

CHAPTER 10

In this chapter we have,

- I.** The ample commission which Christ gave to the seventy disciples to preach the gospel, and to confirm it by miracles; and the full instructions he gave them how to manage themselves in the execution of their commissions, and great encouragements therein (v. 1-16).
- II.** The report which the seventy disciples made to their Master of the success of their negotiation, and his discourse thereupon (v. 17-24).
- III.** Christ's discourse with a lawyer concerning the way to heaven, and the instructions Christ gave him by a parable to look upon every one as his neighbour whom he had occasion to show kindness to, or receive kindness from (v. 25-37).
- IV.** Christ's entertainment at Martha's house, the reproof he gave to her for her care about the world, and his commendation of Mary for her care about her soul (v. 38-42).

LUKE 10:1-16

THE MISSION OF THE SEVENTY

We have here the sending forth of seventy disciples, two and two, into divers parts of the country, to preach the gospel, and to work miracles in those places which Christ himself designed to visit, to make way for his entertainment. This is not taken notice of by the other evangelists: but the instructions here given them are much the same with those given to the twelve. Observe,

I. Their number: they were seventy. As in the choice of twelve apostles Christ had an eye to the twelve patriarchs, the twelve tribes, and the twelve princes of those tribes, so here he seems to have an eye to the *seventy* elders of Israel. So many went up with Moses and Aaron to the mount, and *saw the glory of the God of Israel* (~~241~~ Exodus 24:1, 9), and so many were afterwards chosen to assist Moses in the government, in order to which the

Spirit of prophecy came unto them, ^{<0412>}Numbers 11:24, 25. The *twelve wells of water* and the *seventy palm-trees* that were at Elim were a figure of the *twelve apostles* and the *seventy disciples*, ^{<0157>}Exodus 15:27. They were seventy elders of the Jews that were employed by Ptolemy king of Egypt in turning the Old Testament into Greek, whose translation is thence called the *Septuagint*. The great sanhedrim consisted of this number. Now,

1. We are glad to find that Christ had so many followers fit to be sent forth; his labour was not altogether in vain, though he met with much opposition. Note, Christ's interest is a *growing* interest, and his followers, like Israel in Egypt, though *afflicted* shall *multiply*. These *seventy*, though they did not attend him so closely and constantly as the *twelve* did, were nevertheless the constant hearers of his doctrine, and witnesses of his miracles, and believed in him. Those three mentioned in the close of the foregoing chapter might have been of these seventy, if they would have applied themselves in good earnest to their business. These seventy are those of whom Peter speaks as "*the men who companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,*" and were part of the one hundred and twenty three spoken of, ^{<0415>}Acts 1:15, 21. Many of those that were the companions of the apostles, whom we read of in the Acts and the Epistles, we may suppose, were of these seventy disciples.

2. We are glad to find there was work for so many ministers, hearers for so many preachers: thus the grain of mustard-seed began to *grow*, and the savour of the leaven to diffuse itself in the meal, in order to the leavening of the whole.

II. Their work and business: He sent them *two and two*, that they might strengthen and encourage one another. *If one fall, the other will help to raise him up*. He sent them, not to all the cities of Israel, as he did the *twelve*, but only *to every city and place whither he himself would come* (v. 1), as his harbingers; and we must suppose, though it is not recorded, that Christ soon after went to all those places whither he now sent them, though he could stay but a little while in a place. Two things they were ordered to do, the same that Christ did wherever he came: —

1. They must *heal the sick* (v. 9), heal them *in the name of Jesus*, which would make people long to see this Jesus, and ready to entertain him whose name was so powerful.

2. They must publish the approach of the kingdom of God, its approach *to them*: “Tell them this, *The kingdom of God is come nigh to you*, and you now stand fair for an admission into it, if you will but look about you. Now is the *day of your visitation*, know and understand it.” It is good to be made sensible of our advantages and opportunities, that we may lay hold of them. When the *kingdom of God comes nigh us*, it concerns us to go forth to meet it.

III. The instructions he gives them.

1. They must set out with prayer (v. 2); and, in prayer,

(1.) They must be duly affected with the necessities of the souls of men, which called for their help. They must *look about*, and see how *great the harvest was*, what abundance of people there were that wanted to have the gospel preached to them and were willing to receive it, nay, that had at this time their expectations raised of the coming of the Messiah and of his kingdom. There was corn ready to shed and be lost for want of hands to gather it in. Note, Ministers should apply themselves to their work under a deep concern for *precious souls*, looking upon them as the riches of this world, which ought to be secured for Christ. They must likewise be concerned that the *labourers were so few*. The Jewish teachers were indeed many, but they were not labourers; they did not gather in souls to God's kingdom, but to their own interest and party. Note, Those that are good ministers themselves wish that there were more good ministers, for there is work for more. It is common for tradesmen not to care how few there are of their own trade; but Christ would have the labourers in his vineyard reckon it a matter of complaint when the *labourers are few*.

(2.) They must earnestly desire to receive their mission from God, that *he* would send them forth as *labourers into his harvest* who is the *Lord of the harvest*, and that he would send others forth; for, if God send them forth, they may hope he will go along with them and give them success. Let them therefore say, as the prophet (²⁰⁶⁸Isaiah 6:8), *Here I am, send me*. It is desirable to receive our commission from God, and then we may go on boldly.

2. They must set out with an expectation of trouble and persecution: “*Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves*; but *go your ways*, and resolve to make the best of it. Your enemies will be as *wolves*, bloody and cruel, and ready to pull you to pieces; in their threatenings and revilings,

they will be as *howling* wolves to *terrify* you; in their persecutions of you, they will be as *ravening* wolves to *tear* you. But you must be as *lambs*, peaceable and patient, though made an easy prey of.” It would have been very hard thus to be sent forth as *sheep among wolves*, if he had not endured them with his spirit and courage.

3. They must not encumber themselves with a load of provisions, as if they were going a long voyage, but depend upon God and their friends to provide what was convenient for them: “Carry neither a *purse* for money, nor a *scrip* or knapsack for clothes or victuals, nor new *shoes* (as before to the twelve, ^{}Luke 9:3); and *salute no man by the way*.” This command Elisha gave to his servant, when he sent him to see the Shunamite's dead child, ^{}2 Kings 4:29. Not that Christ would have his ministers to be rude, morose, and unmannerly; but,

(1.) They must go as men *in haste*, that had their particular places assigned them, where they must deliver their message, and in their way directly to those places must not hinder or retard themselves with needless ceremonies or compliments.

(2.) They must go as *men of business*, business that relates to another world, which they must be intent in, and intent upon, and therefore must not entangle themselves with conversation about secular affairs. *Minister verbi est; hoc age* — *You are a minister of the word; attend to your office*.

(3.) They must go as *serious* men, and *men in sorrow*. It was the custom of mourners, during the first seven days of their mourning, not to *salute any*, ^{}Job 2:13. Christ was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and it was fit that by this and other signs his messengers should resemble him, and likewise show themselves affected with the calamities of mankind which they came to relieve, and touched with a feeling of them.

