

CHAPTER 16

The scope of Christ's discourse in this chapter is to awaken and quicken us all so to use this world as not to abuse it, so to manage all our possessions and enjoyments here as that they may make for us, and may not make against us in the other world; for they will do either the one or the other, according as we use them now.

I. If we do good with them, and lay out what we have in works of piety and charity, we shall reap the benefit of it in the world to come; and this he shows in the parable of the unjust steward, who made so good a hand of his lord's goods that, when he was turned out of his stewardship, he had a comfortable subsistence to betake himself to. The parable itself we have (v. 1-8); the explanation and application of it (v. 9-13); and the contempt which the Pharisees put upon the doctrine Christ preached to them, for which he sharply reprov'd them, adding some other weighty sayings (v. 14-18).

II. It, instead of doing good with our worldly enjoyments, we make them the food and fuel of our lusts, of our luxury and sensuality, and deny relief to the poor, we shall certainly perish eternally, and the things of this world, which were thus abused, will but add to our misery and torment. This he shows in the other parable of the rich man and Lazarus, which has likewise a further intention, and that is, to awaken us all to take the warning given us by the written word, and not to expect immediate messages from the other world (v. 19-31).

LUKE 16:1-18

THE UNJUST STEWARD

We mistake if we imagine that the design of Christ's doctrine and holy religion was either to amuse us with notions of divine mysteries or to entertain us with notions of divine mercies. No, the divine revelation of both these in the gospel is intended to engage and quicken us to the practice of Christian duties, and, as much as any one thing, to the duty of

beneficence and doing good to those who stand in need of any thing that either we have or can do for them. This our Saviour is here pressing us to, by reminding us that we are but *stewards of the manifold grace of God*; and since we have in divers instances been unfaithful, and have forfeited the favour of our Lord, it is our wisdom to think how we may, some other way, make what we have in the world turn to a good account. Parables must not be forced beyond their primary intention, and therefore we must not hence infer that any one can befriend us if we lie under the displeasure of our Lord, but that, in the general, we must so lay out what we have in works of piety and charity as that we may meet it again with comfort on the other side death and the grave. If we would act wisely, we must be diligent and industrious to employ our riches in the acts of piety and charity, in order to promote our future and eternal welfare, as worldly men are in laying them out to the greatest temporal profit, in making to themselves friends with them, and securing other secular interests. So *Dr. Clarke*. Now let us consider,

I. The parable itself, in which all the children of men are represented as *stewards* of what they have in this world, and we are but stewards. Whatever we have, the property of it is God's; we have only the use of it, and that according to the direction of our great Lord, and for his honour. Rabbi Kimchi, quoted by Dr. Lightfoot, says, "This world is a house; heaven the roof; the stars the lights; the earth, with its fruits, a table spread; the Master of the house is the holy and blessed God; man is the steward, into whose hands the goods of this house are delivered; if he behave himself well, he shall find favour in the eyes of his Lord; if not, he shall be turned out of his stewardship." Now,

1. Here is the *dishonesty* of this *steward*. He *wasted his lord's goods*, embezzled them, misapplied them, or through carelessness suffered them to be lost and damaged; and for this he was *accused to his lord*, v. 1. We are all *liable* to the same charge. We have not made a due improvement of what God has entrusted us with in this world, but have perverted his purpose; and, that we may not be for this *judged of our Lord*, it concerns us to *judge ourselves*.

2. His *discharge* out of his place. His lord *called for him*, and said, "*How is it that I hear this of thee?*" I expected better things from thee." He speaks as one sorry to find himself disappointed in him, and under a necessity of dismissing him from his service: it troubles him to hear it; but the steward

cannot deny it, and therefore there is no remedy, he must make up his accounts; and be gone in a little time, v. 2. Now this is designed to teach us,

(1.) That we must all of us shortly be discharged from *our stewardship* in this world; we must not always enjoy those things which we now enjoy. Death will come, and *dismiss* us from our stewardship, will *deprive* us of the abilities and opportunities we now have of doing good, and others will come in our places and have the same.

(2.) That our discharge from our stewardship at death is *just*, and what we have deserved, for we have wasted our Lord's goods, and thereby forfeited our trust, so that we cannot complain of any wrong done us.

