

# CHAPTER 12

In this chapter we have divers excellent discourses of our Saviour's upon various occasions, many of which are to the same purport with what we had in Matthew upon other the like occasions; for we may suppose that our Lord Jesus preached the same doctrines, and pressed the same duties, at several times, in several companies, and that one of the evangelists took them as he delivered them at one time and another at another time; and we need thus to have precept upon precept, line upon line. Here,

- I.** Christ warns his disciples to take heed of hypocrisy, and of cowardice in professing Christianity and preaching the gospel (v. 1-12).
- II.** He gives a caution against covetousness, upon occasion of a covetous motion made to him, and illustrates that caution by a parable of a rich man suddenly cut off by death in the midst of his worldly projects and hopes (v. 13-21).
- III.** He encourages his disciples to cast all their care upon God, and to live easy in a dependence upon his providence, and exhorts them to make religion their main business (v. 22-34).
- IV.** He stirs them up to watchfulness for their Master's coming, from the consideration of the reward of those who are then found faithful, and the punishment of those who are found unfaithful (v. 35-48).
- V.** He bids them expect trouble and persecution (v. 49-53).
- VI.** He warns the people to observe and improve the day of their opportunities and to make their peace with God in time (v. 54-59).

## ☞ LUKE 12:1-12

### CHRIST'S CHARGE TO HIS APOSTLES

We find here,

**I.** A vast auditory that was got together to hear Christ preach. The *scribes* and *Pharisees* sought to *accuse him*, and do him mischief; but the people, who were not under the bias of their prejudices and jealousies, still *admired* him, attended on him, and did him honour. *In the mean time* (v. 1), while he was in the Pharisee's house, contending with them that sought to ensnare him, the people got together for an afternoon sermon, a sermon after *dinner*, after dinner with a Pharisee; and he would not disappoint them. Though in the morning sermon, when they were *gathered thickly together* (<sup>412</sup>Luke 11:29), he had severely reproved them, as an *evil generation that seek a sign*, yet they renewed their attendance on him; so much better could the people bear *their* reproofs than the Pharisees *theirs*. The more the Pharisees strove to drive the people from Christ, the more flocking there was to him. Here was an *innumerable multitude of people gathered together, so that they trade one upon another*, in labouring to get foremost, and to come within hearing. It is a good sight to see people thus forward to hear the word, and venture upon inconvenience and danger rather than miss an opportunity for their souls. Who are these that thus *fly as the doves to their windows?* (<sup>268</sup>Isaiah 60:8. When the net is cast where there is such a multitude of fish, it may be hoped that some will be enclosed.

**II.** The instructions which he gave his followers, in the hearing of this auditory.

**1.** He began with a caution against *hypocrisy*. This he said to *his disciples first of all*; either to the twelve, or to the seventy. These were his more peculiar charge, his family, his school, and therefore he particularly *warned them* as his *beloved sons*; they made more profession of religion than others and hypocrisy in *that* was the sin they were most in danger of. They were to preach to others; and, if they should *prevaricate*, corrupt the word, and deal deceitfully, hypocrisy would be worse in them than in others. Besides, there was a Judas among them, who was a hypocrite, and Christ knew it, and would hereby startle him, or leave him inexcusable. Christ's disciples were, for aught we know, the *best men* then in the world, yet they needed to be cautioned against hypocrisy. Christ said this to the disciples, *in the hearing* of this great multitude, rather than *privately* when he had them by themselves, to add the greater weight to the caution, and to let the world know that he would not countenance hypocrisy, no, not in *his own disciples*. Now observe,

(1.) The description of that sin which he warns them against: *It is the leaven of the Pharisees.*

[1.] It is *leaven*; it is *spreading* as leaven, *insinuates* itself into the whole man, and all that he does; it is *swelling* and *souring* as leaven, for it puffs men up with pride, embitters them with malice, and makes their service unacceptable to God.

[2.] It is the leaven of the Pharisees: “It is the sin they are most of them found in. Take heed of imitating them; be not you of their spirit; do not dissemble in Christianity as they do in Judaism; make not *your* religion a *cloak of maliciousness*, as they do theirs.”

(2.) A good reason against it: “*For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed*, v. 2, 3. It is to no purpose to dissemble, for, sooner or later, truth will come out; and a *lying tongue is but for a moment*. If you *speak in darkness* that which is unbecoming you, and is inconsistent with your public professions, *it shall be heard in the light*; some way or other it shall be discovered, *a bird of the air shall carry the voice* (<sup>210</sup>Ecclesiastes 10:20), and your folly and falsehood will be *made manifest*.” The iniquity that is concealed with a show of piety will be discovered, perhaps in this world, as Judas's was, and Simon Magus's, at furthest in the great day, when the *secrets of all hearts* shall be made manifest, (<sup>2124</sup>Ecclesiastes 12:14; <sup>4126</sup>Romans 2:16. If men's religion prevail not to conquer and cure the wickedness of their hearts, it shall not always serve for a cloak. The day is coming when hypocrites will be stripped of their fig-leaves.

2. To this he added a charge to them to be faithful to the trust reposed in them, and not to betray it, through cowardice or base fear. Some make v. 2, 3, to be a caution to them not to *conceal* those things which they had been *instructed* in, and were *employed* to publish to the world. “Whether men will *hear*, or whether they will *forbear*, tell them the *truth*, the *whole truth*, and *nothing but* the truth; what has been spoken to you, and you have talked of among yourselves, *privately*, and in corners, that do you preach *publicly*, whoever is offended; for, if you *please men*, you are not *Christ's servants*, nor can you please him,” (<sup>410</sup>Galatians 1:10. But this was not the worst of it: it was likely to be a *suffering* cause, though never a *sinking* one: let them therefore arm themselves with courage; and divers arguments are furnished here to steel them with a holy resolution in their work. Consider,

(1.) “The power of your enemies is a limited power (v. 4): *I say unto you, my friends*” (Christ’s disciples are his friends, he calls them *friends*, and gives them this *friendly* advice), “*be not afraid*, do not disquiet yourselves with tormenting fears of the power and rage of men.” Note, Those whom Christ owns for *his friends* need not be afraid of any enemies. “*Be not afraid*, no, not of them that *kill the body*, let it not be in the power of *scoffers*, not even of *murderers*, to drive you off from your work, for you that have learned to triumph over death may say, even of them, Let them do their worst, *after that there is no more that they can do*; the immortal soul lives, and is happy, and enjoys itself and its God, and sets them all at defiance.” Note, Those can do Christ’s disciples no real harm, and therefore ought not to be dreaded, who can but *kill the body*; for they only send that to its rest, and the soul to its joy, the sooner.

(2.) God is to be feared more than the most powerful men: “*I will forewarn you whom you shall fear* (v. 5): that you may fear man less, fear God more. Moses conquers his fear of the *wrath of the king*, by having an eye to him *that is invisible*. By *owning Christ* you may incur the wrath of men, which can reach no further than to *put you to death* (and without God’s permission they cannot do that); but by *denying Christ*, and disowning him, you will incur the wrath of God, which has power to send *you to hell*, and there is no resisting it. Now of two evils the less is to be chosen, and the greater is to be dreaded, and therefore *I say unto you, Fear him*.” “It is true,” said that blessed martyr, Bishop Hooper, “life is sweet, and death bitter; but eternal life is more sweet, and eternal death more bitter.”

(3.) The lives of good Christians and good ministers are the particular care of divine Providence, v. 6, 7. To encourage us in times of difficulty and danger, we must have recourse to our first principles, and build upon them. Now a firm belief of the doctrine of God’s universal providence, and the extent of it, will be satisfying to us when at any time we are in peril, and will encourage us to trust God in the way of duty.

[1.] Providence takes cognizance of the *meanest creatures*, even of *the sparrows*. “Though they are of such small account that *five* of them are sold for *two farthings*, yet not one of them is *forgotten of God*, but is provided for, and notice is taken of its death. Now, *you are of more value than many sparrows*, and therefore you may be sure you *are not forgotten*, though imprisoned, though banished, though forgotten by your friends;

much more *precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of saints* than the death of sparrows.”

