hopes of preferment for themselves, and their relations under him. It is plain that the mother of Zebedee's children was so (Mt. 20:21); and now to see *him* upon a cross, whom they thought to have seen upon a throne, could not but be a great disappointment to them. Note, Those that follow Christ, in expectation of great things in this world by him, and by the profession of his religion, may probably live to see themselves sadly disappointed.

#### **Verses 42-47**

We are here attending the funeral of our Lord Jesus, a solemn, mournful funeral. O that we may by grace be planted in the likeness of it! Observe,

I. How the body of Christ was *begged*. It was, as the dead bodies of malefactors are, at the disposal of the government. Those that hurried him to the cross, designed that he should make *his grave with the wicked*; but God designed he should make it *with*

*the rich* (Isa. 53:9), and so he did. We are here told,

1. When the body of Christ was begged, in order to its being buried, and why such haste was made with the funeral; *The even was come*, and it was *the preparation*, that is, *the day before the sabbath*, v. 42. The Jews were more strict in the observation of the sabbath than of any other feast; and therefore, though this day was itself a *feast-day*, yet they observed it more religiously as the *eve* of the *sabbath*; when they prepared their houses and tables for the *splendid* and *joyful* solemnizing of the sabbath day. Note, The day before the sabbath should be a day of preparation for the sabbath, not of our houses and tables, but of our hearts, which, as much as possible, should be *freed* from the cares and business of the world, and *fixed*, and put in frame for the service and enjoyment of God. Such work is to be done, and such advantages are to be gained on the sabbath day, that it is requisite we should get ready for it a day before; nay, the whole week should be divided between the improvement of the foregoing sabbath and the preparation for the following sabbath.

2. Who was it that begged the body, and took care for the decent interment of it; it was *Joseph of Arimathea*, who is here called an *honourable counsellor* (v. 43), a person of character and distinction, and in an office of public trust; some think *in the state*, and that he was one of Pilate's privy council; his post rather seems to have been *in the church*, he was one of the *great Sanhedrim* of the Jews, or one of the high priest's council. He was *ευσχευμοῦν βουλευτής*—*a counsellor that conducted himself in his place as did become him*. Those are truly honourable, and those only, in place of power and trust, who make conscience of their duty, and whose deportment is agreeable to their preferment. But here is a more shining character put upon him; he was one that *waited for the kingdom of God*, the kingdom of grace on earth, and of glory in heaven, the kingdom of the Messiah. Note, Those who *wait for the kingdom of God*, and hope for an interest in the privileges of it, must show it by their forwardness to own Christ's cause and interest, even then when it seems to be crushed and run down. Observe, Even among the *honourable counsellors* there were some, there was *one* at least, that waited for the kingdom of God, whose faith will condemn the unbelief of all the rest. This man God raised up for this necessary service, when none of Christ's disciples could, or durst, undertake it, having neither purse, nor interest, nor courage, for it. *Joseph went in boldly to Pilate*; though he knew how much it would affront the chief priests, who had loaded him with so much reproach, to see any honour done him, yet he *put on courage*; perhaps at first he was a little afraid, but *tolmeusas*—*taking heart on it*, he determined to show this respect to the remains of the Lord Jesus, let the worst come to the worst.

3. What a surprise it was to Pilate, to hear that he was *dead* (Pilate, perhaps, expecting that he would have saved himself, and come down from the cross), especially that he was *already dead*, that one who seemed to have more than ordinary vigour, should so soon yield to death. Every circumstance of Christ's dying was marvellous; for from first to last his name was called *Wonderful*. Pilate doubted (so some understand it) whether he was yet dead or no, fearing lest he should be imposed upon, and the body should be *taken down alive*, and recovered, whereas the sentence was, as with us, to hang *till the body be dead*. He therefore called the centurion, his own officer, and asked him *whether he had been any while dead* (v. 44), whether it was so long since they perceived any sign of life in him, any breath or motion, that they might conclude he was dead past recall. The centurion could assure him of this, for he had particularly observed how *he gave up the ghost*, v. 39. There was a special

providence in it, that Pilate should be so strict in examining this, that there might be no pretence to say that he was buried alive, and so to take away the truth of his resurrection; and so fully was this determined, that the objection was never started. Thus the truth of Christ gains confirmation, sometimes, even from its enemies.