(3.) That when our stewardship is taken from us we must *give an account* of it to our Lord: *After death the judgment*. We are fairly warned both of our discharge and our account, and ought to be frequently thinking of them.

3. His *after-wisdom*. Now he began to consider, *What shall I do?* v. 3. He would have done well to have considered this before he had so foolishly thrown himself out of a good place by his unfaithfulness; but it is better to *consider* late than never. Note, Since we have all received notice that we must shortly be turned out of our stewardship, we are concerned to consider what we shall do then. He must live; which way shall he have a livelihood?

(1.) He knows that he has not such a degree of industry in him as to get his living by work: "*I cannot dig; I cannot earn my bread by my labour.*" But why can he not dig? It does not appear that he is either old or lame; but the truth is, he is *lazy*. His *cannot* is a *will not*; it is not a natural but a moral disability that he labours under; if his master, when he turned him out of the stewardship, had continued him in his service as a labourer, and set a task-master over him, he would have made him dig. He *cannot dig*, for he was never used to it. Now this intimates that we cannot get a livelihood for our souls by any labour for this world, nor indeed do any thing to purpose for our souls by any ability of our own.

(2.) He knows that he has not such a degree of *humility* as to get his bread by begging: To *beg I am ashamed*. This was the language of his pride, as the former of his slothfulness. Those whom God, in his providence, has

disabled to help themselves, should not be *ashamed* to ask relief of others. This steward had more reason to be ashamed of cheating his master than of begging his bread.

(3.) He therefore determines to make friends of his lord's debtors, or his tenants that were behind with their rent, and had given notes under their hands for it: "*I am resolved what to do*, v. 4. My lord turns me out of his house. I have none of my own to go to. I am acquainted with my lord's tenants, have done them many a good turn, and now I will do them one more, which will so oblige them that they will bid me welcome to their houses, and the best entertainment they afford; and so long as I live, at least till I can better dispose of myself, I will quarter upon them, and go from one good house to another." Now the way he would take to make them his friends was by striking off a considerable part of their debt to his lord, and giving it in his accounts so much less than it was. Accordingly, he sent for one, who owed his lord *a hundred measures of oil* (in that commodity he paid his rent): *Take thy bill*, said he, here it is, and *sit down quickly, and write fifty* (v. 6); so he reduced his debt to the one half. Observe, he was in haste to have it done: "*Sit down quickly*, and do it, lest we be taken treating, and suspected." He took another, who owed his lord *a hundred measures of wheat*, and from his bill he cut off a fifth part, and bade him write *fourscore* (v. 7); probably he did the like by others, abating more or less according as he expected kindness from them. See here what uncertain things our worldly possessions are; they are most so to those who have most of them, who devolve upon others all the care concerning them, and so put it into their power to *cheat them*, because they will not trouble themselves to see with their own eyes. See also what treachery is to be found even among those in whom trust is reposed. How hard is it to find one that confidence can be reposed in! *Let God be true, but every man a liar*. Though this steward is turned out for dealing dishonestly, yet still he does so. So rare is it for men to mend of a fault, though they smart for it.

4. The approbation of this: *The lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely*, v. 8. It may be meant of *his lord*, the lord of that servant, who, though he could not but be angry at his knavery, yet was pleased with his ingenuity and policy for himself; but, taking it so, the latter part of the verse must be the words of *our Lord*, and therefore I think the whole is meant of him. Christ did, as it were, say, "Now commend me to such a man as this, that knows how to do well for himself, how to

improve a present opportunity, and how to provide for a future necessity.” He does not commend him because he had done *falsely* to his master, but because he had done *wisely* for himself. Yet perhaps herein he did well for his master too, and but justly with the tenants. He knew what *hard bargains* he had *set them*, so that they could not *pay their rent*, but, having been screwed up by his rigour, were thrown *behindhand*, and they and their families were likely to go to ruin; in consideration of this, he now, at going off, did as he ought to do both in justice and charity, not only easing them of part of their arrears, but abating their rent for the future. *How much owest thou?* may mean, “What rent dost thou sit upon? Come, I will set thee an easier bargain, and yet no easier than what thou oughtest to have.” He had been *all for his lord*, but now he begins to consider the tenants, that he might have *their favour* when he had lost *his lord's*. The abating of their rent would be a lasting kindness, and more likely to engage them than abating their arrears only. Now this forecast of his, for a comfortable subsistence in this world, shames our improvidence for another world: *The children of this world*, who choose and have their portions in it, *are wiser for their generation*, act more considerately, and better consult their worldly interest and advantage, than the *children of light*, who enjoy the gospel, in *their generation*, that is, in the concerns of their souls and eternity. Note,