[2.] Providence takes cognizance of the *meanest interest* of the disciples of Christ: “*Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered* (v. 7); much more are your sighs and tears numbered, and the drops of your blood, which you shed for Christ's name's sake. An account is kept of all your losses, that they *may be*, and without doubt they shall be, recompensed unspeakably to your advantage.”

(4.) “You will be owned or disowned by Christ, in the great day, according as you now own or disown him,” v. 8, 9.

[1.] To engage us to *confess Christ before men*, whatever we may lose or suffer for our constancy to him, and how dear soever it may cost us, we are assured that they who *confess Christ* now shall be owned by him in the great day *before the angels of God*, to their everlasting comfort and honour. Jesus Christ will *confess*, not only that he suffered for them, and that they are to have the benefit of *his* sufferings, but that they suffered *for him*, and that his kingdom and interest on earth were advanced by *their* sufferings; and what greater honour can be done them?

[2.] To deter us from *denying Christ*, and a cowardly *deserting* of his truths and ways, we are here assured that those who *deny Christ*, and treacherously depart from him, whatever they may save by it, though it were life itself, and whatever they may gain by it, though it were a kingdom, will be vast losers at last, for they shall be *denied before the angels of God*; Christ will not know them, will not own them, will not show them any favour, which will turn to their everlasting terror and contempt. By the stress here laid upon their being *confessed or denied before the angels of God*, it should seem to be a considerable part of the happiness of glorified saints that they will not only stand *right*, but stand *high*, in the esteem of the *holy angels*; they will love them, and honour them, and own them, if they be Christ's servants; they are their fellow-servants, and they will take them for their companions. On the contrary, a considerable part of the misery of damned sinners will be that the holy angels will abandon them, and will be the pleased witnesses, not only of their disgrace, as here, but of their misery, for they shall be *tormented in the presence of the holy angels* (<sup>6640</sup>Revelation 14:10), who will give them no relief.

(5.) The errand they were shortly to be sent out upon was of the highest and last importance to the children of men, to whom they were sent, v. 10. Let them be bold in preaching the gospel, for a sorer and heavier doom would attend those that rejected them (after the Spirit was poured upon them, which was to be the *last* method of conviction) than those that now rejected Christ himself, and opposed him: “*Greater works than those shall he do*, and, consequently, greater will be the punishment of those that blaspheme the gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost in you. *Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man*, shall stumble at the meanness of his appearance, and speak *slightly* and *spitefully* of him, it is capable of some excuse: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*. But unto him that *blasphemes the Holy Ghost*, that blasphemes the Christian doctrine, and maliciously opposes it, after the pouring out of the Spirit and his attestation of Christ's *being glorified* (~~413~~ Acts 2:33; 5:32), the privilege of the *forgiveness of sins* shall be denied; he shall have no benefit by Christ and his gospel. You may shake off the dust of your feet against those that do so, and give them over as incurable; they have forfeited that *repentance* and that *remission* which Christ was *exalted to give*, and which you are *commissioned to preach*.” The sin, no doubt, was the more daring, and consequently the case the more desperate, during the continuance of the *extraordinary* gifts and operations of the Spirit in the church, which were intended for a *sign to them who believed not*, ~~412~~ 1 Corinthians 14:22. There were hopes of those who, though not convinced by them at first, yet admired them, but those who *blasphemed* them were given over.

(6.) Whatever trials they should be called out to, they should be sufficiently furnished for them, and honourably brought through them, v. 11, 12. The faithful martyr for Christ has not only *sufferings to undergo*, but a *testimony to bear*, a *good confession to witness*, and is concerned to do that *well*, so that the cause of Christ may not suffer, though he suffer for it; and, if this be his care, let him cast it upon God: “When they *bring you into the synagogues*, before church-rulers, before the Jewish courts, or before *magistrates and powers*, Gentile rulers, rulers in the state, to be examined about your doctrine, what it is, and what the proof of it, *take no thought what ye shall answer*,”

[1.] “That you may *save yourselves*. Do not study by what art or rhetoric to mollify your judges, or by what tricks in law to bring yourselves off; if it be the will of God that you should come off, and your time is not yet come, he will bring it about effectually.”

[2.] “That you may *serve your Master*; aim at this, but do not perplex yourselves about it, for *the Holy Ghost*, as a Spirit of wisdom, *shall teach you what you ought to say*, and how to say it, so that it may be for the honour of God and his cause.”

## LUKE 12:13-21

### WORLDLY-MINDEDNESS EXPOSED

We have in these verses,

**I.** The application that was made to Christ, very unseasonably, by one of his hearers, desiring him to interpose *between him and his brother* in a matter that concerned the estate of the family (v. 13): “*Master, speak to my brother*; speak as a prophet, speak as a king, speak with authority; he is one that will have regard to what thou sayest; speak to him, *that he divide the inheritance with me*.” Now,

**1.** Some think that his brother *did him wrong*, and that he appealed to Christ to *right him*, because he knew the law was costly. His brother was such a one as the Jews called *Ben-hamesen* — *a son of violence*, that took not only his own part of the estate, but his brother's too, and forcibly detained it from him. Such brethren there are in the world, who have no sense at all either of *natural equity* or *natural affection*, who make a prey of those whom they ought to patronize and protect. They who are so wronged have God to go to, who will *execute judgment and justice for those that are oppressed*.

**2.** Others think that he had a mind to *do his brother wrong*, and would have Christ to *assist him*; that, whereas the law gave the elder brother a double portion of the estate, and the father himself could not dispose of what he had but by that rule (<sup>(Deuteronomy 21:16, 17)</sup>), he would have Christ to *alter that law*, and oblige his brother, who perhaps was a follower of Christ at large, to *divide the inheritance equally with him*, in gavel-kind, share and share alike, and to allot him as much as his elder brother. I suspect that this was the case, because Christ takes occasion from it to warn against *covetousness*, *pleonexia* — *a desire of having more*, more than God in his providence has allotted us. It was not a lawful desire of getting his own, but a *sinful* desire of getting more than his own.



**II.** Christ's refusal to interpose in this matter (v. 14): *Man, who made me a judge or divider over you?* In matters of this nature, Christ will not assume either a *legislative* power to alter the settled rule of inheritances, or a *judicial* power to determine controversies concerning them. He could have done the judge's part, and the lawyer's, as well as he did the physician's, and have ended suits at law as happily as he did diseases; but he would not, for it was not in his commission: *Who made me a judge?* Probably he refers to the indignity done to Moses by his brethren in Egypt, with which Stephen upbraided the Jews, <sup><407></sup>Acts 7:27, 35. "If I should offer to do this, you would taunt me as you did Moses, *Who made thee a judge or a divider?*" He corrects the man's mistake, will not admit his appeal (it was *coram non iudice* — *not before the proper judge*), and so *dismisses* his bill. If he had come to him to desire him to assist his pursuit of the heavenly inheritance, Christ would have given him his best help; but as to this matter he has nothing to do: *Who made me a judge?* Note, Jesus Christ was no usurper; he took no honour, no power, to himself, but what was given him, <sup><385></sup>Hebrews 5:5. Whatever he did, he could tell by what authority he did it, and who gave him that authority. Now this shows us what is the nature and constitution of Christ's kingdom. It is a spiritual kingdom, and not of this world.