4. They must show, not only *their goodwill*, but *God's good-will*, to all to whom they came, and leave the issue and success to him that knows the heart, v. 5, 6.

(1.) The charge given them was, Whatsoever *house* they *entered into*, they must say, *Peace be to this house*. Here,

[1.] They are supposed to enter into *private houses*; for, being not admitted into the synagogues, they were forced to preach where they could have liberty. And, as their public preaching was driven into houses, so

thither they carried it. Like their Master, wherever they *visited*, they *preached from house to house*, ~~4HB~~ Acts 5:42; 20:20. Christ's church was at first very much *a church in the house*.

[2.] They are instructed to say, "*Peace be to this house*, to all under this roof, to this family, and to all that belong to it." *Peace be to you* was the common form of salutation among the Jews. They must not use it in *formality*, according to custom, to those they met on the way, because they must use it with *solemnity* to those whose houses they entered into:

"*Salute no man by the way* in compliment, but to those into whose house ye enter, say, *Peace be to you*, with seriousness and in reality; for this is intended to be more than a compliment." Christ's ministers go into all the world, to say, in Christ's name, *Peace be to you*. *First*, We are to *propose* peace to all, to *preach peace by Jesus Christ*, to proclaim the gospel of peace, the covenant of peace, *peace on earth*, and to invite the children of men to come and take the benefit of it. *Secondly*, We are to *pray* for peace to all. We must earnestly desire the salvation of the souls of those we preach to, and offer up those desires to God in prayer; and it may be well to let them know that we do thus pray for them, and bless them in the name of the Lord.

(2.) The success was to be different, according to the different dispositions of those whom they preached to and prayed for. According as the inhabitants were sons of peace or not, so their peace should or should not *rest upon the house*. *Recipitur ad modum recipientis* — *The quality of the receiver determines the nature of the reception*.

[1.] "You will meet with some that are the *sons of peace*, that by the operations of divine grace, pursuant to the designations of the divine counsel, are ready to admit the word of the gospel in the light and love of it, and have their hearts made as soft wax to receive the impressions of it. Those are qualified to receive the comforts of the gospel in whom there is a good work of grace wrought. And, as to those, *your peace* shall find them out and *rest upon them*; your prayers for them shall be heard, the promises of the gospel shall be *confirmed* to them, the privileges of it *conferred* on them, and the fruit of both shall remain and continue with them — a good part that shall not be *taken away*."

[2.] "You will meet with others that are no ways disposed to hear or heed your message, whole houses that have not one *son of peace* in them." Now it is certain that our peace shall *not come upon them*, they have no part nor

lot in the matter; the blessing that rests upon the *sons of peace* shall never come upon the sons of Belial, nor can any expect the blessings of the covenant that will not come under the bonds of it. But it shall *return to us again*; that is, we shall have the comfort of having done our duty to God and discharged our trust. Our prayers like David's shall return *into our own bosom* (^{<498>}Psalm 35:13) and we shall have commission to go on in the work. Our peace shall return to us again, not only to be enjoyed by ourselves, but to be communicated to others, to the next we meet with, them that are *sons of peace*.

5. They must *receive* the kindnesses of those that should *entertain* them and *bid them welcome*, v. 7, 8. “Those that receive the gospel will receive you that preach it, and give you entertainment; you must not think to raise estates, but you may depend upon a subsistence; and,”

(1.) “Be not *shy*; do not suspect our welcome, nor be afraid of being troublesome, but *eat and drink heartily such things as they give*; for, whatever kindness they show you, it is but a small return for the kindness you do them in bringing the glad tidings of *peace*. You will deserve it, for *the labourer is worthy of his hire*, the labourer in the work of the ministry is so, if he be indeed a *labourer*; and it is not an act of charity, but of justice, in those who are *taught in the word to communicate to those that teach them*”

(2.) “Be not *nice* and *curious* in your diet: *Eat and drink such things as they give* (v. 7), *such things as are set before you*, v. 8. Be thankful for plain food, and do not find fault, though it be not dressed according to art.” It ill becomes Christ's disciples to be *desirous of dainties*. As he has not tied them up to the Pharisees' superstitious fasts, so he has not allowed the luxurious feasts of the Epicureans. Probably, Christ here refers to the traditions of the elders about their meat which were so many that those who observed them were extremely critical, you could hardly set a dish of meat before them, but there was some scruple or other concerning it; but Christ would not have them to regard those things, but eat what was given them, *asking no question for conscience' sake*.

6. They must *denounce* the judgments of God against those who should *reject* them and their *message*: “If you *enter into a city*, and they *do not receive you*, if there be none there disposed to hearken to your doctrine, leave them, v. 10. If they will not *give you welcome* into their houses, do you *give them warning* in their streets.” He orders them to (^{<495>}Luke 9:5)

do as he had ordered the apostles to do: “Say to them, not with rage, or scorn, or resentment, but with compassion to their poor perishing souls, and a holy dread of the ruin which they are bringing upon themselves, *Even the dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you*, v. 11. From them do not receive any kindnesses at all, be not beholden to them. It cost that prophet of the Lord dear who accepted a meal's meat with a prophet in Bethel, ^{<4112>}1 Kings 13:21, 22. Tell them that you will not carry with you the dust of their city; let them take it to themselves, for *dust they are*.” It shall be a witness for Christ's messengers that they had been there according to their Master's order; *tender* and *refusal* were a discharge of their trust. But it shall be a witness against the recusants that they would not give Christ's messengers any entertainment, no, not so much as water to wash their feet with, but they were forced to wipe off the dust. “But tell them plainly, and bid them *be sure* of it, *The kingdom of God is come nigh to you*. Here is a fair offer made you; if you have not the benefit of it, it is your own fault. The gospel is brought to your doors; if you shut your doors against it, your blood is upon your own head. Now that the *kingdom of God is come nigh to you*, if you will not come up to it, and come into it, your sin will be inexcusable, and your condemnation intolerable.” Note, The fairer offers we have of grace and life by Christ, the more we shall have to answer for another day, if we slight these offers: *It shall be more tolerable for Sodom than for that city*, v. 12. The Sodomites indeed rejected the warning given them by Lot; but rejecting the gospel is a more heinous crime, and will be punished accordingly *in that day*. He means the day of judgment (v. 14), but calls it, by way of emphasis, *that day*, because it is the last and great day, the day when we must account for all the *days of time*, and have our state determined for the *days of eternity*.

Upon this occasion, the evangelist repeats,

(1.) The particular doom of those cities wherein most of Christ's mighty works were done, which we had, ^{<4112>}Matthew 11:20, etc. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, all bordering upon the sea of Galilee, where Christ was most conversant, are the places here mentioned.