(1.) The wisdom of worldly people in the concerns of this world is to be *imitated* by us in the concerns of our souls: it is their principle to improve their opportunities, to do that first which is most needful, in summer and harvest to lay up for winter, to take a good bargain when it is offered them, to trust the *faithful* and not the *false*. O that we were thus wise in our spiritual affairs!

(2.) The children of light are commonly *outdone* by the children of this world. Not that the children of this world are *truly wise*; it is only *in their generation*. But in that they are *wiser than the children of light in theirs*; for, though we are told that we must shortly be *turned out of our stewardship*, yet we do not provide as we were to be *here always* and as if there were not *another life after this*, and are not so solicitous as this steward was to provide for *hereafter*. Though as *children of the light*, that light to which life and immortality are brought by the gospel, we cannot but see *another world* before us, yet we do not prepare for it, do not send our best effects and best affections thither, as we should.

II. The application of this parable, and the inferences drawn from it (v. 9): “*I say unto you, you my disciples*” (for to them this parable is directed, v. 1), “though you have but little in this world, consider how you may do good with that little.” Observe,

1. What it is that our Lord Jesus here exhorts us to; to provide for our comfortable reception to the happiness of another world, by making good use of our possessions and enjoyments in this world: “*Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness*, as the steward with his lord's goods made his lord's tenants his friends.” It is the wisdom of the men of this world so to manage their money as that they may have the benefit of it hereafter, and not for the present only; therefore they put it out to interest, buy land with it, put it into this or the other fund. Now we should learn of them to make use of our money so as that we may be the better for it hereafter in another world, as they do in hopes to be the better for it hereafter in this world; so *cast it upon the waters* as that we may *find it again after many days*, ²⁰¹¹Ecclesiastes 11:1. And in our case, though whatever we have *are our Lord's goods*, yet, as long as we dispose of them among *our Lord's tenants* and for their advantage, it is so far from being reckoned a wrong to our Lord, that it is a duty to him as well as policy for ourselves. Note,

(1.) The things of this world are the *mammon of unrighteousness*, or the false *mammon*, not only because often got by fraud and unrighteousness, but because those who trust to it for satisfaction and happiness will certainly be deceived; for riches are perishing things, and will disappoint those that raise their expectations from them.

(2.) Though this *mammon of unrighteousness* is not to be *trusted to* for a happiness, yet it may and must be *made use of* in subserviency to our pursuit of that which is our happiness. Though we cannot find true satisfaction in it, yet we may *make to ourselves friends* with it, not by way of *purchase or merit*, but *recommendation*; so we may make God and Christ our friends, the good angels and saints our friends, and the poor our friends; and it is a desirable thing to be *befriended* in the account and state to come.

(3.) At death we must all *fail*, *hotan eklipete* — *when ye suffer an eclipse*. Death eclipses us. A tradesman is said to *fail* when he becomes a *bankrupt*. We must all thus fail shortly; death shuts up the shop, seals up

the hand. Our comforts and enjoyments on earth will *all fail* us; flesh and heart fail.

(4.) It ought to be our great concern to make it sure to ourselves, that *when we fail* at death we may be *received into everlasting habitations* in heaven. The *habitations* in heaven are *everlasting*, not *made with hands*, but *eternal*, ^{<41>}2 Corinthians 5:1. Christ is gone before, to prepare a place for those that are his, and is there ready to *receive them*; the bosom of Abraham is ready to receive them, and, when a *guard of angels* carries them thither, a *choir of angels* is ready to receive them there. The poor saints that are gone before to glory will receive those that in this world distributed to their necessities.

(5.) This is a good reason why we should use what we have in the world for the honour of God and the good of our brethren, that thus we may with them *lay up in store a good bond*, a good security, a good foundation *for the time to come*, for an eternity to come. See ^{<41>}1 Timothy 6:17-19, which explains this here.