- 1.** It does not interfere with civil powers, nor take the authority of princes out of their hands. Christianity leaves the matter as it found it, as to civil power.
- 2.** It does not intermeddle with civil rights; it obliges all to do justly, according to the settled rules of equity, but dominion is not founded in grace.
- 3.** It does not *encourage* our *expectations* of worldly advantages by our religion. If this man will be a disciple of Christ, and expects that in consideration of this Christ should give him his brother's estate, he is mistaken; the rewards of Christ's disciples are of another nature.
- 4.** It does not *encourage* our *contests* with our brethren, and our being rigorous and high in our demands, but rather, for peace' sake, to recede from our right.
- 5.** It does not allow ministers to *entangle* themselves in the affairs of this life (<sup><311></sup>2 Timothy 2:4), to *leave the word of God to serve tables*. There are



those whose business it is, let it be left to them, *Tractent fabrilia fabri — Each workman to his proper craft.*

**III.** The necessary caution which Christ took occasion from this to give to his hearers. Though he came not to be a *divider* of men's estates, he came to be a director of their consciences about them, and would have all take heed of harbouring that corrupt principle which they saw to be in others the *root of so much evil*. Here is,

**1.** The caution itself (v. 15): *Take heed and beware of covetousness; horate* — “*Observe yourselves, keep a jealous eye upon your own hearts, lest covetous principles steal into them; and phylassesthe* — *preserve yourselves, keep a strict band upon your own hearts, lest covetous principles rule and give law in them.*” Covetousness is a sin which we have need constantly to *watch against*, and therefore frequently to be *warned against*.

**2.** The reason of it, or an argument to enforce this caution: *For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*; that is, “our happiness and comfort do not depend upon our having a great deal of the wealth of this world.”

**(1.)** The life of the *soul*, undoubtedly, does not depend upon it, and the soul is the man. The things of the world will not suit the nature of a soul, nor supply its needs, nor satisfy its desires, nor last so long as it will last. Nay,

**(2.)** Even the life of the body and the happiness of that do not consist in an *abundance* of these things; for many live very contentedly and easily, and get through the world very comfortably, who have but a little of the wealth of it (a dinner of herbs with holy love is better than a *feast of fat things*); and, on the other hand, many live very miserably who have a great deal of the things of this world; they possess abundance, and yet have no comfort of it; they *bereave their souls of good*, <sup>2018</sup> Ecclesiastes 4:8. Many who have abundance are discontented and fretful, as Ahab and Haman; and then what good does their abundance do them?

**3.** The illustration of this by a parable, the sum of which is to show the folly of carnal worldlings while they live, and their misery when they die, which is intended not only for a check to that man who came to Christ with an address about his estate, while he was in no care about his soul

and another world, but for the enforcing of that necessary caution to us all, to *take heed of covetousness*. The parable gives us the life and death of a *rich man*, and leaves us to judge whether he was a *happy man*.

(1.) Here is an account of his worldly wealth and abundance (v. 16): *The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully, chora — regio — the country*. He had a whole country to himself, a lordship of his own; he was a little prince. Observe, His wealth lay much in the fruits of the earth, for *the king himself is served by the field*, <sup>218</sup>Ecclesiastes 5:9. He had a great deal of ground, and his ground was *fruitful*; much would have *more*, and he *had more*. Note, The fruitfulness of the earth is a great blessing, but it is a blessing which God often gives plentifully to wicked men, to whom it is a snare, that we may not think to judge of his love or hatred by what is before us.

(2.) Here are the workings of his heart, in the midst of this abundance. We are here told what *he thought within himself*, v. 17. Note, The God of heaven knows and observes whatever we think within ourselves, and we are accountable to him for it. He is both a discerner and judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We mistake if we imagine that thoughts are *hid* and thoughts are *free*. Let us here observe,

[1.] What his *cares* and *concerns* were. When he saw an extraordinary crop upon his ground, instead of *thanking God* for it, or rejoicing in the opportunity it would give him of doing the more good, he afflicts himself with this thought, *What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?* He speaks as one *at a loss*, and full of perplexity. *What shall I do now?* The poorest beggar in the country, that did not know where to get a meal's meat, could not have said a more anxious word. Disquieting care is the common fruit of an abundance of this world, and the common fault of those that have abundance. The more men have, the more perplexity they have with it, and the more solicitous they are to keep what they have and to add to it, how to spare and how to spend; so that even the *abundance* of the rich will not suffer them to *sleep*, for thinking what they shall do with what they have and how they shall dispose of it. The rich man seems to speak it with a sigh, *What shall I do?* And if you ask, Why, what is the matter? Truly he had *abundance* of wealth, and wants a place to *put it in*, that is all.

[2.] What his *projects* and *purposes* were, which were the result of his cares, and were indeed absurd and foolish like them (v. 18): *“This will I*

do, and it is the wisest course I can take, *I will pull down my barns*, for they are too little, and I will *build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods*, and then I shall be at ease.” Now here, *First*, It was folly for him to call the fruits of the ground *his fruits and his goods*. He seems to lay a pleasing emphasis upon that, *my fruits and my goods*; whereas what we have is but *lent* us for our use, the property is still in God; we are but stewards of our *Lord's goods*, tenants at will of our Lord's land. It is *my corn* (saith God) and *my wine*, <sup><30B></sup>Hosea 2:8, 9. *Secondly*, It was folly for him to *hoard up* what he had, and then to think it *well bestowed*. There will I bestow it *all*; as if none must be bestowed upon the poor, none upon his family, none upon the Levite and *the stranger, the fatherless and the widow*, but all in the great barn. *Thirdly*, It was folly for him to let his *mind* rise with his *condition*; when his ground brought forth more plentifully than usual, then to talk of bigger barns, as if the next year must needs be as fruitful as this, and much more abundant, whereas the barn might be as much too big the next year as it was too little this. Years of famine commonly follow years of plenty, as they did in Egypt; and therefore it were better to *stack* some of his corn for this once. *Fourthly*, It was folly for him to think to ease his care by building new barns, for the building of them would but increase his care; those know this who know any thing of the spirit of building. The way that God prescribes for the cure of inordinate care is certainly successful, but the way of the world does but increase it. Besides, when he had done this, there were other cares that would still attend him; the greater the barns, still the greater the cares, <sup><30B></sup>Ecclesiastes 5:10. *Fifthly*, It was folly for him to contrive and resolve all this *absolutely and without reserve*. This *I will do: I will pull down my barns and will build greater, yea, that I will*; without so much as that necessary proviso, *If the Lord will, I shall live*, <sup><30B></sup>James 4:13-15. Peremptory projects are foolish projects; for our times are in God's hand, and not in our own, and we do not so much as *know what shall be on the morrow*.

[3.] What his *pleasing hopes and expectations* were, when he should have made good these projects. “Then *I will say to my soul*, upon the credit of this security, whether God say it or no, *Soul*, mark what I say, *thou hast much goods laid up for many years in these barns; now take thine ease, enjoy thyself, eat, drink, and be merry*,” v. 19. Here also appears his folly, as much in the enjoyment of his wealth as in the pursuit of it. *First*, It was folly for him to put off his comfort in his abundance till he had compassed

his projects concerning it. When he has built bigger barns, and filled them (which will be a work of time), then he will *take his ease*; and might he not as well have *done that now*? Grotius here quotes the story of Pyrrhus, who was projecting to make himself master of Sicily, Africa, and other places, in the prosecution of his victories. Well, says his friend Cyneas, and what must we do then? *Postea vivemus*, says he, *Then we will live*; *At hoc jam licet*, says Cyneas, *We may live now if we please*. Secondly, It was folly for him to be confident that his goods were *laid up for many years*, as if his bigger barns would be *safer* than those he had; whereas in an hour's time they might be burnt to the ground and all that was laid up in them, perhaps by lightning, against which there is no defence. A few years may make a great change; *moth and rust may corrupt, or thieves break through and steal*. Thirdly, It was folly for him to count upon certain *ease*, when he had laid up abundance of the wealth of this world, whereas there are many things that may make people uneasy in the midst of their greatest abundance. One dead fly may spoil a whole pot of precious ointment; and one thorn a whole bed of down. Pain and sickness of body, disagreeableness of relations, and especially a guilty conscience, may rob a man of his ease, who has ever so much of the wealth of this world. Fourthly, It was folly for him to think of making no other use of his plenty than to *eat and drink*, and to *be merry*; to indulge the flesh, and gratify the sensual appetite, without any thought of doing good to others, and being put thereby into a better capacity of serving God and his generation: as if we *lived to eat*, and did not *eat to live*, and the happiness of man consisted in nothing else but in having all the gratifications of sense wound up to the height of pleasurable. Fifthly, It was the greatest folly of all to say all this to his *soul*. if he had said, *Body, take thine ease, for thou hast goods laid up for many years*, there had been sense in it; but the soul, considered as an immortal spirit, separable from the body, was no way interested in a barn full of corn or a bag full of gold. If he had had the *soul of a swine*, he might have *blessed it* with the satisfaction of *eating and drinking*; but what is this to the *soul of a man*, that has exigencies and desires which these things will be no ways suited to? It is the great absurdity which the children of this world are guilty of that they portion their souls in the wealth of the world and the pleasures of sense.