II. How the body of Christ was *buried*. Pilate gave Joseph leave to take down the body, and do what he pleased with it. It was a wonder the chief priests were not too quick for him, and had not first begged the body of Pilate, to expose it and drag it about the streets, but that remainder of their wrath did God restrain, and gave that invaluable prize to Joseph, who knew how to value it; and the hearts of the priests were so influenced, that they did not oppose it. *Sit divus, modo non sit vivus—We care not for his being adored, provided he be not revived.*

1. Joseph bought *fine linen* to wrap the body in, though in such a case old linen that had been worn might have been thought sufficient. In paying respects to Christ it becomes us to be *generous*, and to serve him with the *best* that can be got, not with that which can be got at the best hand.

2. He *took down* the body, mangled and macerated as it was, and *wrapt it in the linen* as a treasure of great worth. Our Lord Jesus hath commanded himself to be delivered to us sacramentally in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, which we should receive in such a manner as may best express our love to him who loved us and died for us.

3. He *laid it in a sepulchre* of his own, in a private place. We sometimes find it spoken of in the story of the kings of Judah, as a slur upon the memory of the wicked kings, that they were not buried in the *sepulchres of the kings*; our Lord Jesus, though he did no evil but much good, and to him was given the throne of his father David, yet was buried in the graves of the common people, for it was not in this world, but in the other, that *his rest was glorious*. The sepulchre belonged to Joseph. Abraham when he had no other possession in the land of Canaan, yet had a burying-place, but Christ had not so much as that. This sepulchre was *hewn out of a rock*, for Christ died to make the grave a *refuge* and shelter to the saints, and being hewn out of a rock, it is a *strong* refuge. *O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave!* Christ himself is a *hiding place* to his people, that is, as *the shadow of a great rock*.

4. He *rolled a stone to the door of the sepulchre*, for so the manner of the Jews was to bury. When Daniel was put into the lion's den, a stone was laid to the mouth of it to keep him in, as here to the door of Christ's sepulchre, but neither of them could keep off the angels' visits to the prisoners.

5. Some of the good women attended the funeral, and *beheld where he was laid*, that they might come after the sabbath to anoint the dead body, because they had not time to do it now. When Moses, the mediator and lawgiver of the Jewish church, was buried, care was taken that no man should *know of his sepulchre* (Deu. 34:6), because the respect of the people towards his person were to die with him; but when our great Mediator and Lawgiver was buried, special notice was taken of his sepulchre, because he was to *rise again*: and the care taken of his body, bespeaks the care which he himself will take concerning his body the church. Even when it seems to be a dead body, and as a valley full of dry bones, it shall be preserved in order to a resurrection; as shall also the dead bodies of the saints, with whose dust there is a covenant in force which shall not be forgotten. Our meditations on Christ's burial should lead us to think of our own, and should help to make the grave familiar to

us, and so to render that bed easy which we must shortly make in the darkness. Frequent thoughts of it would not only take off the dread and terror of it, but quicken us, since the *graves* are always ready for us, to get ready for the graves, Job 17:1.

## Chapter 16

In this chapter, we have a short account of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus: and the joys and triumphs which it furnished all believers with, will be very acceptable to those who sympathised and suffered with Christ in the foregoing chapters. Here is, I. Christ's resurrection notified by an angel to the women that came to the sepulchre to anoint him (v. 1-8). II. His appearance to Mary Magdalene, and the account she gave of it to the disciples (v. 9-11). III. His appearance to the two disciples, going to Emmaus, and the report they made of it to their brethren (v. 12, 13). IV. His appearance to the eleven with the commission he gave them to set up his kingdom in the world, and full instructions and credentials in order thereunto, (v. 14-18). V. His ascension into heaven, the apostles' close application to their work, and God's owning of them in it (v. 19, 20).