2. With what arguments he presses this exhortation to abound in works of piety and charity.

(1.) If we do not make a right use of the *gifts of God's providence*, how can we expect from him those present and future comforts which are the *gifts of his spiritual grace*? Our Saviour here compares these, and shows that though our faithful use of the things of this world cannot be thought to merit any favour at the hand of God, yet our unfaithfulness in the use of them may be justly reckoned a *forfeiture* of that grace which is necessary to bring us to glory, and that is it which our Saviour here shows, v. 10-14.

[1.] The riches of this world are the *less*; grace and glory are the *greater*. Now if we be unfaithful in the less, if we use the things of this world to other purposes than those for which they were given us, it may justly be feared that we should be so in the gifts of God's grace, that we should receive them also in vain, and therefore they will be denied us: *He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much*. He that serves God, and does good, with his money, will serve God, and do good, with the more noble and valuable talents of wisdom and grace, and spiritual gifts, and the earnest of heaven; but he that buries the *one talent* of this world's wealth will never improve the *five talents* of spiritual riches. God

withholds his grace from covetous worldly people more than we are aware of.

[2.] The riches of this world are *deceitful* and *uncertain*; they are the *unrighteous mammon*, which is hastening from us apace, and, if we would make any advantage of it, we must bestir ourselves quickly; if we do not, how can we expect to be entrusted with spiritual riches, which are the only *true riches*? v. 11. Let us be convinced of this, that those are *truly* rich, and *very* rich, who are rich in *faith*, and rich *towards God*, rich in Christ, in the promises, and in the earnest of heaven; and therefore let us lay up our treasure in them, expect our portion from them, and mind them in the first place, the *kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof*, and then, if other things be added to us, use them *in ordine ad spiritualia* — *with a spiritual reference*, so that by using them well we may take the faster hold of the *true riches*, and may be qualified to receive yet *more grace* from God; *for God giveth to a man that is good in his sight*, that is, to a free-hearted charitable man, *wisdom, and knowledge, and joy* (²⁰⁶Ecclesiastes 2:26); that is, to a man that is *faithful in the unrighteous mammon*, he gives the *true riches*.

[3.] The riches of this world are *another man's*. They are *ta allotria*, not *our own*; for they are foreign to the soul and its nature and interest. They are not *our own*; for they are God's; his title to them is prior and superior to ours; the property remains in him, we are but usufructuaries. They are *another man's*; we have them from others; we use them for others, and *what good has the owner from his goods that increase, save the beholding of them with his eyes, while still they are increased that eat them*; and we must shortly leave them to others, and we know not to whom? But spiritual and eternal riches are *our own* (they enter into the soul that becomes *possessed* of them) and *inseparably*; they are a good part that will never be taken away from us. If we make Christ our own, and the promises our own, and heaven our own, we have that which we may truly call *our own*. But how can we expect God should *enrich us* with these if we do not serve him with our worldly possessions, of which we are but stewards?

(2.) We have no other way to prove ourselves the servants of God than by giving up ourselves so entirely to his service as to make *mammon*, that is, all our worldly gain, serviceable to us in his service (v. 13): *No servant can serve two masters*, whose commands are so inconsistent as those of

God and *mammon* are. If a man will *love* the world, and *hold to that*, it cannot be but he will *hate God* and *despise* him. He will make all his pretensions of religion truckle to his secular interests and designs, and the things of God shall be made to help him in serving and seeking the world. But, on the other hand, if a man will *love God*, and *adhere* to him, he will comparatively *hate* the world (whenever God and the world come in competition) and will *despise* it, and make all his business and success in the world some way or other conducive to his furtherance in the business of religion; and the things of the world shall be made to help him in serving God and working out his salvation. The matter is here laid plainly before us: *Ye cannot serve God and mammon*. So divided are their interests that their services can never be *compounded*. If therefore we be determined to *serve God*, we must disclaim and abjure the service of the world.

3. We are here told what entertainment this doctrine of Christ met with among the Pharisees, and what rebuke he gave them.