**(3.)** Here is God's sentence upon all this; and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth. He said to himself, said to his soul, *Take thine ease*. If God had said so too, the man had been happy, as his Spirit witnesses

with the spirit of believers to make them easy. *But God said* quite otherwise; and by his judgment of us we must stand or fall, not by ours of ourselves, <sup>(401B)</sup>1 Corinthians 4:3, 4. His neighbours blessed him (<sup>(401B)</sup>Psalm 10:3), praised him as *doing well for himself* (<sup>(401B)</sup>Psalm 49:18); but God said he did ill for himself: *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee*, v. 20. *God said to him*, that is, decreed this concerning him, and let him know it, either by his conscience or by some awakening providence, or rather by both together. This was said when he was *in the fulness of his sufficiency* (<sup>(402)</sup>Job 20:22), when his eyes were held waking upon his bed with his cares and contrivances about enlarging his barns, not by adding a bay or two more of building to them, which might serve to answer the end, but by pulling them down and building greater, which was requisite to please his fancy. When he was forecasting this, and had brought it to an issue, and then lulled himself asleep again with a pleasing dream of many years' enjoyment of his present improvements, *then* God said this to him. Thus Belshazzar was struck with terror by the hand-writing on the wall, in the midst of his jollity. Now observe what God said,

[1.] The character he gave him: *Thou fool*, thou *Nabal*, alluding to the story of Nabal, that *fool* (Nabal is his name, and folly is with him) whose heart was struck dead *as a stone* while he was regaling himself in the abundance of his provision for his sheep-shearers. Note, Carnal worldlings are fools, and the day is coming when God will call them by their own name, *Thou fool*, and they will call themselves so.

[2.] The sentence he passed upon him, a sentence of death: *This night thy soul shall be required of thee; they shall require thy soul* (so the words are), and then *whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?* He thought he had goods that should be his for many years, but he must part from them *this night*; he thought he should enjoy them himself, but he must leave them to he knows not who. Note, The death of carnal worldlings is miserable in itself and terrible to them.

*First*, It is a *force*, an *arrest*; it is the *requiring of the soul*, that soul that thou art making such a fool of; what hast thou to do with a soul, who canst use it no better? Thy soul shall be *required*; this intimates that he is loth to part with it. A good man, who has taken his heart off from this world, cheerfully resigns his soul at death, and gives it up; but a worldly man has it *torn* from him with violence; it is a terror to him to think of leaving this

world. *They shall require thy soul.* God shall require it; he shall require an account of it. “Man, woman, what hast thou done with thy soul. Give an account of that stewardship.” *They shall;* that is, evil angels as the messengers of God's justice. As good angels receive gracious souls to carry them to their joy, so evil angels receive wicked souls to carry them to the place of torment; they shall *require it* as a guilty soul to be punished. The devil requires thy soul as his own, for it did, in effect, give itself to him.

*Secondly,* It is a *surprize*, an *unexpected* force. It is in *the night*, and terrors in the night are most terrible. The time of death is day-time to a good man; it is his morning. But it is night to a worldling, a dark night; he *lies down in sorrow*. It is *this night*, this *present* night, without delay; there is no giving bail, or begging a day. This *pleasant* night, when thou art promising thyself many years to come, now thou must die, and go to judgment. Thou art entertaining thyself with the fancy of many a merry day, and merry night, and merry feast; but, in the midst of all, here is an end of all,  
<sup>(271)</sup>Isaiah 21:4.

*Thirdly,* It is the leaving of all *those things* behind *which they have provided*, which they have laboured for, and prepared for hereafter, with abundance of toil and care. All that which they have placed their happiness in, and built their hope upon, and raised their expectations from, they must leave behind. *Their pomp shall not descend after them* (<sup>(297)</sup>Psalms 49:17), but they shall go as naked out of the world as they came into it, and they shall have no benefit at all by what they have hoarded up either in death, in judgment, or in their everlasting state.

*Fourthly,* It is leaving them to they *know not who*: “Then *whose shall those things be?* Not *thine* to be sure, and thou knowest not what *they* will prove for whom thou didst design them, thy children and relations, whether they will be *wise* or *fools* (<sup>(218)</sup>Ecclesiastes 2:18, 19), whether such as will bless thy memory or curse it, be a credit to thy family or a blemish, do good or hurt with what thou leavest them, keep it or spend it; nay, thou knowest not but those for whom thou dost design it may be prevented from the enjoyment of it, and it may be turned to somebody else thou little thinkest of; nay, though thou knowest to whom thou leavest it, thou knowest not to whom they will leave it, or into whose hand it will come at last.” If many a man could have foreseen to whom his house would have come after his death, he would rather have burned it than beautified it.

*Fifthly*, It is a demonstration of his folly. Carnal worldlings are *fools* while they live: *this their way is their folly* (<sup><44B></sup>Psalm 49:13); but their folly is made most evident when they die: *at his end he shall be a fool* (<sup><247B></sup>Jeremiah 17:11); for then it will appear that he took pains to lay up treasure in a world he was hastening from, but took no care to lay it up in the world he was hastening to.

*Lastly*, Here is the application of this parable (v. 21): *So is he*, such a fool, a fool in God's judgment, a fool upon record, that *layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God*. This is the way and this is the end of such a man. Observe here,

**1.** The description of a worldly man: He *lays up treasure for himself*, for the body, for the world, for *himself* in opposition to God, for that *self* that is to be *denied*.

**(1.)** It is his error that he counts his *flesh himself*, as if the *body* were the *man*. If *self* be rightly stated and understood, it is only the true Christian that lays up treasure for himself, and is *wise for himself*, <sup><30B></sup>Proverbs 9:12.

**(2.)** It is his error that he makes it his business to *lay up for the flesh*, which he calls laying up *for himself*. All his labour is *for his mouth* (<sup><216B></sup>Ecclesiastes 6:7), *making provision for the flesh*.

**(3.)** It is his error that he counts those things his *treasure* which are thus *laid up* for the world, and the body, and the life that now is; they are the wealth he trusts to, and spends upon, and lets out his affections toward.

**(4.)** The greatest error of all is that he is in no care to be *rich towards God*, rich in the *account of God*, whose accounting us rich makes us so (<sup><60B></sup>Revelation 2:9), rich in the *things of God*, rich in *faith* (<sup><30B></sup>James 2:5), rich in *good works*, in the *fruits of righteousness* (<sup><50B></sup>1 Timothy 6:18), rich in graces, and comforts, and spiritual gifts. Many who have abundance of this world are wholly destitute of that which will enrich their souls, which will make them rich towards God, rich for eternity.

**2.** The folly and misery of a worldly man: *So is he*. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who knows what the end of things will be, has here told us what his end will be. Note, It is the unspeakable folly of the most of men to mind and pursue the wealth of this world more than the wealth of the other world, that which is merely for the body and for time, more than that which is for the soul and eternity.