[1.] They enjoyed greater privileges. Christ's *mighty works were done in them*, and they were all gracious works, works of mercy. They were hereby *exalted to heaven*, not only dignified and honoured, but put into a fair way

of being happy; they were brought as near heaven as external means could bring them.

[2.] God's design in favouring them thus was to bring them to *repentance* and *reformation* of life, *to sit in sackcloth and ashes*, both in humiliation for the sins they had committed, and in humility and a meek subjection to God's government.

[3.] Their frustrating this design, and their receiving the grace of God therein in vain. It is implied that they *repented not*; they were not wrought upon by all the miracles of Christ to think the better of him, or the worse of sin; they did not bring forth fruits agreeable to the advantages they enjoyed.

[4.] There was reason to think, morally speaking, that, if Christ had gone to Tyre and Sidon, Gentile cities, and had preached the same doctrine to them and wrought the same miracles among them that he did in these cities of Israel, they would have repented *long ago*, so speedy would their repentance have been, and that in *sackcloth and ashes*, so deep would it have been. Now to understand the wisdom of God, in *giving* the means of grace to those who would not improve them, and *denying* them to those that would, we must wait for the great day of discovery.

[5.] The doom of those who thus receive the grace of God in vain will be very fearful. They that were *thus exalted*, not making use of their elevation, will be *thrust down to hell*, thrust down with disgrace and dishonour. They will thrust in to get into heaven, in the crowd of professors, but in vain; they shall be *thrust down*, to their everlasting grief and disappointment, into the lowest hell, and hell will be hell indeed to them.

[6.] In the day of judgment Tyre and Sidon will fare better, and it will be more tolerable for them than for these cities.

(2.) The general rule which Christ would go by, as to those to whom he sent his ministers: He will reckon himself treated according as they treated his ministers, v. 16. What is done to the ambassador is done, as it were, to the prince that sends him.

[1.] "*He that hearest you, and regardeth what you say, heareth me, and herein doeth me honour. But,*"

[2.] “He that *despiseth you* doth in effect *despise me*, and shall be reckoned with as having put an affront upon me; nay, he *despiseth him that sent me*.” Note, Those who contemn the Christian religion do in effect put a slight upon natural religion, which it is perfective of. And they who *despise* the faithful ministers of Christ, who, though they do not hate and persecute them, yet think meanly of them, look scornfully upon them, and turn their backs upon their ministry, will be reckoned with as despisers of God and Christ.

LUKE 10:17-24

THE SUCCESS OF THE SEVENTY

Christ sent forth the seventy disciples as he was going up to Jerusalem to the *feast of tabernacles*, when he *went up, not openly*, but *as it were in secret* (John 7:10), having sent abroad so great a part of his ordinary retinue; and Dr. Lightfoot thinks it was before his return from that feast, and while he was yet at Jerusalem, or Bethany, which was hard by (for there he was, v. 38), that they, or at least some of them, returned to him. Now here we are told,

I. What account they gave him of the success of their expedition: *They returned again with joy* (v. 17); not complaining of the fatigue of their journeys, nor of the opposition and discouragement they met with, but rejoicing in their success, especially in casting out unclean spirits: *Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name*. Though only the *healing of the sick* was mentioned in their commission (v. 19), yet no doubt the *casting out* of devils was included, and in this they had wonderful success.

1. They give Christ the glory of this: It is *through thy name*. Note, all our victories over Satan are obtained by power derived from Jesus Christ. We must *in his name* enter the lists with our spiritual enemies, and, whatever advantages we gain, he must have all the praise; if the work be done *in his name*, the honour is due *to his name*.

2. They entertain themselves with the comfort of it; they speak of it with an air of exultation: *Even the devils*, those potent enemies, are *subject to us*. Note, the saints have no greater joy or satisfaction in any of their

triumphs than in those over Satan. If devils are *subject to us*, what can stand before us?

II. What acceptance they found with him, and how he received this account.

1. He confirmed what they said, as agreeing with his own observation (v. 18): “My heart and eye went along with you; I took notice of the success you had, and I *saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven*.” Note, Satan and his kingdom fell before the preaching of the gospel. “I see how it is,” saith Christ, “as you get ground the devil loseth ground.” He falls *as lightning falls from heaven*, so suddenly, so irrecoverably, so visibly, that all may perceive it, and say, “See how Satan's kingdom totters, see how it tumbles.” They triumphed in casting devils out of the bodies of people; but Christ sees and rejoices in the fall of the devil from the interest he has in the souls of men, which is called his power *in high places*, ^{<400>}Ephesians 6:12. He foresees this to be but an earnest of what should now be shortly done and was already begun — the destroying of Satan's kingdom in the world by the extirpating of idolatry and the turning of the nations to the faith of Christ. Satan *falls from heaven* when he falls from the throne in men's hearts, ^{<400>}Acts 26:18. And Christ foresaw that the preaching of the gospel, which would *fly like lightning* through the world, would wherever it went pull down Satan's kingdom. *Now is the prince of this world cast out*. Some have given another sense of this, as looking back to the fall of the angels, and designed for a caution to these disciples, lest their success should puff them up with pride: “I saw angels turned into devils by *pride*: that was the sin for which Satan was *cast down from heaven*, where he had been an angel of light I saw it, and give you an intimation of it lest you, being *lifted up with pride should fall into that condemnation of the devil*, who fell by pride,” ^{<500>}1 Timothy 3:6.

2. He repeated, ratified, and enlarged their commission: *Behold I give you power to tread on serpents*, v. 19. Note, To him that hath, and useth well what he hath, more shall be given. They had employed their power vigorously against Satan, and now Christ entrusts them with greater power.

(1.) An *offensive* power, power to *tread on serpents and scorpions*, devils and malignant spirits, the old serpent: “You shall *bruise their heads* in my name,” according to the first promise, ^{<000>}Genesis 3:15. Come, *set your*

feet on the necks of these enemies; you shall tread upon these *lions* and *adders* wherever you meet with them; you shall *trample them under foot*, ^{<4113>}Psalm 91:13. You shall *tread upon all the power of the enemy*, and the kingdom of the Messiah shall be every where set up upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom. As the devils have now been *subject to you*, so they shall still be.

(2.) A *defensive* power: “*Nothing shall by any means hurt you; not serpents nor scorpions*, if you should be chastised with them or thrown into prisons and dungeons among them; you shall be unhurt by the most venomous creatures,” as St. Paul was (^{<4115>}Acts 28:5), and as is promised in ^{<4118>}Mark 16:18. “If wicked men be as *serpents* to you, and you *dwell* among those *scorpions* (as ^{<4116>}Ezekiel 2:6), you may despise their rage, and *tread upon it; it need not disturb you*, for they have no power against you but what is *given them from above*; they may *hiss*, but they cannot *hurt*.” You may play upon the hole of the asp, for *death itself shall not hurt nor destroy*, ^{<4118>}Isaiah 11:8, 19; 25:8.