(1.) They wickedly *ridiculed* him, v. 14. *The Pharisees, who were covetous, heard all these things, and could not contradict him, but they derided him*. Let us consider this,

[1.] As their *sin*, and the fruit of their *covetousness*, which was their reigning sin, their own iniquity. Note, Many that make a great profession of religion, have much knowledge, and abound in the exercise of devotion, are yet ruined by the love of the world; nor does any thing harden the heart more against the word of Christ. These covetous Pharisees could not bear to have that *touched*, which was their *Delilah*, their darling lust; for this they derided him, *exemykterizon auton* — *they snuffled up their noses at him*, or blew their noses on him. It is an expression of the utmost scorn and disdain imaginable; *the word of the Lord was to them a reproach*, ²¹⁸Jeremiah 6:10. They laughed at him for going so contrary to the opinion and way of the world, for endeavouring to recover them from a sin which they were resolved to hold fast. Note, It is common for those to *make a jest* of the word of God who are resolved that they will not be ruled by it; but they will find at last that it cannot be turned off so.

[2.] As *his suffering*. Our Lord Jesus endured not only the *contradiction* of sinners, but their *contempt*; they *had him in derision* all the day. He that spoke as never man spoke was bantered and ridiculed, that his faithful ministers, whose preaching is unjustly *derided*, may not be disheartened at

it. It is no disgrace to a man to be laughed at, but to deserve to be laughed at. Christ's apostles were *mocked*, and no wonder; the *disciple is not greater than his Lord*.

(2.) He justly reprov'd them; not for *deriding* him (he knew how to *despise the shame*), but for *deceiving* themselves with the shows and colours of piety, when they were strangers to the power of it, v. 15. Here is,

[1.] Their *specious outside*; nay, it was a *splendid one*. *First*, They *justified themselves before men*; they denied whatever ill was laid to their charge, even by Christ himself. They claimed to be looked upon as men of singular sanctity and devotion, and justified themselves in that claim: “*You are they that do that, so as none ever did, that make it your business to court the opinion of men, and, right or wrong, will justify yourselves before the world; you are notorious for this.*” *Secondly*, They were *highly esteemed among men*. Men did not only *acquit* them from any blame they were under, but *applauded* them, and had them in veneration, not only as *good men*, but as the *best of men*. Their sentiments were esteemed as oracles, their directions as laws, and their practices as inviolable prescriptions.

[2.] Their *odious inside*, which was under the eye of God: “*He knows your heart, and it is in his sight an abomination; for it is full of all manner of wickedness.*” Note, *First*, It is folly to *justify ourselves before men*, and to think this enough to bear us out, and bring us off, in the judgment of the great day, that men *know no ill* of us; for God, who knows our hearts, knows that ill of us which no one else can know. This ought to check our value for ourselves, and our confidence in ourselves, that *God knows our hearts*, and how much deceit is there, for we have reason to abase and distrust ourselves. *Secondly*, It is folly to judge of persons and things by the opinion of men concerning them, and to go down with the stream of vulgar estimate; for that which is *highly esteemed among men*, who judge according to outward appearance, is perhaps *an abomination in the sight of God*, who sees things as they are, and whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth. On the contrary, there are those whom men despise and condemn who yet are accepted and approved of God, ~~4708~~ 2 Corinthians 10:18.

(3.) He turned from them to the publicans and sinners, as more likely to be wrought upon by his gospel than those covetous conceited Pharisees (v.

16): “The *law and the prophets* were indeed *until John*; the Old-Testament dispensation, which was *confined* to you Jews, continued till John Baptist appeared, and you seemed to have the monopoly of righteousness and salvation; and you are puffed up with this, and this gains you esteem among men, that you are students in the law and the prophets; but since John Baptist appeared *the kingdom of God is preached*, a New-Testament dispensation, which does not value men at all for their being doctors of the law, but *every man presses* into the gospel kingdom, Gentiles as well as Jews, and no man thinks himself bound in good manners to let his betters go before him into it, or to stay till the *rulers* and the Pharisees have led him that way. It is not so much a political national constitution as the Jewish economy was, when *salvation was of the Jews*; but it is made a particular personal concern, and therefore *every man* that is convinced he has a soul to save, and an eternity to provide for, thrusts to get in, lest he should come short by trifling and complimenting.” Some give this sense of it; they derided Christ or speaking in contempt of riches, for, thought they, were there not many promises of riches and other temporal good things in the *law and the prophets*? And were not many of the best of God’s servants very rich, as Abraham and David? “It is true,” saith Christ, “so it was, but now that the kingdom of God is begun to be preached things take a new turn; now blessed are the poor, and the mourners, and the persecuted.” The Pharisees, to requite the people for their high opinion of them, allowed them in a cheap, easy, formal religion. “But,” saith Christ, “now that the *gospel is preached* the eyes of the people are opened, and as they cannot now have a veneration for the Pharisees, as they have had, so they cannot content themselves with such an indifferency in religion as they have been trained up in, but they *press* with a holy violence into the kingdom of God.” Note, Those that would go to heaven must take pains, must strive against the stream, must press against the crowd that are going the contrary way.