## INORDINATE CARE REPROVED

Our Lord Jesus is here inculcating some needful useful lessons upon his disciples, which he had before taught them, and had occasion afterwards to press upon them; for they need to have *precept upon precept, and line upon line*: “*Therefore, because there are so many that are ruined by covetousness, and an inordinate affection to the wealth of this world, I say unto you, my disciples, take heed of it.*” *Thou, O man of God, flee these things, as well as thou, O man of the world,* <sup><501></sup>1 Timothy 6:11.

**I.** He charges them not to afflict themselves with disquieting perplexing cares about the necessary supports of life: *Take no thought for your life*, v. 22. In the foregoing parable he had given us warning against that branch of covetousness of which rich people are most in danger; and that is, a *sensual complacency* in the abundance of this world's goods. Now his disciples might think they were in no danger of this, for they had no plenty or variety to glory in; and therefore he here warns them against another branch of covetousness, which they are most in temptation to that have but a little of this world, which was the case of the disciples at best and much more now that they had left all to follow Christ, and that was, an *anxious solicitude* about the necessary supports of life: “*Take no thought for your life, either for the preservation of it, if it be in danger, or for the provision that is to be made for it, either of food or clothing, what ye shall eat or what ye shall put on.*” This is the caution he had largely insisted upon, <sup><465></sup>Matthew 6:25, etc.; and the arguments here used are much the same, designed for our encouragement to cast all our care upon God, which is the *right way to ease* ourselves of it. Consider then,

**1.** God, who has done the greater for us, may be depended upon to do the less. He has, without any care or forecast of our own, given us *life* and a *body*, and therefore we may cheerfully leave it to him to provide *meat* for the support of that life, and *raiment* for the defence of that body.

**2.** God, who provides for the inferior creatures, may be depended upon to provide for good Christians. “Trust God for *meat*, for he *feeds the ravens* (v. 24); they *neither sow nor reap*, they take neither care nor pains beforehand to provide for themselves, and yet they are *fed*, and never

perish for want. Now consider *how much better ye are than the fowls*, than the ravens. Trust God for clothing, for he clothes the lilies (v. 27, 28); they make no preparation for their own clothing, they *toil not*, they *spin not*, the root in the ground is a naked thing, and without ornament, and yet, as the flower grows up, it appears wonderfully *beautified*. Now, if God has so clothed the flowers, which are fading perishing things, *shall he not much more clothe* you with such clothing as is fit for you, and with clothing suited to your nature, as theirs is?" When God fed Israel with *manna* in the wilderness, he also took care for their clothing; for though he did not furnish them with new clothes, yet (which came all to one) he provided that those they had should not *wax old upon them*, ~~(KJB)~~ Deuteronomy 8:4. Thus will he clothe his spiritual Israel; but then let them not be *of little faith*. Note, Our inordinate cares are owing to the weakness of our faith; for a powerful practical belief of the all-sufficiency of God, his covenant-relation to us as a Father, and especially his precious promises, relating both to this life and that to come, would be mighty, through God, to the pulling down of the strong holds of these disquieting perplexing imaginations.

**3.** Our cares are fruitless, vain, and insignificant, and therefore it is folly to indulge them. They will not gain us our wishes, and therefore ought not to hinder our repose (v. 25): "*Which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit, or one inch, can add to his age one year or one hour?*" Now if ye be *not able to do that which is least*, if it be not in your power to alter your statures, why should you perplex yourselves about other things, which are as much out of your power, and about which it is necessary that we refer ourselves to the providence of God?" Note, As in our *stature*, so in our *state*, it is our wisdom to take *it as it is*, and make the best of it; for fretting and vexing, carping and caring, will not mend it.

**4.** An inordinate anxious pursuit of the things of this world, even necessary things, very ill becomes the disciples of Christ (v. 29, 30): "Whatever others do, *seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink*; do not you afflict yourselves with perplexing cares, nor weary yourselves with constant toils; do not hurry hither and thither with enquiries *what you shall eat or drink*, as David's enemies, that *wandered up and down for meat* (~~(KJB)~~ Psalm 59:15), or as the eagle that *seeks the prey afar off*, ~~(KJB)~~ Job 39:29. Let not the disciples of Christ thus *seek* their food, but ask it of God day by day; let them not be *of doubtful mind*; *me meteorizesthe* — *Be not as meteors in the air*, that are blown hither and thither with every wind; do

not, like them, *rise and fall*, but maintain a consistency with yourselves; be even and steady, and have your hearts fixed; *live not in careful suspense*; let not your minds be continually perplexed between hope and fear, ever upon the rack." Let not the children of God make themselves uneasy; for,

**(1.)** This is to make themselves like the children of this world: "*All these things do the nations of the world seek after*, v. 30. They that take care for the body only, and not for the soul, for this world only, and not for the other, look no further than what they shall *eat and drink*; and, having no all-sufficient God to seek to and confide in, they burden themselves with anxious cares about those things. But it ill becomes you to do so. You, who are called out of the world, ought not to be thus conformed to the world, and to *walk in the way of this people*," ~~2011~~ Isaiah 8:11, 12. When inordinate cares prevail over us, we should think, "What am I, a Christian or a heathen? Baptized or not baptized? If a Christian, if baptized, shall I rank myself with Gentiles, and join with them in their pursuits?"

**(2.)** It is needless for them to disquiet themselves with care about the necessary supports of life; for they have a Father in heaven who does and will take care for them: "*Your Father knows that you have need of these things*, and considers it, and will supply your needs *according to his riches in glory*; for he is *your Father*, who *made* you subject to these necessities, and therefore will suit his compassions to them: *your Father*, who *maintains* you, educates you, and designs an inheritance for you, and therefore will take care that you *want no good thing*."

**(3.)** They have better things to mind and pursue (v. 31): "*But rather seek ye the kingdom of God*, and mind this, you, my disciples, who are to *preach the kingdom of God*; let your hearts be upon your work, and your great care how to do that well, and this will effectually divert your thoughts from inordinate care about things of the world. And let all that have souls to save *seek the kingdom of God*, in which only they can be *safe*. Seek admission into it, seek advancement in it; seek the *kingdom of grace*, to be subjects in that; the *kingdom of glory*, to be princes in that; and then *all these things shall be added to you*. Mind the affairs of your souls with diligence and care, and then trust God with all your other affairs."

**(4.)** They have better things to expect and hope for: *Fear not, little flock*, v. 32. For the banishing of inordinate cares, it is necessary that fears should be suppressed. When we frighten ourselves with an apprehension

of evil to come, we put ourselves upon the stretch of care how to avoid it, when after all perhaps it is but the creature of our own imagination. Therefore *fear not, little flock, but hope to the end; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* This comfortable word we had not in Matthew. Note,

[1.] Christ's flock in this world is a *little flock*; his sheep are but few and feeble. The church is a vineyard, a garden, a small spot, compared with the wilderness of this world; as Israel (~~1~~1 Kings 20:27), who were like two little flocks of kids, when *the Syrians filled the country.*

[2.] Though it be a little flock, quite *over-numbered*, and therefore in danger of being *overpowered*, by its enemies, yet it is the will of Christ that they should not *be afraid*: “*Fear not, little flock, but see yourselves safe under the protection and conduct of the great and good Shepherd, and lie easy.*”

[3.] God has *a kingdom* in store for all that belong to Christ's *little flock*, a crown of glory (~~1~~1 Peter 5:4), a throne of power (~~1~~Revelation 3:21), unsearchable riches, far exceeding the peculiar treasures of *kings and provinces*. The *sheep on the right hand* are called to *come and inherit the kingdom*; it is theirs for ever; a kingdom for each.

[4.] The kingdom is given according to the *good pleasure* of the Father; *It is your Father's good pleasure*; it is given not of debt, but of grace, free grace, sovereign grace; *even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee.* The kingdom is his; and may he not do what he will with his own?