3. He directed them to turn their joy into the right channel (v. 20): “*Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you*, that they have been so, and shall be still so. Do not rejoice in this merely as it is your honour, and a confirmation of your mission, and as it sets you a degree above other good people; do not rejoice in this *only*, or in this *chiefly*, but *rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven*, because you are chosen of God to eternal life, and are the children of God through faith.” Christ, who knew the counsels of God, could tell them that their *names were written in heaven*, for it is the *Lamb's book of life* that they are written in. All believers are through grace, entitled to the inheritance of sons, and have received the adoption of sons, and the Spirit of adoption, which is the earnest of that inheritance and so are enrolled among his family; now this is matter of joy, greater joy than casting out devils. Note, Power to become the children of God is to be valued more than a power to work miracles; for we read of those who did *in Christ's name cast out devils*, as Judas did, and yet will be disowned by Christ in the great day. But they whose *names are written in heaven* shall never perish; they are *Christ's sheep*, to whom he will *give eternal life*. Saving graces are more to be rejoiced in than spiritual gifts; holy love is a *more excellent way* than speaking with tongues.

4. He offered up a solemn thanksgiving to his Father, for employing such mean people as his disciples were in such high and honourable service, v. 21, 22. This we had before (⁴¹²⁵Matthew 11:25-27), only here it is prefixed that *in that hour Jesus rejoiced*. It was fit that particular notice should be taken of *that hour*, because there were so few such, for he was a *man of sorrows*. In *that hour* in which he saw Satan fall, and heard of the good success of his ministers, *in that hour he rejoiced*. Note, Nothing rejoices the heart of the Lord Jesus so much as the progress of the gospel, and its getting ground of Satan, by the conversion of souls to Christ. Christ's joy was a solid substantial joy, an inward joy: *he rejoiced in spirit*; but his joy, like deep waters, made no noise; it was a joy that a stranger did not intermeddle with. Before he applied himself to *thank his Father*, he stirred up himself to *rejoice*; for, as *thankful praise* is the genuine language of *holy joy*, so *holy joy* is the root and spring of *thankful praise*. Two things he gives thanks for: —

(1.) For what was *revealed* by the *Father* through the *Son*: *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth*, v. 21. In all our adorations of God, we must have an eye to him, both as the Maker of heaven and earth and as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our Father. Now that which he gives thanks for is,

[1.] That the counsels of God concerning man's reconciliation to himself were *revealed* to some of the children of men, who might be fit also to *teach others*, and it is God that *by his Son* has spoken these things *to us* and by his Spirit has revealed them *in us*; *he has revealed* that which had been *kept secret* from the beginning of the world.

[2.] That they were revealed to *babes*, to those who were of mean parts and capacities, whose extraction and education had nothing in them promising, who were but *children in understanding*, till God by his Spirit elevated their faculties, and furnished them with this knowledge, and an ability to communicate it. We have reason to thank God, not so much for the honour he has hereby put upon babes, as for the honour he has hereby done himself in perfecting strength *out of weakness*.

[3.] That, at the same time when he revealed them unto babes, he *hid them from the wise and prudent*, the Gentile philosophers, the Jewish rabbin. He *did not reveal* the things of the gospel to them, nor employ them in preaching up his kingdom. Thanks be to God that the apostles were not fetched from their schools; for, *First*, they would have been apt to mingle

their notions with the doctrine of Christ, which would have corrupted it, as afterwards it proved. For Christianity was much corrupted by the Platonic philosophy in the first ages of it, by the Peripatetic in its latter ages, and by the Judaizing teachers at the first planting of it. *Secondly*, If rabbin and philosophers had been made apostles, the success of the gospel would have been ascribed to their learning and wit and the force of their reasonings and eloquence; and therefore they must not be employed, lest they should have taken too much to themselves, and others should have attributed too much to them. They were passed by for the same reason that Gideon's army was reduced: *The people are yet too many*, ⁽¹⁰⁰⁴⁾Judges 7:4. Paul indeed was bred a scholar among the wise and prudent; but he became a *babe* when he became an apostle, and laid aside the *enticing words of man's wisdom*, forgot them all, and made neither show nor use of any other knowledge than that of *Christ and him crucified*, ⁽¹⁰⁰⁵⁾1 Corinthians 2:2, 4.

[4.] That God herein acted by way of sovereignty: *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*. If God gives his grace and the knowledge of his son to some that are less likely, and does not give it to others whom we should think better able to deliver it with advantage, this must satisfy: so it pleases God, whose thoughts are infinitely above ours. He chooses to entrust the dispensing of his gospel in the hands of those who with a *divine energy* will give it the *setting on*, rather than in theirs who with *human art* will give it the *setting off*.

(2.) For what was *secret* between the *Father* and the *Son*, v. 22.

[1.] The vast *confidence* that the Father *puts* in the Son: *All things are delivered to me of my Father*, all wisdom and knowledge, all power and authority, all the grace and comfort which are intended for the chosen remnant; it is all delivered into the hands of the Lord Jesus; in him all fulness must *dwell*, and from him it must be *derived*: he is the great *trustee* that manages all the concerns of God's kingdom.

[2.] The good understanding that there is between the Father and the Son, and their *mutual consciousness*, such as no creature can be admitted to: *No man knows who the Son is*, nor what his mind is, *but the Father*, who *possessed him in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old* (⁽¹⁰⁰²⁾Proverbs 8:22), nor *who the Father is*, and what his counsels are, *but the Son*, who lay in his bosom from eternity, was *by him as one brought up with him, and was daily his delight* (⁽¹⁰⁰³⁾Proverbs 8:30), *and he to whom*

the Son by the Spirit will reveal him. The gospel is the revelation of Jesus Christ, to him we owe all the discoveries made to us of the will of God for our salvation; and here he speaks of being entrusted with it as that which was a great pleasure to himself and for which he was very thankful to his Father.

5. He told his disciples how well it was for them that they had these things revealed to them, v. 23, 24. Having addressed himself to his Father, he *turned to his disciples*, designing to make them sensible how much it was for their happiness, as well as for the glory and honour of God, that they knew the mysteries of the kingdom and were employed to lead others into the knowledge of them, considering,

(1.) What a step it is *towards* something better. Though the bare knowledge of these things is not saving, yet it puts us in the way of salvation: *Blessed are the eyes which see the things which we see.* God therein blesseth them, and, if it be not their own fault it will be an eternal blessedness to them.

(2.) What a step it is *above* those that went before them, even the greatest saints, and those that were most the favourites of Heaven: “*Many prophets and righteous men*” (so it is in ⁴¹³⁷Matthew 13:17), *many prophets and kings* (so it is here), “*have desired to see and hear those things which you are daily and intimately conversant with, and have not seen and heard them.*” The honour and happiness of the New-Testament saints far exceed those even of the *prophets and kings* of the Old Testament, though they also were *highly favoured*. The general ideas which the Old-Testament saints had, according to the intimations given them, of the graces and glories of the Messiah's kingdom, made them wish a thousand times that their lot had been reserved for those blessed days, and that they might see the substance of those things of which they had faint shadows. Note, The consideration of the great advantages which we have in the New-Testament light, above what they had who lived in Old-Testament times, should awaken our diligence in the improvement of it; for, if it do not, it will aggravate our condemnation for the non-improvement of it.

WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOUR

We have here Christ's discourse with a lawyer about some points of conscience, which we are all concerned to be rightly informed in and are so here from Christ though the questions were proposed with no good intention.

I. We are concerned to know what that good is which we should do in *this* life, in order to our attaining *eternal life*. A question to this purport was proposed to our Saviour by a *certain lawyer*, or *scribe*, only with a design to *try* him, not with a desire to be instructed by him, v. 25. The lawyer *stood up*, and *asked him, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?* If Christ had any thing peculiar to prescribe, by this question he would get it out of him, and perhaps expose him for it; if not, he would expose his doctrine as needless, since it would give no other direction for obtaining happiness than what they had already received; or, perhaps, he had no malicious design against Christ, as some of the scribes had, only he was willing to have a little talk with him, just as people go to church to hear what the minister will say. This was a good question: *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* But it lost all its goodness when it was proposed with an ill design, or a very mean one. Note, It is not enough to speak of the things of God, and to enquire about them, but we must do it with a suitable concern. If we speak of *eternal life*, and *the way* to it, in a careless manner, merely as matter of discourse, especially as matter of dispute, we do but take the name of God in vain, as the lawyer here did. Now this question being started, observe,

1. How Christ turned him over to the divine law, and bade him follow the direction of that. Though he knew the thoughts and intents of his heart, he did not answer him according to the folly of that, but according to the wisdom and goodness of the question he asked. He answered him with a question: *What is written in the law? How readest thou?* v. 26. He came to catechize Christ, and to know him; but Christ will catechize him, and make him know himself. He talks to him as a lawyer, as one conversant in the law: the studies of his profession would inform him; let him practise according to his knowledge, and he should not come short of *eternal life*. Note, It will be of great use to us, in our way to heaven, to consider *what*

is written in the law, and what we read there. We must have recourse to our bibles, to the law, as it is now in the hand of Christ and walk in the way that is shown us there. It is a great mercy that we have the law *written*, that we have it thereby reduced to certainty, and that thereby it is capable of spreading the *further*, and lasting the *longer*. Having it *written*, it is our duty to read it, to read it with understanding, and to treasure up what we read, so that when there is occasion, we may be able to tell *what is written in the law, and how we read*. To this we must appeal; by this we must try doctrines and end disputes; this must be our oracle, our touchstone, our rule, our guide. What is written in the law? How do we read? if there be light in us, it will have regard to this light.

2. What a good account he gave of the law, of the principal commandments of the law, to the observance of which we must bind ourselves if we would inherit eternal life. He did not, like a Pharisee, refer himself to the tradition of the elders, but, like a good textuary, fastened upon the two first and great commandments of the law, as those which he thought must be most strictly observed in order to the obtaining of *eternal life*, and which included all the rest, v. 27.

(1.) We must *love God with all our hearts*, must look upon him as the best of beings, in himself most amiable, and infinitely perfect and excellent; as one whom we lie under the greatest obligations to, both in gratitude and interest. We must prize him, and value ourselves by our elation to him; must please ourselves in him, and devote ourselves entirely to him. Our love to him must be sincere, hearty, and fervent; it must be a superlative love, a love that is as strong as death, but an intelligent love, and such as we can give a good account of the grounds and reasons of. It must be an *entire* love; he must have our *whole* souls, and must be served with *all that is within us*. We must love nothing *besides him*, but what we love *for him* and in subordination to him.

(2.) We must love our neighbours as *ourselves*, which we shall easily do, if we, as we ought to do, love God *better than ourselves*. We must wish well to all and ill to none; must do all the good we can in the world and no hurt, and must fix it as a rule to ourselves to do to others as we would they should do to us; and this is to love our neighbour *as ourselves*.

3. Christ's approbation of what he said, v. 28. Though he came to tempt him, yet what he said that was good Christ commended: *Thou hast answered right*. Christ himself fastened upon these as the two great

commandments of the law (⁴⁰³Matthew 22:37): both sides agreed in this. Those who do well shall have praise of the same, and so should those have that speak well. So far is right; but the hardest part of this work yet remains: “*This do, and thou shalt live; thou shalt inherit eternal life.*”

4. His care to avoid the conviction which was now ready to fasten upon him. When Christ said, *This do, and thou shalt live*, he began to be aware that Christ intended to draw from him an acknowledgment that he *had not done this*, and therefore an enquiry what he should do, which way he should look, to get his sins pardoned; an acknowledgment also that he *could not do this* perfectly for the future by any strength of his own, and therefore an enquiry which way he might fetch in strength to enable him to do it: but he was *willing to justify himself*, and therefore cared not for carrying on that discourse, but saith, in effect, as another did (⁴⁰⁴Matthew 19:20), *All these things have I kept from my youth up*. Note, Many ask good questions with a design rather to *justify themselves* than to *inform themselves*, rather proudly to show what is good in them than humbly to see what is bad in them.

II. We are concerned to know who is our neighbour, whom by the second great commandment we are obliged to love. This is another of this lawyer's queries, which he started only that he might *drop* the former, lest Christ should have forced him, in the prosecution of it, to *condemn himself*, when he was resolved to *justify* himself. As to loving God, he was willing to say no more of it; but, as to his *neighbour*, he was sure that there he had come up to the rule, for he had always been very kind and respectful to all about him. Now observe,

1. What was the corrupt notion of the Jewish teachers in this matter. Dr. Lightfoot quotes their own words to this purport: “Where he saith, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour*, he excepts all Gentiles, for they are not *our neighbours*, but those only that are of our own nation and religion.” They would not put an Israelite to death for killing a Gentile, for he was not his *neighbour*: they indeed say that they ought not to kill a Gentile whom they were not at war with; but, if they saw a Gentile in *danger of death*, they thought themselves under no obligation to help to *save his life*. Such wicked inferences did they draw from that holy covenant of peculiarity by which God had distinguished them, and by abusing it thus they had forfeited it; God justly took the forfeiture, and transferred covenant-

favours to the Gentile world, to whom they brutishly denied common favours.