(4.) Yet still he protests against any design to invalidate the law (v. 17): *It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, [parelthein](#) — to pass by, to pass away, though the foundations of the earth and the pillars of heaven are so firmly established, than for one tittle of the law to fail.* The moral law is confirmed and ratified, and not one tittle of that fails; the duties enjoined by it are duties still; the sins forbidden by it are sins still. Nay, the precepts of it are explained and enforced by the gospel, and made to appear more spiritual. The ceremonial law is perfected in the gospel colours; not *one*

title of that *fails*, for it is found printed off in the gospel, where, though the force of it is as a law taken off, yet the figure of it as a type shines very brightly, witness the epistle to the Hebrews. There were some things which were connived at by the law, for the preventing of greater mischiefs, the permission of which the gospel has indeed taken away, but without any detriment or disparagement to the law, for it has thereby reduced them to the primitive intention of the law, as in the case of divorce (v. 18), which we had before, ~~405~~ Matthew 5:32; 19:9. Christ will not allow divorces, for his gospel is intended to strike at the bitter root of men's corrupt appetites and passions, to kill them, and pluck them up; and therefore they must not be so far *indulged* as that permission *did* indulge them, for the more they are indulged the more impetuous and headstrong they grow.

~~416~~ LUKE 16:19-31

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

As the parable of the prodigal son set before us the grace of the gospel, which is encouraging to us all, so this sets before us the *wrath to come*, and is designed for our awakening; and very fast asleep those are in sin that will not be awakened by it. The Pharisees made a jest of Christ's sermon against worldliness; now this parable was intended to make those mockers serious. The tendency of the gospel of Christ is both to reconcile us to poverty and affliction and to arm us against temptations to worldliness and sensuality. Now this parable, by drawing the curtain, and letting us see what will be the end of both in the other world, goes very far in prosecuting those two great intentions. This parable is not like Christ's other parables, in which spiritual things are represented by similitudes borrowed from worldly things, as those of the sower and the seed (except that of the sheep and goats), the prodigal son, and indeed all the rest but this. But here the *spiritual things themselves* are represented in a narrative or description of the different state of good and bad in this world and the other. Yet we need not call it a history of a particular occurrence, but it is *matter of fact* that is true every day, that poor godly people, whom men neglect and trample upon, die away out of their miseries, and go to heavenly bliss and joy, which is made the more pleasant to them by their preceding sorrows; and that rich epicures, who live in luxury, and are unmerciful to the poor, die, and go into a state of insupportable torment,

which is the more grievous and terrible to them because of the sensual lives they lived: and that there is no gaining any relief from their torments. Is this a parable? What similitude is there in this? The discourse indeed between Abraham and the rich man is only an illustration of the description, to make it the more affecting, like that between God and Satan in the story of Job. Our Saviour came to bring us acquainted with another world, and to show us the reference which *this* world has to *that*; and here is does it. In this description (for so I shall choose to call it) we may observe,

I. The different condition of a *wicked rich man*, and a *godly poor man*, in this world. We know that as some of late, so the Jews of old, were ready to make prosperity one of the marks of a true church, of a good man and a favourite of heaven, so that they could hardly have any favourable thoughts of a *poor man*. This mistake Christ, upon all occasions, set himself to correct, and here very fully, where we have,