[5.] The believing hopes and prospects of *the kingdom* should silence and suppress the fears of Christ's little flock in this world. “Fear no trouble; for, though it should come, it shall not come between you and the kingdom, that is sure, it is near.” (That is not an evil worth trembling at the thought of which cannot separate us from the love of God). “*Fear not the want of any thing that is good for you; for, if it be your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, you need not question but he will bear your charges thither.*”

**II.** He charged them to make sure work for their souls, by laying up their treasure in heaven, v. 33, 34. Those who have done this may be very easy as to all the events of time.

1. “*Sit loose to this world, and to all your possessions in it: Sell that ye have, and give alms,*” that is, “rather than want wherewith to relieve those that are truly *necessitous*, sell what you have that is *superfluous*, all that you can spare from the support of yourselves and families, and give it to *the poor*. *Sell what you have*, if you find it a hindrance from, or incumbrance in, the service of Christ. Do not think yourselves undone, if by being fined, imprisoned, or banished, for the testimony of Jesus, you be forced to sell your estates, thought they be *the inheritance of your fathers*. Do not sell to *hoard up* the money, or because you can make more of it by usury, but *sell and give alms*; what is given in alms, in a right manner, is put out to the *best interest*, upon the *best security*.”

2. “*Set your hearts upon the other world, and your expectations from that world. Provide yourselves bags that wax not old, that wax not empty, not of gold, but of grace in the heart and good works in the life; these are the bags that will last.*” Grace will *go with us* into another world, for it is *woven in* the soul; and our good works will *follow us*, for *God is not unrighteous to forget* them. These will be *treasures in heaven*, that will enrich us to eternity.

(1.) It is treasure that will not be *exhausted*; we may spend upon it to eternity, and it will not be at all the less; there is no danger of seeing the bottom of it.

(2.) It is treasure that we are in no danger of being robbed of, for *no thief approaches* near it; what is laid up in heaven is out of reach of enemies.

(3.) It is treasure that will not *spoil* with *keeping*, any more than it will *waste* with *spending*; the *moth* does not *corrupt* it, as it does our garments which we now wear. Now by *this* it appears that we have laid up our treasure in heaven if our *hearts* be *there* while we are *here* (v. 34), if we think much of heaven and keep our eye upon it, if we quicken ourselves with the hopes of it and keep ourselves in awe with the fear of falling short of it. But, if your hearts be set upon the earth and the things of it, it is to be feared that you have your treasure and portion in it, and are undone when you leave it.

III. He charges them to get ready, and to keep in a readiness for Christ's coming, when all those who have laid up their treasure in heaven shall enter upon the enjoyment of it, v. 35, etc.

**1.** Christ is our *Master*, and we are his *servants*, not only *working* servants, but *waiting* servants, servants that are to do him honour, in *waiting* on him, and attending his motions: *If any man serve me, let him follow me. Follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes.* But that is not all: they must do him honour in *waiting for him*, and expecting his return. We must be as men that *wait for their Lord*, that sit up late while he stays out late, to be ready to receive him.

**2.** Christ our Master, though now *gone from us*, will *return again*, return *from the wedding*, from *solemnizing* the nuptials abroad, to *complete* them at home. Christ's servants are now in a state of expectation, *looking for their Master's glorious appearing*, and doing every thing with an eye to *that*, and in order to *that*. He *will come* to take cognizance of his servants, and, that being a *critical day*, they shall either stay with him or be turned out of doors, according as they are found in that day.

**3.** The time of our Master's return is uncertain; it will be *in the night*, it will be *far* in the night, when he has long *deferred* his coming, and when many have done looking for him; in the *second watch*, just before midnight, or in the *third watch*, next after midnight, v. 38. His coming to us, at our death, is uncertain, and to many it will be a great surprise; for *the Son of Man cometh at an hour that ye think not* (v. 40), without giving notice beforehand. This bespeaks not only the uncertainty of the time of his coming, but the prevailing security of the greatest part of men, who are *unthinking*, and altogether regardless of the notices given them, so that, whenever he comes, it is *in an hour that they think not*.

**4.** That which he expects and requires from his servants is that they be *ready to open to him immediately*, whenever he comes (v. 36), that is, that they be in a frame fit to receive him, or rather to be received by him; that they be found *as* his servants, in the posture that becomes them, with their *loins girded about*, alluding to the servants that are ready to go whither their master sends them, and do what their master bids them, having their long garments tucked up (which otherwise would hang about them, and hinder them), and *their lights burning*, with which to light their master into the house, and up to his chamber.

**5.** Those servants will be happy who shall be found ready, and in a good frame, when their Lord shall come (v. 37): *Blessed are those servants* who, after having waited long, continue in a waiting frame, until the hour that their Lord comes, and are then found awake and aware of his first

approach, of his first knock; and again (v. 38): *Blessed are those servants,* for then will be the time of their preferment. Here is such an instance of honour done them as is scarcely to be found among men: He *will make them sit down to meat, and will serve them.* For the bridegroom to wait upon his bride at table is not uncommon, but to wait upon his servants is not *the manner of men*; yet Jesus Christ was among his disciples as *one that served,* and did once, to show his condescension, *gird himself, and serve them,* when he *washed their feet* (~~414~~ John 13:4, 5); it signified the joy with which they shall be received into the other world by the Lord Jesus, who is gone before, to prepare for them, and has told them that his *Father will honour them,* ~~412b~~ John 12:26.

**6.** We are *therefore* kept at uncertainty concerning the precise time of his coming that we may be always ready; for it is no thanks to a man to be ready for an attack, if he know beforehand just the time when it will be made: *The good man of the house, if he had known what hour the thief would have come,* though he were ever so careless a man, *would yet have watched,* and have frightened away the thieves, v. 39. But we do not know at what hour the alarm will be given us, and therefore are concerned to watch at all times, and never to be off our guard. Or this may intimate the miserable case of those who are careless and unbelieving in this great matter. If the *good man of the house* had had notice of his danger of being robbed such a night, he would have sat up, and saved his house; but we have notice of the day of the Lord's coming, *as a thief in the night,* to the confusion and ruin of all secure sinners, and yet do not thus *watch.* If men will take such care of their houses, O let us be thus wise for our souls: *Be ye therefore ready also,* as ready as the good man of the house would be *if he knew what hour the thief would come.*

## ~~412a~~ LUKE 12:41-53

### VIGILANCE AND EXERTION INCULCATED

Here is,

**I.** Peter's question, which he put to Christ upon occasion of the foregoing parable (v. 41): "*Lord, speakest thou this parable to us that are thy constant followers, to us that are ministers, or also to all that come to be taught by thee, to all the hearers, and in them to all Christians?*" Peter was



now, as often, spokesman for the disciples. We have reason to bless God that there are some such forward men, that have a gift of utterance; let those that are such take heed of being proud. Now Peter desires Christ to explain himself, and to direct the arrow of the foregoing parable to the mark he intended. He calls it a *parable*, because it was not only figurative, but weighty, solid, and instructive. Lord, said Peter, was it intended for *us*, or for *all*? To this Christ gives a direct answer (<sup>4157</sup>Mark 13:37): *What I say unto you, I say unto all*. Yet here he seems to show that the apostles were primarily concerned in it. Note, We are all concerned to take to ourselves what Christ in his word designs for us, and to enquire accordingly concerning it: *Speakest thou this to us?* To me? Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears. Doth this word belong to me? Speak it to *my heart*.

**II.** Christ's reply to this question, directed to Peter and the rest of the disciples. If what Christ had said before did not so peculiarly concern them, but in common with other Christians, who must all watch and pray for Christ's coming, *as his servants*, yet this that follows is peculiarly adapted to ministers, who are the *stewards* in Christ's house. Now our Lord Jesus here tells them,

**1.** What was their *duty as stewards*, and what the *trust* committed to them.

**(1.)** They are made *rulers of God's household*, under Christ, whose own the house is; ministers derive an authority from Christ to preach the gospel, and to administer the ordinances of Christ, and apply the seals of the covenant of grace.