### Verses 1-8

Never was there such a *sabbath* since the sabbath was first instituted as this was, which the first words of this chapter tell us was *now past*; during all this sabbath our Lord Jesus lay in the grave. It was *to him* a sabbath of *rest*, but a *silent* sabbath, it was to his disciples a melancholy sabbath, spent in tears and fears. Never were the sabbath services in the temple such an *abomination to God*, though they had been often so, as they were now, when the chief priests, who presided in them, had their hands full of blood, the blood of Christ. Well, this sabbath is over, and the first day of the week is the first day of a new world. We have here,

I. The affectionate visit which the good women that had attended Christ, now made it to his sepulchre—not a *superstitious* one, but a *pious* one. They set out from their lodgings *very early in the morning*, at break of day, or sooner; but either they had a long walk, or they met with some hindrance, so that it was *sun-rising* by the time they got to the sepulchre. They had *bought sweet spices* too, and came not only to *bedew* the dead body with their tears (for nothing could more renew their grief than this), but to *perfume* it with their *spices*, v. 1. Nicodemus had bought a very large quantity of *dry spices, myrrh and aloes*, which served to dry the wounds, and dry up the blood, Jn. 19:39. But these good women did not think that enough; they bought spices, perhaps of another kind, some perfumed oils, to *anoint him*. Note, The respect which others have showed to Christ's name, should not hinder us from showing our respect to it.

II. The care they were in about the rolling away of the stone, and the superseding of that care (v. 3, 4); *They said among themselves*, as they were coming along, and now drew near the sepulchre, *Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? For it was very great*, more than they with their united strength could move. They should have thought of this before they came out, and then discretion would have bid them not go, unless they had those to go with them, who could do it. And there was another difficulty much greater than this, to be got over, which they knew nothing of, to wit, a guard of soldiers set to *keep* the sepulchre; who, had they come before they were frightened away, would have frightened them away. But their gracious love to Christ carried them to the sepulchre; and see how by the time they came thither, both these difficulties were removed, both the *stone* which they *knew of*, and the *guard* which they *knew not of*. *They saw that the stone was rolled away*, which was the first thing that amazed them. Note, They who are carried by a holy zeal, to seek Christ diligently, will find the

difficulties that lie in their way strangely to vanish, and themselves helped over them beyond their expectation.

III. The assurance that was given them by an angel, that the Lord Jesus was risen from the dead, and had taken leave of his sepulchre, and had left him there to tell those so who came thither to enquire after him.

1. They *entered into the sepulchre*, at least, a little way in, and saw that the body of Jesus was not there where they had left it the other night. He, who by his death undertook to pay our debt, in his resurrection took out our acquittance, for it was a fair and legal discharge, by which it appeared that his satisfaction was accepted for all the purposes for which it was intended, and the matter in dispute was determined by an incontestable evidence that he was the Son of God.

2. They saw a *young man sitting on the right side* of the sepulchre. The angel appeared in the likeness of *a man*, of a *young man*; for angels, though created in the beginning, grow not *old*, but are always the same perfection of beauty and strength; and so shall glorified saints be, when they are *as the angels*. This angel was *sitting on the right hand* as they went into the sepulchre, *clothed with a long white garment*, a garment down to the feet, such as great men were arrayed with. The sight of him might justly have encouraged them, but they were *affrighted*. Thus many times that which should be matter of comfort to us, through our own mistakes and misapprehensions proves a terror to us.