1. A wicked man, and one that will be for ever miserable, in the height of prosperity (v. 19): *There was a certain rich man*. From the Latin we commonly call him *Dives* — a *rich man*; but, as Bishop Tillotson observes, he has no name given him, as the poor man has, because it had been invidious to have named any particular rich man in such a description as this, and apt to provoke and gain ill-will. But others observe that Christ would not do the rich man so much honour as to name him, though when perhaps he called his lands by his own name he thought it should long survive that of the beggar at his gate, which yet is here preserved, when that of the rich man is buried in oblivion. Now we are told concerning this rich man,

(1.) That he was *clothed in purple and fine linen*, and that was his *adorning*. He had *fine linen* for *pleasure*, and clean, no doubt, every day; night-linen, and day-linen. He had *purple* for *state*, for that was the wear of princes, which has made some conjecture that Christ had an eye to Herod in it. He never appeared abroad but in great magnificence.

(2.) He *fared deliciously and sumptuously every day*. His table was furnished with all the varieties and dainties that nature and art could supply; his side-table richly adorned with plate; his servants, who waited at table, in rich liveries; and the guests at his table, no doubt, such as he thought *graced* it. Well, and what harm was there in all this? It is no sin to

be rich, no sin to wear purple and fine linen, nor to keep a plentiful table, if a man's estate will afford it. Not are we told that he got his estate by fraud, oppression, or extortion, no, nor that he was drunk, or made others drunk; but,

[1.] Christ would hereby show that a man may have a great deal of the wealth, and pomp, and pleasure of this world, and yet lie and perish for ever under God's wrath and curse. We cannot infer from men's living great either that God loves them *in* giving them so much, or that they love God *for* giving them so much; happiness consists not in these things. [2.] That plenty and pleasure are a very *dangerous* and to many a *fatal* temptation to luxury, and sensuality, and forgetfulness of God and another world. This man might have been happy if he had not had great possessions and enjoyments.

[3.] That the indulgence of the body, and the ease and pleasure of that, are the ruin of many a soul, and the interests of it. It is true, eating good meat and wearing good clothes are lawful; but it is true that they often become the food and fuel of pride and luxury, and so turn into sin to us.

[4.] That feasting ourselves and our friends, and, at the same time, forgetting the distresses of the poor and afflicted, are very provoking to God and damning to the soul. The sin of this rich man was not so much his dress or his diet, but his providing only for himself.

2. Here is a godly man, and one that will be for ever happy, in the depth of adversity and distress (v. 20): *There was a certain beggar*, named *Lazarus*. A beggar of that name, eminently devout, and in great distress, was probably well known among good people at that time: a beggar, suppose such a one as Eleazar, or Lazarus. Some think Eleazar a proper name for any poor man, for it signifies the *help of God*, which they must fly to that are destitute of *other helps*. This poor man was reduced to the last extremity, as miserable, as to outward things, as you can lightly suppose a man to be in this world.

(1.) His body was *full of sores*, like Job. To be sick and weak in body is a great affliction; but sores are more *painful* to the patient, and more *loathsome* to those about him.

(2.) He was forced to beg his bread, and to take up with such scraps as he could get at rich people's doors. He was so sore and lame that he could not

go himself, but was carried by some compassionate hand or other, and *laid at the rich man's gate*. Note, Those that are not able to help the poor with their *purses* should help them with their *pains*; those that cannot lend them *a penny* should lend them *a hand*; those that have not themselves wherewithal to give to them should either bring them, or go for them, to those that have. Lazarus, in his distress, had nothing of his own to subsist on, no relation to go to, nor did the parish take care of him. It is an instance of the degeneracy of the Jewish church at this time that such a godly man as Lazarus was should be suffered to perish for want of necessary food. Now observe,