**(2.)** Their business is to give God's children and servants *their portion of meat*, that which is proper for them and allotted to them; convictions and comfort to those to whom they respectively belong. *Suum cuique* — *to every one his own*. This is *rightly to divide the word of truth*, <sup>4158</sup>2 Timothy 2:15.

**(3.)** To give it to them *in due season*, at that time and in that way which are most suitable to the temper and condition of those that are to be fed; a word *in season* to him *that is weary*.

**(4.)** Herein they must approve themselves *faithful* and *wise*; *faithful* to their Master, by whom this great trust is reposed in them, and *faithful* to their fellow-servants, for whose benefit they are put in trust; and *wise* to

improve an opportunity of doing honour to their Master, and service in the family. Ministers must be both *skilful* and *faithful*.

**2.** What would be their happiness if they approved themselves faithful and wise (v. 43): *Blessed is that servant,*

**(1.)** That is *doing*, and is not idle, nor indulgent of his ease; even the rulers of the household must be *doing*, and make themselves *servants of all*.

**(2.)** That is *so doing*, doing as he should be, giving them their *portion of meat*, by public preaching and personal application.

**(3.)** That is *found* so doing when his Lord comes; that perseveres to the end, notwithstanding the difficulties he may meet with in the way. Now his happiness is illustrated by the preferment of a steward that has approved himself within a lower and narrower degree of service; he shall be preferred to a larger and higher (v. 44): *He will make him ruler over all that he has*, which was Joseph's preferment in Pharaoh's court. Note, Ministers that obtain mercy of the Lord to be faithful shall obtain further mercy to be abundantly rewarded for their faithfulness in the day of the Lord.

**3.** What a dreadful reckoning there would be if they were treacherous and unfaithful, v. 45, 46. If that servant begin to be quarrelsome and profane, he shall be called to an account, and severely punished. We had all this before in Matthew, and therefore shall here only observe,

**(1.)** Our looking upon Christ's second coming as a thing at a distance is the cause of all those irregularities which render the thought of it terrible to us: *He saith in his heart, My Lord delays his coming*. Christ's patience is very often misinterpreted his *delay*, to the *discouragement* of his people, and the *encouragement* of his enemies.

**(2.)** The persecutors of God's people are commonly abandoned to security and sensuality; *they beat their fellow-servants*, and then *eat and drink with the drunken*, altogether unconcerned either at their own sin or their brethren's sufferings, as the king and Haman, who *sat down to drink when the city Shushan was perplexed*. Thus they drink, to drown the clamours of their own consciences, and baffle them, which would otherwise fly in their faces.

**(3.)** Death and judgment will be very terrible to all wicked people, but especially to wicked ministers. It will be a surprise to them: *At an hour when they are not aware.* It will be the determining of them to endless misery; they shall be cut in sunder, and have their portion assigned them with *the unbelievers.*

**4.** What an aggravation it would be of their sin and punishment that they knew their duty, and did not do it (v. 47, 48): *That servant that knew his lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes,* shall fall under a sorer punishment; and *he that knew not shall be beaten with few stripes,* his punishment shall, in consideration of this, be mitigated. Here seems to be an allusion to the law, which made a distinction between sins committed through ignorance, and presumptuous sins (<sup><RB5></sup>Leviticus 5:15, etc.; <sup><RB9></sup>Numbers 15:29, 30), as also to another law concerning the number of stripes given to a malefactor, to be according to the nature of the crime, <sup><RB3></sup>Deuteronomy 25:2, 3. Now,

**(1.)** Ignorance of our duty is an extenuation of sin. He *that knew not his lord's will,* through carelessness and neglect, and his not having such opportunities as some others had of coming to the knowledge of it, and *did things worthy of stripes,* he shall *be beaten,* because he might have known his duty better, but *with few stripes;* his ignorance excuses in part, but not wholly. Thus *through ignorance* the Jews put Christ to death (<sup><RB7></sup>Acts 3:17; <sup><RB8></sup>1 Corinthians 2:8), and Christ pleaded that ignorance in their excuse: *They know not what they do.*

**(2.)** The knowledge of our duty is an aggravation of our sin: *That servant that knew his lord's will,* and yet did his own will, shall be *beaten with many stripes.* God will justly inflict more upon him for abusing the means of knowledge he afforded him, which others would have made a better use of, because it argues a great degree of wilfulness and contempt to sin against knowledge; of how much sorer punishment then shall they be thought worthy, besides the many stripes that their own consciences will give them! Son, remember. Here is a good reason for this added: *To whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required,* especially when it is *committed* as a trust he is to account for. Those have greater capacities of mind than others, more knowledge and learning, more acquaintance and converse with the scriptures, to them *much is given,* and their account will be accordingly.

**III.** A further discourse concerning his own sufferings, which he expected, and concerning the sufferings of his followers, which he would have them also to live in expectation of. In general (v. 49): *I am come to send fire on the earth.* By this some understand the preaching of the gospel, and the pouring out of the Spirit, holy fire; this Christ came to send with a commission to refine the world, to purge away its dross, to burn up its chaff, and it was *already kindled.* The gospel was begun to be preached; some prefaces there were to the pouring out of the Spirit. Christ baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire; this Spirit descended in fiery tongues. But, by what follows, it seems rather to be understood of the fire of *persecution.* Christ is not the Author of it, as it is the sin of the incendiaries, the *persecutors;* but he *permits* it, nay, he *commissions* it, as a *refining* fire for the *trial* of the *persecuted.* This fire was *already kindled* in the enmity of the carnal Jews to Christ and his followers. “*What will I that it may presently be kindled? What thou doest, do quickly. If it be already kindled, what will I? Shall I wait the quenching of it? No, for it must fasten upon myself, and upon all, and glory will redound to God from it.*”

**1.** He must himself suffer many things; he must pass through this fire that was already kindled (v. 50): *I have a baptism to be baptized with.* Afflictions are compared both to *fire* and *water,* <sup><462></sup>Psalm 66:12; 69:1, 2. Christ's sufferings were both. He calls them a *baptism* (<sup><412></sup>Matthew 20:22); for he was watered or sprinkled with them, as Israel was baptized *in the cloud,* and dipped into them, as Israel was baptized *in the sea,* <sup><410></sup>1 Corinthians 10:2. He must be sprinkled with his own blood, and with the blood of his enemies, <sup><253B></sup>Isaiah 63:3. See here,

**(1.)** Christ's *foresight* of his sufferings; he knew what he was to undergo, and the necessity of undergoing it: *I am to be baptized with a baptism.* He calls his sufferings by a name that *mitigates* them; it is a baptism, not a deluge; I must be *dipped* in them, not *drowned* in them; and by a name that *sanctifies* them, for baptism is a name that *sanctifies* them, for baptism is a sacred rite. Christ in his sufferings *devoted* himself to his Father's honour, and *consecrated* himself a priest for evermore, <sup><317></sup>Hebrews 7:27, 28.

**(2.)** Christ's *forwardness* to his sufferings: *How am I straitened till it be accomplished!* He longed for the time when he should suffer and die, having an eye to the glorious issue of his sufferings. It is an allusion to a

woman in travail, that is *pained to be delivered*, and welcomes her pains, because they hasten the birth of the child, and wishes them sharp and strong, that the *work* may be *cut short*. Christ's sufferings were the *travail of his soul*, which he cheerfully underwent, in hope that he should by them *see his seed*, <sup><2530></sup>Isaiah 53:10, 11. So much was his heart set upon the redemption and salvation of man.