3. He silences their fears by assuring them that here was cause enough for triumph, but none for trembling (v. 6); *He saith to them, Be not affrighted*. Note, As angels rejoice in the conversation of sinners, so they do also in the consolation of sinners. Be not affrighted, for, (1.) "Ye are faithful lovers of Jesus Christ, and therefore, instead of being *confounded*, out to be *comforted*. *Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified*." Note, The enquiries of believing souls after Christ, have a particular regard to him as *crucified* (1 Co. 2:2), that they may know him, and the fellowship of his sufferings. His being *lifted up from the earth*, is that which *draws all men unto him*. Christ's cross is the ensign to which the Gentiles seek. Observe, He speaks of Jesus as one that *was crucified*; "The thing is *past*, that scene is over, ye must not dwell so much upon the sad circumstances of his crucifixion as to be unapt to believe the joyful news of his resurrection. He was *crucified in weakness*, yet that doth not hinder but that he may be raised in power, and therefore ye that seek him, be not *afraid of missing* of him." He *was* crucified, but he *is* glorified; and the shame of his sufferings is so far from lessening the glory of his exaltation, that that glory perfectly wipes away all the reproach of his sufferings. And therefore after his entrance upon his glory, he never drew any veil over his sufferings, nor was shy of having his cross spoken of. The angel here that proclaims his resurrection, calls him Jesus that *was crucified*. He himself owns (Rev. 1:18), *I am he that liveth, and was dead*; and he appears in the midst of the praises of the heavenly host as a *Lamb that had been slain*, Rev. 5:6. (2.) "It will therefore be good news to you, to hear that, instead of anointing him dead, you may rejoice in him living. *He is risen, he is not here*, not dead, but alive again. We cannot as yet show you *him*, but hereafter you will see him, and you may here see *the place where they laid him*. You see he is gone hence, not stolen either by his enemies or by his friends, but *risen*."

4. He orders them to give speedy notice of this to his disciples. Thus they were made the apostles of the apostles, which was a recompence of their affection and fidelity to him, in attending him on the cross, to the grave, and in the grave. They first came, and were first served; no other of the disciples durst come near his sepulchre, or enquire after him; so little danger was there of

their coming by night to *steal him away*, that none came near him but a few women, who were not able so much as to *roll away the stone*.

(1.) They must tell the *disciples*, that *he is risen*. It is a dismal time with them, their dear Master is dead, and all their hopes and joys are buried in his grave; they look upon their cause as sunk, and themselves ready to fall an easy prey into the hands of their enemies, so that there remains no more spirit in them, they are perfectly at their wits' end, and every one is contriving how to shift for himself. "O, go quickly to them," said the angel, "tell them that *their Master is risen*; this will put some life and spirit into them, and keep them from sinking into despair." Note, [1.] Christ is not ashamed to own his poor disciples, no, not now that he is in his exalted state; his preferment doth not make him shy of them, for he took early care to have it *notified* to them. [2.] Christ is not extreme to mark what *they* do amiss, whose hearts are upright with him. The disciples had very unkindly deserted him, and yet he testified this concern for them. [3.] Seasonable comforts shall be sent to those that are lamenting after the Lord Jesus, and he will find a time to manifest himself to them.

(2.) They must be sure to tell Peter. This is particularly taken notice of by this evangelist, who is supposed to have written by Peter's direction. If it were told the disciples, it would be told Peter, for, as a token of his repentance for disowning his Master, he still associated with his disciples; yet he is particularly named: *Tell Peter*, for, [1.] It will be good news to him, more welcome to him than to any of them; for he is in sorrow for sin, and no tidings can be more welcome to true penitents than to hear of the resurrection of Christ, because he rose again for *their justification*. [2.] He will be afraid, lest the joy of this good news do not belong to him. Had the angel said only, *Go, tell his disciples*, poor Peter would have been ready to sigh, and say, "But I doubt I cannot look upon myself as one of them, for I disowned him, and deserve to be disowned by him;" to obviate that, "Go to Peter by name, and tell him, he shall be as welcome as any of the rest to *see him in Galilee*." Note, A sight of Christ will be very welcome to a true penitent, and a true penitent shall be very welcome to a sight of Christ, for there is joy in heaven concerning him.

(3.) They must appoint them all, and Peter by name, to give him the meeting in Galilee, as *he said unto you*, Mt. 26:32. In their journey down into Galilee they would have time to recollect themselves, and call to mind what he had often said to them there, that he should suffer and die, and *the third day be raised again*; whereas while they were at Jerusalem, among strangers and enemies, they could not recover themselves from the fright they had been in, nor compose themselves to the due entertainment of better tidings. Note, [1.] All the meetings between Christ and his disciples are of his own appointing. [2.] Christ never forgets his appointment, but will be sure to meet his people with the promised blessing in every place where he records his name. [3.] In all meetings between Christ and his disciples, he is the most forward. *He goes before you*.