2. How Christ corrected this inhuman notion, and showed, by a parable, that whomsoever we *have need* to receive kindness *from*, and *find ready* to show us the kindness *we need*, we cannot but look upon as *our neighbour*; and therefore ought to look upon all those as such who need our kindness, and to show them kindness accordingly, though they be not of our own nation and religion. Now observe,

(1.) The parable itself, which represents to us a poor Jew in distressed circumstances, succoured and relieved by a good Samaritan. Let us see here,

[1.] How he was *abused* by his *enemies*. The honest man was traveling peaceably upon his lawful business in the road, and it was a great road that led from Jerusalem to Jericho, v. 30. The mentioning of those places intimates that it was matter of fact, and not a parable; probably it happened lately, just as it is here related. The occurrences of Providence would yield us many good instructions, if we would carefully observe and improve them, and would be equivalent to parables framed on purpose for instruction, and be more *affecting*. This poor man *fell among thieves*. Whether they were Arabians, plunderers, that lived by spoil, or some profligate wretches of his own nation, or some of the Roman soldiers, who, notwithstanding the strict discipline of their army, did this villany, does not appear; but they were very *barbarous*; they not only took his money, but stripped him of his clothes, and, that he might not be able to pursue them, or only to gratify a cruel disposition (for otherwise *what profit was there in his blood?*) they *wounded him*, and left him *half dead*, ready to die of his wounds. We may here conceive a just indignation at *highwaymen*, that have divested themselves of all humanity, and are as natural brute beasts, beasts of prey, made to be *taken and destroyed*; and at the same time we cannot but think with compassion on those that fall into the hands of such wicked and unreasonable men, and be ready, when it is in our power, to help them. What reason have we to thank God for our preservation from perils by robbers!

[2.] How he was *slighted* by those who should have been his friends, who were not only men of his own nation and religion, but one a priest and the other a Levite, men of a public character and station; nay, they were men of professed sanctity, whose offices obliged them to tenderness and

compassion (^{89D}Hebrews 5:2), who ought to have taught others their duty in such a case as this, which was to *deliver them that were drawn unto death*; yet they would not themselves do it. Dr. Lightfoot tells us that many of the courses of the priests had their residence in Jericho, and thence came up to Jerusalem, when it was their turn to officiate there, and so back again, which occasioned abundance of *passing* and *repassing* of priests that way, and Levites their attendants. They came *this way*, and saw the poor wounded man. It is probable that they heard his groans, and could not but perceive that if he were not helped he must quickly perish. The Levite not only saw him, but *came and looked on him* v. 32. But they *passed by on the other side*; when they saw his case, they got as far off him as ever they could, as if they would have had a pretence to say, *Behold, we knew it not*. It is sad when those who should be examples of charity are prodigies of cruelty, and when those who should by displaying the mercies of God, open the bowels of compassion in others, shut up their own.

[3.] How he was *succoured* and *relieved* by a *stranger*, a *certain Samaritan*, of that nation which of all others the Jews most despised and detested and would have no dealings with. This man had some humanity in him, v. 33. The priest had his heart hardened against one of *his own people*, but the Samaritan had his opened towards one of *another* people. *When he saw him he had compassion on him*, and never took into consideration what country he was of. Though he was a Jew, he was a man, and a man in *misery*, and the Samaritan has learned to honour all men; he knows not how soon this poor man's case may be his own, and therefore pities him, as he himself would desire and expect to be pitied in the like case. That such great love should be found in a Samaritan was perhaps thought as wonderful as that great faith which Christ admired in a Roman, and in a woman of Canaan; but really it was not so, for pity is the work of a man, but faith is the work of divine *grace*. The *compassion* of this Samaritan was not an idle compassion; he did not think it enough to say, "Be healed, be helped" (^{90D}James 2:16); but, when he *drew out his soul*, he *reached forth his hand* also to this poor *needy* creature, (^{91D}Isaiah 58:7, 10; ^{92D}Proverbs 31:20. See how friendly this good Samaritan was. *First*, He *went to* the poor man, whom the priest and Levite kept at a distance from; he enquired, no doubt, how he came into this deplorable condition, and condoled with him. *Secondly*, He did the surgeon's part, for want of a better. He *bound up his wounds*, making use of his own linen, it

is likely, for that purpose; and poured *in oil and wine*, which perhaps he had with him; wine to wash the wound, and oil to mollify it, and close it up. He did all he could to ease the pain, and prevent the peril, of his wounds, as one whose heart bled with him. *Thirdly*, He *set him on his own beast*, and went on foot himself, and *brought him to an inn*. A great mercy it is to have inns upon the road, where we may be furnished for our money with all the conveniences for food and rest. Perhaps the Samaritan, if he had not met with this hindrance, would have got that night to his journey's end; but, in compassion to that poor man, he takes up short at an inn. Some think that the priest and Levite pretended they could not stay to help the poor man, because they were in haste to go and attend the temple-service at Jerusalem. We suppose the Samaritan went upon business; but he understood that both his own business and God's sacrifice too must give place to such an act of mercy as this. *Fourthly*, He *took care of him* in the inn, got him to bed, had food for him that was proper, and due attendance, and, it may be, prayed with him. Nay, *Fifthly*, As if he had been his own child, or one he was obliged to look after, when he left him next morning, he left money with the landlord, to be laid out for his use, and passed his word for what he should spend more. *Twopence* of their money was about fifteen pence of ours, which, according to the rate of things then, would go a great way; however, here it was an earnest of satisfaction to the full of all demands. All this was kind and generous, and as much as one could have expected from a friend or a brother; and yet here it is done by a stranger and foreigner.

Now this parable is applicable to another purpose than that for which it was intended; and does excellently set forth the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards sinful miserable man. We were like this poor distressed traveller. Satan, our enemy, had *robbed* us, *stripped* us, *wounded* us; such is the mischief that sin had done us. We were by nature more than *half dead*, twice dead, in trespasses and sins; utterly unable to help ourselves, for we were without strength. The law of Moses, like the priest and Levite, the ministers of the law, *looks upon us*, but has no compassion on us, gives us no relief, *passes by on the other side*, as having neither pity nor power to help us; but then comes the blessed Jesus, that good Samaritan (and they said of him, by way of reproach, *he is a Samaritan*), he has compassion on us, he binds up our bleeding wounds (~~HEB~~ Psalm 147:3; ~~HEB~~ Isaiah 61:1), pours in, not *oil and wine*, but that which is infinitely more precious, *his own blood*. He takes care of us, and bids us

put all the expenses of our cure upon his account; and all this though he was none of us, till he was pleased by his voluntary condescension to make himself so, but infinitely above us. This magnifies the riches of his love, and obliges us all to say, “How much are we indebted, and what shall we render?”

(2.) The application of the parable.

[1.] The truth contained in it is extorted from the lawyer's own mouth. “Now tell me,” saith Christ, “*which of these three was neighbour to him that fell among thieves* (v. 36), the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan? Which of these did the neighbour's part?” To this the lawyer would not answer, as he ought to have done, “Doubtless, the Samaritan was;” but, “*He that showed mercy on him*; doubtless, he was a good neighbour to him, and very neighbourly, and I cannot but say that it was a good work thus to save an honest Jew from perishing.”