**2.** He tells those about him that they also must bear with hardships and difficulties (v. 51): “*Suppose ye that I came to give peace on earth, to give you a peaceable possession of the earth, and outward prosperity on the earth?*” It is intimated that they were ready to entertain such a thought as this, nay, that they went upon this supposition, that the gospel would meet with a *universal* welcome, that people *unanimously* embrace it, and would therefore study to make the preachers of it *easy* and *great*, that Christ, if he did not give them *pomp* and *power*, would at least give them *peace*; and herein they were encouraged by divers passages of the Old Testament, which speak of the peace of the Messiah's kingdom, which they were willing to understand of external peace. “But,” saith Christ, “you will be mistaken, the event will declare the contrary, and therefore do not flatter yourselves into a fool's paradise. You will find,”

**(1.)** “That the effect of the preaching of the gospel will be *division*.” Not but that the design of the gospel and its proper tendency are to unite the children of men to one another, to knit them together in holy love, and, if all would receive it, this would be the effect of it; but there being multitudes that not only will not receive it, but oppose it, and have their corruptions exasperated by it, and are enraged at those that do receive it, it proves, though not the *cause* yet the *occasion* of *division*. While *the strong man armed kept his palace*, in the Gentile world, *his goods were at peace*; all was quiet, for all went one way, the sects of philosophers agreed well enough, so did the worshippers of different deities; but when the gospel was preached, and many were enlightened by it, and turned from the power of Satan to God, then there was a disturbance, *a noise and a shaking*, <sup><2507></sup>Ezekiel 37:7. Some *distinguished* themselves by embracing the gospel, and others were angry that they did so. Yea, and among them that received the gospel there would be different sentiments in minor things, which would occasion *division*; and Christ permits it for holy ends (<sup><4118></sup>1 Corinthians 11:18), that Christians may learn and practise mutual forbearance, <sup><541></sup>Romans 14:1, 2.

(2.) “That this *division* will reach into private families, and the preaching of the gospel will give occasion for discord among the nearest relations” (v. 53): *The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father*, when the one turns Christian and the other does not; for the one that does turn Christian will be zealous by arguments and endearments to turn the other too, ~~4076~~ 1 Corinthians 7:16. As soon as ever Paul was converted, he *disputed*, ~~4092~~ Acts 9:29. The one that continues in unbelief will be provoked, and will hate and persecute the one that by his faith and obedience witnesses against, and condemns, his unbelief and disobedience. A spirit of bigotry and persecution will break through the strongest bonds of relation and natural affection; see ~~4105~~ Matthew 10:35; 24:7. Even *mothers* and *daughters* fall out about religion; and those that believe not are so violent and outrageous that they are ready to deliver up into the hands of the bloody persecutors those that believe, though otherwise very near and dear to them. We find in the *Acts* that, wherever the gospel came, *persecution* was *stirred up*; it was *every where spoken against*, and there was *no small stir about that way*. Therefore let not the disciples of Christ promise themselves *peace upon earth*, for they are sent forth *as sheep in the midst of wolves*.

## ~~4124~~ LUKE 12:54-59

### RECONCILIATION TO GOD

Having given his disciples *their* lesson in the foregoing verses, here Christ turns to *the people*, and gives them *theirs*, v. 54. He *said also to the people*: he preached *ad populum* — *to the people*, as well as *ad clerum* — *to the clergy*. In general, he would have them be as wise in the affairs of their souls as they are in their outward affairs. Two things he specifies: —

**I.** Let them learn to *discern the way of God towards them*, that they may *prepare* accordingly. They were *weather-wise*, and by observing the winds and clouds could foresee when there would be *rain* and when there would be *hot weather* (v. 54, 55); and, according as they foresaw the weather would be, they either housed their hay and corn, or threw it abroad, and equipped themselves for a journey? Even in regard to changes of the weather God gives warning to us what is coming, and art has improved the notices of nature in weather-glasses. The prognostications here referred to

had their origin in repeated observations upon the chain of causes: from what *has been* we conjecture what *will be*. See the benefit of experience; by *taking notice* we may come to *give notice*. Whose is wise will *observe* and *learn*. See now.

1. The particulars of the presages: “*When you see a cloud arising out of the west*” (the Hebrew would say, *out of the sea*), “perhaps it is at first *no bigger than a man's hand* (<sup><1884></sup>1 Kings 18:44), but you say, There is a shower in the womb of it, and it proves so. When you *observe the south wind blow*, you say, *There will be heat*” (for the hot countries of Africa lay not far south from Judea), “and it usually *comes to pass*;” yet nature has not ties itself to such a track but that *sometimes* we are mistaken in our prognostics.

2. The inferences from them (v. 56): “*Ye hypocrites*, who pretend to be wise, but really are not so, who pretend to expect the Messiah and his kingdom” (for so the generality of the Jews did) “and yet are no way disposed to receive and entertain it, *how is it that you do not discern this time*, that you do not discern that now is the time, according to the indications given in the Old-Testament prophecies, for the Messiah to appear, and that, according to the marks given of him, I am he? Why are you not aware that you have now an opportunity which you *will not have long*, and which you *may never have again*, of securing to yourselves an interest in the kingdom of God and the privileges of that kingdom?” *Now is the accepted time*, now or never. It is the folly and misery of man that he *knows not his time*, <sup><2192></sup>Ecclesiastes 9:12. This was the ruin of the men of that generation, that they *knew not the day of their visitation*, <sup><2194></sup>Luke 19:44. But a *wise man's heart discerns time and judgment*; such was the wisdom of the men of Issachar, who *had understanding of the times*, <sup><3122></sup>1 Chronicles 12:32. He adds, “*Yea, and why even of yourselves*, though ye had not these loud alarms given you, *judge ye not what is right?* v. 57. You are not only stupid and regardless in matters that are purely of divine revelation, and take not the hints which that gives you, but you are so even in the dictates of the very light and law of nature.” Christianity has reason and natural conscience on its side; and, if men would allow themselves the liberty of *judging what is right*, they would soon find that all Christ's precepts concerning all things are right, and that there is nothing more equitable in itself, nor better becoming us, than to submit to them and be ruled by them.



**II.** Let them hasten to *make their peace with God* in time, before it be too late, v. 58, 59. This we had upon another occasion, <sup>4025</sup>Matthew 5:25, 26.

**1.** We reckon it our wisdom in our temporal affairs to *compound* with those with whom we cannot *contend*, to *agree with our adversary* upon the best terms we can, before the equity be *foreclosed*, and we be left to the rigour of the law: “*When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, to whom the appeal is made, and knowest that he has an advantage against thee, and thou art in danger of being cast, thou knowest it is the most prudent course to make the matter up between yourselves; as thou art in the way, give diligence to be delivered from him, to get a discharge, lest judgment be given, and execution awarded according to law.*” Wise men will not let their quarrels go to an extremity, but accommodate them in time.

**2.** Let us do thus in the affairs of our souls. We have by sin made God our *adversary*, have provoked his displeasure against us, and he has both *right* and *might* on his side; so that it is to no purpose to think of carrying on the controversy with him either at *bar* or in *battle*. Christ, to whom all judgment is committed, is the magistrate before whom we are hastening to appear: if we stand a trial before him, and insist upon our own justification, the cause will certainly go against us, the *Judge* will *deliver* us to the *officer*, the ministers of his justice, and we shall be *cast into* the *prison* of hell, and the debt will be exacted to the utmost; though we cannot make a full satisfaction for it, it will be continually demanded, *till the last mite be paid*, which will not be to all eternity. Christ's sufferings were short, yet the *value* of them made them fully satisfactory. In the sufferings of damned sinners what is wanting in value must be made up in an endless duration. Now, in consideration of this, let us give diligence to be delivered *out of* the hands of God as an adversary, into his hands as a Father, and this *as we are in the way*, which has the chief stress laid upon it here. While we are alive, we are *in the way*; and *now* is our *time*, by repentance and faith through Christ (who is the Mediator as well as the magistrate), to get the quarrel made up, while it may be done, before it be too late. Thus was God in Christ *reconciling the world to himself, beseeching us to be reconciled*. Let us take hold on the arm of the Lord stretched out in this gracious offer, that we may make peace, and we *shall make peace* (<sup>2370</sup>Isaiah 27:4, 5), for we cannot *walk together* till we be *agreed*.