IV. The account which the women did bring of this to the disciples (v. 8); They *went out quickly*, and *ran from the sepulchre*, to make all the haste they could to the disciples, *trembling* and *amazed*. See how much we are enemies to ourselves and our own comfort, in not considering and mixing faith with that Christ hath said to us. Christ had often told them, that *the third day he would rise again*; had they given that its due notice and credit, they would have come to the sepulchre, expecting to have found him risen, and would have received the news of it with a joyful assurance, and not with all this terror and amazement.

But, being ordered to tell the disciples, because they were to tell it to all the world, they would not tell it to any one else, they showed not any thing of it to any man that they *met by the way*, for *they were afraid*, afraid it was too good news to be true. Note, Our disquieting fears often hinder us from doing that service to Christ and to the souls of men, which if faith and the *joy of faith* were strong, we might do.

### Verses 9-13

We have here a very short account of two of Christ's appearances, and the little credit which the report of them gained with the disciples.

I. He appeared to Mary Magdalene, to her first in the garden, which we have a particular narrative of, Jn. 20:14. It was she *out of whom he had cast seven devils*; much was forgiven her, and much was given her, and done for her, and she *loved much*; and this honour Christ did her, that she was the first that saw him after his resurrection. The closer we cleave to Christ, the sooner we may expect to see him, and the more to see of him.

Now, 1. She brings notice of what she had seen, to the disciples; not only to the *eleven*, but to the rest that followed him, *as they mourned and wept*, v. 10. Now was the time of which Christ had told them, that they should *mourn and lament*, Jn. 16:20. And it was an evidence of their great love to Christ, and the deep sense they had of their loss of him. But when their *weeping* had *endured a night* or two, comfort returned, as Christ has promised; *I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice*. Better news cannot be brought to disciples in tears, than to tell them of Christ's resurrection. And we should study to be comforters to disciples that are mourners, by communicating to them our experiences, and what we have *seen of Christ*.

2. They could not give credit to the report she brought them. They heard that *he was alive*, and had been seen of her. The story was plausible enough, and yet *they believed not*. They would not say that she made the story herself, or designed to deceive them; but they fear that she is *imposed upon*, and that it was but a fancy that she *saw him*. Had they believed the *frequent* predictions of it from his own mouth, they would not have been now so incredulous of the report of it.

II. He appeared to two of the disciples, *as they went into the country*, v. 12. This refers, no doubt, to that which is largely related (Lu. 24:13, etc.), of which passed between Christ and the two disciples *going to Emmaus*. He is here said to have appeared to them in *another form*, in another dress than what he usually wore, in the form of a *traveller*, as, in the garden, in such a dress, that Mary Magdalene took him for the gardener; but that he had really his own countenance, appears by this, that *their eyes were holden, that they should not know him*; and when that restraint on *their* eyes was taken off, immediately they *knew him*, Lu. 24:16–31. Now,

1. These *two* witnesses gave in their *testimony* to this proof of Christ's resurrection; *They went and told it to the residue*, v. 13. Being *satisfied* themselves, they were desirous to give their brethren the *satisfaction* they had, that they might be comforted as they were.

2. This did not gain credit with all; *Neither believed they them*. They suspected that their eyes also deceived them. Now there was a wise providence in it, the proofs of Christ's resurrection were given in thus *gradually*, and admitted thus *cautiously*, that so the assurance with which the apostles preached this doctrine afterward, when they ventured their all upon it, might be the

more satisfying. We have the more reason to believe those who did themselves believe so slowly: had they swallowed it presently, they might have been thought *credulous*, and their testimony the less to be *regarded*; but their *disbelieving* at first, shows that they did not believe it afterward but upon a full conviction.