[2.] The duty inferred from it is pressed home upon the lawyer's own conscience: *Go, and do thou likewise*. The duty of relations is mutual and reciprocal; the titles of friends, brethren, neighbours, are, as Grotius here speaks *ton pros ti* — *equally binding on both sides*: if one side be bound, the other cannot be loose, as is agreed in all contracts. If a Samaritan does well that helps a distressed Jew, certainly a Jew does not well if he refuses in like manner to help a distressed Samaritan. *Petimusque damusque vicissim* — *These kind offices are to be reciprocated*. “And therefore go thou and do as the Samaritan did, whenever occasion offers: show mercy to those that need thy help, and do it freely, and with concern and compassion, though they be not of thy own nation and thy own profession, or of thy own opinion and communion in religion. Let thy charity be thus extensive, before thou boastest of having conformed thyself to that great commandment of *loving thy neighbour*.” This lawyer valued himself much upon his learning and his knowledge of the laws, and in that he thought to have puzzled Christ himself; but Christ sends him to school to a Samaritan, to learn his duty: “Go, and do like him.” Note, It is the duty of every one of us, in our places, and according to our ability, to succour, help, and relieve all that are in distress and necessity, and of lawyers particularly; and herein we must study to excel many that are proud of their being priests and Levites.

LUKE 10:38-42

MARTHA AND MARY

We may observe in this story,

I. The entertainment which Martha gave to Christ and his disciples at her house, v. 38. Observe,

1. Christ's coming to the village where Martha lived: *As they went* (Christ and his disciples together), he and they with him *entered into a certain village*. This village was *Bethany*, nigh to Jerusalem, whither Christ was now going up, and he took this in his way. Note

(1.) Our Lord Jesus went about doing good (~~40:38~~ Acts 10:38), scattering his benighted beams and influences as the true light of the world.

(2.) Wherever Christ went his disciples went along with him.

(3.) Christ honoured the country-villages with his presence and favour, and not the great and populous cities only; for, as he *chose privacy*, so he *countenanced poverty*.

2. His reception at Martha's house: *A certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house*, and made him welcome, for she was the housekeeper. Note,

(1.) Our Lord Jesus, when he was here upon earth, was so poor that he was necessitated to be beholden to his friends for a subsistence. Though he was Zion's King, he had no house of his own either in Jerusalem or near it.

(2.) There were some who were Christ's particular friends, whom he loved more than his other friends, and them he visited most frequently. He *loved* this family (~~41:16~~ John 11:5), and often invited himself to them. Christ's visits are the tokens of his love, ~~41:23~~ John 14:23.

(3.) There were those who kindly received Christ into their houses when he was here upon earth. It is called Martha's house, for, probably, she was a widow, and was the housekeeper. Though it was expensive to entertain Christ for he did not come alone, but brought his disciples with him, yet she would not regard the cost of it. (How can we spend what we have better than in Christ's service!) Nay, though at this time it was grown

dangerous to entertain him especially so near Jerusalem, yet she cared not what hazard she ran for his name's sake. Though there were many that rejected him, and would not entertain him, yet there was one that would bid him welcome. Though Christ is every where spoken against, yet there is a remnant to whom he is dear, and who are dear to him.

II. The attendance which Mary, the sister of Martha, gave upon the word of Christ, v. 20.

1. She *heard his word*. It seems, our Lord Jesus, as soon as he came into Martha's house, even before entertainment was made for him, addressed himself to his great work of preaching the gospel. He presently took the chair with solemnity; for Mary sat to hear him, which intimates that it was a continued discourse. Note, A good sermon is never the worse for being preached in a house; and the visits of our friends should be so managed as to make them turn to a spiritual advantage. Mary, having this price put into her hands, sat herself to improve it, not knowing when she should have such another. Since Christ is forward to speak, we should be *swift to hear*.

2. She *sat* to hear, which denotes a close attention. Her mind was composed, and she resolved to abide by it: not to catch a word now and then, but to receive all that Christ delivered. She *sat at his feet*, as scholars at the feet of their tutors when they read their lectures; hence Paul is said to be *brought up at the feet of Gamaliel*. Our sitting at Christ's feet, when we hear his word, signifies a readiness to receive it, and a submission and entire resignation of ourselves to the guidance of it. We must either sit at Christ's feet or be made his footstool; but, if we sit with him at his feet now, we shall sit with him on his throne shortly.

III. The care of Martha about her domestic affairs: But Martha *was cumbered about much serving* (v. 40), and that was the reason why she was not where Mary was — sitting at Christ's feet, to hear his word. She was providing for the entertainment of Christ and those that came with him. Perhaps she had no notice before of his coming, and she was unprovided, but was in care to have every thing handsome upon this occasion; she had not such guests every day. Housekeepers know what care and bustle there must be when a great entertainment is to be made. Observe here,

1. Something *commendable*, which must not be overlooked.

(1.) Here was a commendable *respect to our Lord Jesus*; for we have reason to think it was not for ostentation, but purely to testify her goodwill to him, that she made this entertainment. Note, Those who truly love Christ will think that well bestowed that is laid out for his honour.

(2.) Here was a commendable *care of her household affairs*. It appears, from the respect shown to this family among the Jews (^{<BIB>}John 11:19), that they were persons of some quality and distinction; and yet Martha herself did not think it a disparagement to her to lay her hand even to the *service* of the family, when there was occasion for it. Note, It is the duty of those who have the charge of families to *look well to the ways of their household*. The affectation of state and the love of ease make many families neglected.

2. Here was something *culpable*, which we must take notice of too.

(1.) She was for *much serving*. Her heart was upon it, to have a very sumptuous and splendid entertainment; great plenty, great variety, and great exactness, according to the fashion of the place. She was in care, *peri pollen diakonian* — *concerning much attendance*. Note, It does not become the disciples of Christ to affect *much serving*, to affect varieties, dainties, and superfluities in eating and drinking; what need is there of *much serving*, when much less will serve?

(2.) She was *cumbered* about it; *periespato* — she was just *distracted* with it. Note, Whatever cares the providence of God casts upon us we must not be *cumbered* with them, nor be disquieted and perplexed by them. *Care* is good and duty; but *cumber* is sin and folly.

(2.) She was *then cumbered about much serving* when she should have been with her sister, sitting at Christ's feet to hear his word. Note, Worldly business is *then* a snare to us when it hinders us from serving God and getting good to our souls.