### Verses 14-18

Here is, I. The *conviction* which Christ gave his apostles of the truth of his resurrection (v. 14); He *appeared to them* himself, when they were all together, *as they sat at meat*, which gave him an opportunity to *eat and drink with them*, for their full satisfaction; see Acts 10:41. And still, when he appeared to them, he *upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart*, for even at the general meeting in *Galilee, some doubted*, as we find Mt. 28:17. Note, The evidences of the truth of the gospel are so full, that those who receive it not, may justly be *upbraided* with their unbelief; and it is owing not to any weakness or deficiency in the proofs, but to the *hardness of their heart*, its senselessness and stupidity. Though they had not till now seen him themselves, they are justly blamed *because they believed not them who had seen him after he was risen*; and perhaps it was owing in part to the *pride of their hearts*, that they did not; for they thought, "If indeed he be risen, to *whom should he delight to do the honour* of showing himself but to us?" And if he *pass them by*, and show himself to *others* first, they cannot believe it is he. Thus many disbelieve the doctrine of Christ, because they think it *below them* to give credit to such as he had chosen to be the witnesses and publishers of it. Observe, It will not suffice for an excuse of our infidelity in the great day, to say, "*We did not see him* after he was risen," for we ought to have believed the testimony of those who did see him.

II. The *commission* which he gave them to set up his kingdom among men by the preaching of his *gospel*, the glad tidings of reconciliation to God through a Mediator. Now observe,

1. *To whom* they were to preach *the gospel*. Hitherto they had been sent only to *the lost sheep of the house of Israel*, and were forbidden to go into the *way of the Gentiles*, or into any city of the Samaritans; but now their commission is enlarged, and they are authorized to *go into all the world*, into all parts of the world, the habitable world, and to *preach the gospel* of Christ to *every creature*, to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews; to every human creature that is capable of receiving it. "Inform them concerning Christ, the history of *his life*, and *death*, and *resurrection*; instruct them in the *meaning* and *intention* of these, and of the advantages which the children of men have, or may have, hereby; and invite them, without exception, to come and share in them. This is *gospel*. Let this be *preached* in all places, to all persons." These eleven men could not themselves preach it to all the world, much less to *every creature* in it; but they and the other disciples, seventy in number, with those who should afterward to be added to them, must *disperse* themselves several ways, and, wherever they went, carry the gospel along with them. They must send *others* to those places whither they could not *go themselves*, and, in short, make it the business of their lives to send those glad tidings *up and down the world* with all possible fidelity and care, not as an amusement or entertainment, but as a solemn message from God to men, and an appointed means of making men happy. "Tell as many as you can, and bid them tell others; it is a message of universal concern, and *therefore*, ought to *have* a universal welcome, because it *gives* a universal welcome."

2. What is the *summary of the gospel* they are to preach (v. 16); "Set before the world life and death, good and evil. Tell the

children of men that they are all in a state of misery and danger, *condemned* by their prince, and *conquered* and *enslaved* by their enemies." This is supposed in their being *saved*, which they would not need to be if they were not *lost*. "Now go and tell them," (1.) "That if they *believe the gospel*, and give up themselves to be Christ's disciples; if they *renounce* the devil, the world, and the flesh, and be *devoted* to Christ as their prophet, priest, and king, and to God in Christ a their God in covenant, and evidence by their constant adherence to this covenant their sincerity herein, they *shall be saved* from the guilt and power of sin, it shall not *rule* them, it shall not *ruin* them. He that is a true Christian, shall be saved through Christ." *Baptism* was appointed to be the *inaugurating* rite, by which those that embraced Christ owned him; but it is here put rather for the *thing signified* than for the sign, for Simon Magus *believed* and was *baptized*, yet was not *saved*, Acts 8:13. *Believing with the heart, and confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus* (Rom. 10:9), seems to be much the same with this here. Or thus, We must assent to gospel-truths, and *consent* to gospel-terms. (2.) "*If they believe not*, if they receive not the record God gives concerning his Son, they cannot expect any other way of salvation, but must inevitably perish; *they shall be damned*, by the sentence of a *despised* gospel, added to that of a broken law." And even this is *gospel*, it is good news, that nothing else but unbelief shall damn men, which is a sin against the remedy. Dr. Whitby here observes, that they who hence infer "that the infant seed of believers are not capable of baptism, because they cannot believe, must hence also infer that they cannot be saved; *faith* being here more expressly required to salvation than to baptism. And that in the latter clause baptism is omitted, because it is not simply the want of baptism, but the contemptuous neglect of it, which makes men guilty of damnation, otherwise infants might be damned for the mistakes or profaneness of their parents."