IV. The *complaint* which Martha made to Christ against her sister Mary, for not *assisting* her, upon this occasion, in the *business of the house* (v. 40): “*Lord, dost thou not care that my sister, who is concerned as well as I in having things done well, has left me to serve alone?* Therefore dismiss her from attending thee, and bid her come and help me.” Now,

1. This complaint of Martha's may be considered as a *discovery* of her *worldliness*: it was the language of her inordinate care and cumber. She

speaks as one in a mighty passion with her sister, else she would not have troubled Christ with the matter. Note, The inordinacy of worldly cares and pursuits is often the occasion of disturbance in families and of strife and contention among relations. Moreover, those that are eager upon the world themselves are apt to blame and censure those that are not so too; and while they justify themselves in their worldliness, and judge of others by their serviceableness to them in their worldly pursuits, they are ready to condemn those that addict themselves to the exercises of religion, as if they neglected the *main chance*, as they call it. Martha, being angry at her sister, appealed to Christ, and would have him say that she *did well to be angry*. Lord, *doest not thou care that my sister has let me to serve alone?* It should seem as if Christ had sometimes expressed himself tenderly concerned for her, and her ease and comfort, and would not have her go through so much toil and trouble, and she expected that he should now bid her sister take her share in it. When Martha was caring, she must have Mary, and Christ and all, to *care* too, or else she is not pleased. Note, Those are not always in the right that are most forward to appeal to God; we must therefore take heed, lest at any time we expect that Christ should espouse our unjust and groundless quarrels. The cares which he cast upon us we may cheerfully cast upon him, but not those which we foolishly draw upon ourselves. He will be the patron of the poor and injured, but not of the turbulent and injurious.

2. It may be considered as a discouragement of Mary's piety and devotion. Her sister should have *commended* her for it, should have told her that she was in the right; but, instead of this, she *condemns* her as wanting in her duty. Note, It is no strange thing for those that are zealous in religion to meet with hindrances and discouragements from those that are about them; not only with opposition from enemies, but with blame and censure from their friends. David's *fasting*, and his dancing *before the ark*, were turned *to his reproach*.

V. The reproof which Christ gave to Martha for her inordinate care, v. 41. She appealed to him, and he gives judgment against her: *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, whereas but one thing is needful*.

1. He reprov'd her, though he was at this time her guest. Her fault was her over-solicitude to entertain him, and she expected he should justify her in it, yet he publicly checked her for it. Note, *As many as Christ loves he*

rebukes and chastens. Even those that are dear to Christ, if any thing be amiss in them, shall be sure to hear of it. *Nevertheless I have something against thee.*

2. When he reproved her, he called her by her name, *Martha*; for reproofs are *then* most likely to do good when they are *particular*, applied to particular persons and cases, as Nathan's to David, *Thou art the man.* He repeated her name, *Martha, Martha*; he speaks as one in earnest, and deeply concerned for her welfare. Those that are *entangled* in the cares of this life are not easily *disentangled*. To them we must call again and again, *O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord.*

3. That which he reproved her for was her being *careful and troubled about many things*. He was not *pleased* that she should think to *please him* with a rich and splendid entertainment, and with perplexing herself to prepare it for him; whereas he would teach us, as not to be *sensual* in using such things, so not to be *selfish* in being willing that others should be *troubled*, no matter who or how many, so we may be gratified. Christ reproves her, both for the *intenseness* of her care (“*Thou art careful and troubled, divided and disturbed by thy care*”), and for the *extensiveness of it*, “*about many things; thou dost grasp at many enjoyments, and so art troubled at many disappointments. Poor Martha, thou hast many things to fret at, and this puts thee out of humour, whereas less ado would serve.*” Note, Inordinate care or trouble about many things in this world is a common fault among Christ's disciples; it is very displeasing to Christ, and that for which they often come under the rebukes of Providence. If they fret for no just cause, it is just with him to order them something to fret at.

4. That which aggravated the sin and folly of her care was that *but one thing is needful*. It is a *low* construction which some put upon this, that, whereas Martha was in care to provide *many* dishes of meat, there was occasion but for one, one would be enough. *There is need but of one thing — henos de esti chreia*. If we take it so, it furnishes us with a rule of *temperance*, not to affect varieties and dainties, but to be content to sit down to *one* dish of meat, to *half on one*, ⁴⁰¹¹Proverbs 23:1-3. It is a *forced* construction which some of the ancients put upon it: *But oneness is needful*, in opposition to distractions. There is need of *one heart* to attend upon the word, not divided and hurried to and fro, as Martha's was at this time. *The one thing needful* is certainly meant of that which Mary made

her choice — *sitting at Christ's feet*, to hear his word. She was troubled about *many things*, when she should have applied herself to one; godliness *unites* the heart, which the world had *divided*. The *many things* she was troubled about were *needless*, while the *one thing* she neglected was *needful*. Martha's care and work were good in their proper season and place; but now she had something else to do, which was unspeakably more needful, and therefore should be done first, and most minded. She expected Christ to have blamed Mary for not doing as she did, but he blamed her for not doing as Mary did; and we are sure the *judgment of Christ* is *according to truth*. The day will come when Martha will wish she had set where Mary did.

VI. Christ's approbation and commendation of Mary for her serious piety: *Mary hath chosen the good part*. Mary said nothing in her own defence; but, since Martha has appealed to the Master, to him she is willing to refer it, and will abide by his award; and here we have it.

1. She had justly given the preference to that which best deserved it; for *one thing is needful*, this one thing that she has done, to give up herself to the guidance of Christ, and *receive the law* from his mouth. Note, Serious godliness is a *needful* thing, it is the *one thing needful*; for nothing without this will do us any real good in this world, and nothing but this will go with us into another world.

2. She had herein wisely done well for herself. Christ *justified Mary* against her sister's clamours. However we may be censured and condemned by men for our piety and zeal, our Lord Jesus will take our part: *But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me*. Let us not then condemn the pious zeal of any, lest we set Christ *against us*; and let us never be discouraged if we be censured for our pious zeal, for we have Christ for us. Note, Sooner or later, Mary's choice will be justified, and all those who make that choice, and abide by it. But this was not all; he *applauded* her for her wisdom: *She hath chosen the good part*; for she chose to be with Christ, to take her part with him; she chose the better business, and the better happiness, and took a better way of *honouring* Christ and of *pleasing* him, by receiving his word into her heart, than Martha did by providing for his entertainment in her house. Note,

(1.) A *part with Christ* is a *good part*; it is a part for the soul and eternity, the part Christ gives to his favourites (^{<B3B>}John 13:8), who are partakers of *Christ* (^{<B14>}Hebrews 3:14), and partakers *with Christ*, ^{<B17>}Romans 8:17.

(2.) It is a part that shall *never be taken away from those that have it*. A portion in this life will certainly be *taken away* from us, at the furthest, when we shall be taken away from it; but *nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ*, and our part in that love. Men and devils *cannot* take it away from us, and God and Christ *will not*.

(3.) It is the wisdom and duty of every one of us to choose this *good part*, to choose the service of God for our business, and the favour of God for our happiness, and an interest in Christ, in order to both. In particular cases we must choose that which has a tendency to religion, and reckon that best for us that is best for our souls. Mary was at her choice whether she would partake with Martha in her care, and get the reputation of a fine *housekeeper*, or sit at the feet of Christ and approve herself a *zealous disciple*; and, by her choice in this particular, Christ judges of her general choice.

(4.) Those who *choose this good part* shall not only have what they choose, but shall have their choice commended in the great day.