3. What power they should be endowed with, for the confirmation of the doctrine they were to preach (v. 17); *These signs shall follow them that believe*. Not that all who believe, shall be able to produce these signs, but some, even as many as were employed in propagating the faith, and bringing others to it; for signs are intended *for them that believe not*; see 1 Co. 14:22. It added much to the glory and evidence of the gospel, that the preachers not only wrought miracles themselves, but conferred upon others a power to work miracles, which power *followed* some of them that believed, wherever they went to preach. They shall do wonders *in Christ's name*, the same name into which they were baptized, in the virtue of power derived from him, and fetched in by prayer. Some particular signs are mentioned; (1.) They shall *cast out devils*; this power was more common among Christians than any other, and lasted longer, as appears by the testimonies of Justin Martyr, Origen, Irenaeus, Tertullian Minutius Felix, and others, cited by Grotius on this place. (2.) They shall *speak with new tongues*, which they had never learned, or been acquainted with; and this was both a *miracle* (a miracle *upon the mind*), for the confirming of the truth of the gospel, and a *means* of spreading the gospel among those nations that had not heard it. It saved the preachers a vast labour in learning the languages; and, no doubt, they who by *miracle* were made *masters of languages*, were *complete* masters of them and of all their native elegancies, which were proper both to *instruct* and *affect*, which would very much recommend them and their preaching. (3.) They shall *take up serpents*. This was fulfilled in Paul, who was not hurt by the *viper* that *fastened on his hand*, which was acknowledged a great miracle by the barbarous people, Acts 28:5, 6. They shall be kept unhurt by that *generation of vipers* among whom they live, and by the malice of the *old serpent*. (4.) If they be compelled by their persecutors

to *drink any deadly poisonous thing, it shall not hurt them*: of which very thing some instances are found in ecclesiastical history. (5.) They shall not only be preserved from hurt themselves, but they shall be enabled to do good to others; *They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover*, as multitudes had done by their master's *healing* touch. Many of the elders of the church had this power, as appears by Jam. 5:14, where, as an instituted sign of this miraculous healing, they are said to *anoint the sick with oil in the name of the Lord*. With what assurance of success might they go about executing their commission, when they had such credentials as these to produce!

### **Verses 19-20**

Here is, 1. Christ *welcomed* into the *upper world* (v. 19): *After the Lord had spoken* what he had to say to his disciples, he *went up into heaven*, in a cloud; which we have a particular account of (Acts 1:9), and he had not only an admission, but an abundant *entrance*, into his kingdom there; he was *received up*, received in state, with loud acclamations of the heavenly hosts; and he *sat on the right hand of God*: sitting in a posture of *rest*, for now he had finished his work, and a posture of *rule*, for now he took possession of his kingdom; he sat *at the right hand of God*, which denotes the sovereign dignity he is advanced to, and the universal agency he is entrusted with. Whatever God does concerning us, gives to us, or accepts from us, it is *by his Son*. Now he is glorified with the glory he had before the world.

2. Christ *welcomed* in this *lower world*; his being *believed on in the world*, and *received up into glory*, are put together, 1 Tim. 3:16. (1.) We have here the apostles working diligently for him; they *went forth, and preached every where* far and near. Though the doctrine they preached, was *spiritual* and *heavenly*, and directly contrary to the *spirit* and *genius* of the world, though it met with abundance of opposition, and was utterly destitute of all secular supports and advantages, yet the preachers of it were neither *afraid* nor *ashamed*; they were so industrious in spreading the gospel, that within a few years the sound of it *went forth into the ends of the earth*, Rom. 10:18. (2.) We have here God *working* effectually *with them*, to make their labours successful, by *confirming the word with signs following*, partly by the miracles that were wrought upon the *bodies* of the people, which were divine seals to the Christian doctrine, and partly by the influence it had upon the *minds* of the people, through the operation of the Spirit of God, see Heb. 2:4. These were properly *signs following* the word—the reformation of the world, the destruction of idolatry, the conversion of sinners, the comfort of saints; and these signs still follow it, and that they may do so more and more, for the honour of Christ and the good of mankind, the evangelist prays, and teaches us to say *Amen*. Father in heaven, thus let thy name be hallowed, and let thy kingdom come.