[1.] His expectations from the rich man's table: *He desired to be fed with the crumbs*, v. 21. He did not look for a mess from off his table, though he ought to have had one, one of the best; but would be thankful for the crumbs from under the table, the broken meat which was the rich man's leavings; nay, the leavings of his dogs. *The poor use entreaties*, and must be content with such as they can get. Now this is taken notice of to show, *First*, What was the distress, and what the disposition, of the poor man. He was *poor*, but he was *poor in spirit*, contentedly poor. He did not lie at the rich man's gate complaining, and bawling, and making a noise, but silently and modestly desiring to be *fed with the crumbs*. This miserable man was a good man, and in favour with God. Note, It is often the lot of some of the dearest of God's saints and servants to be greatly afflicted in this world, while wicked people prosper, and have abundance; see ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 73:7, 10, 14. Here is a child of wrath and an heir of hell sitting in the house, faring sumptuously; and a child of love and an heir of heaven lying at the gate, perishing for hunger. And is men's spiritual state to be judged of then by their outward condition? *Secondly*, What was the temper of the rich man towards him. We are not told that he abused him, or forbade him his gate, or did him any harm, but it is intimated that he slighted him; he had no concern for him, took no care about him. Here was a *real* object of charity, and a very *moving* one, which spoke for itself; it was presented to him *at his own gate*. The poor man had a good character and good conduct, and every thing that could recommend him. A *little* thing would be a *great* kindness to him, and yet he took no cognizance of his case, did not order him to be taken in and lodged in the barn, or some of the out-buildings, but let him lie there. Note, It is not enough not to oppress and trample upon the poor; we shall be found unfaithful stewards of our Lord's goods, in the great day, if we do not succour and relieve them. The reason

given for the most fearful doom is, *I was hungry, and you gave me no meat*. I wonder how those rich people who have read the gospel of Christ, and way that they believe it, can be so unconcerned as they often are in the necessities and miseries of the poor and afflicted.

[2.] The usage he had from the dogs; *The dogs came and licked his sores*. The rich man kept a kennel of hounds, it may be, or other dogs, for his diversion, and to please his fancy, and these were fed to the full, when poor Lazarus could not get enough to keep him alive. Note, Those will have a great deal to answer for hereafter that feed their dogs, but neglect the poor. And it is a great aggravation of the uncharitableness of many rich people that they bestow that upon their fancies and follies which would supply the necessity, and rejoice the heart, of many a good Christian in distress. Those offend God, nay, and they put a contempt upon human nature, that pamper their dogs and horses, and let the families of their poor neighbours starve. Now those dogs *came and licked the sores* of poor Lazarus, which may be taken, *First*, As an aggravation of his misery. His sores were *bloody*, which tempted the dogs to come, and lick them, as they did the blood of Naboth and Ahab, ^{<1219>}1 Kings 21:19. And we read of the *tongue of the dogs dipped in the blood of enemies*, ^{<1823>}Psalm 68:23. They attacked him while he was yet alive, as if he had been already dead, and he had not strength himself to keep them off, nor would any of the servants be so civil as to check them. The dogs were like their master, and thought they fared sumptuously when they regaled themselves with human gore. Or, it may be taken, *Secondly*, as some relief to him in his misery; *alla kai*, the master was *hard-hearted* towards him, *but* the dogs *came and licked his sores*, which mollified and eased them. It is not said, They *sucked* them, but *licked* them, which was good for them. The dogs were more kind to him than their master was.

II. Here is the *different condition* of this *godly poor man*, and this *wicked rich man*, *at and after death*. Hitherto the wicked man seems to have the advantage, but *Exitus acta probat* — *Let us wait awhile, to see the end hereof*.

1. They both died (v. 22): *The beggar died; the rich man also died*. Death is the common lot of rich and poor, godly and ungodly; there they meet together. One dieth *in his full strength*, and another in *the bitterness of his soul*; but they shall *lie down alike in the dust*, ^{<1216>}Job 21:26. Death favours not either the rich man for his riches or the poor man for his poverty.

Saints die, that they may bring their sorrows to an end, and may enter upon their joys. Sinners die, that they may go to give up their account. It concerns both rich and poor to prepare for death, for it waits for them both. *Mors sceptrā ligonibus aequat* — *Death blends the sceptre with the spade.*

— *aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas,
Regumque turres.*

*With equal pace, impartial fate
Knocks at the palace, as the cottage gate.*

2. The beggar *died first*. God often takes godly people out of the world, when he leaves the wicked to flourish still. It was an advantage to the beggar that such a speedy end was put to his miseries; and, since he could find no other shelter or resting-place, he was *hid in the grave*, where the *weary are at rest*.

3. The rich man *died and was buried*. Nothing is said of the interment of the poor man. They dug a hole any where, and tumbled his body in, without any solemnity; he was *buried with the burial of an ass*: nay, it is well if they that let the dogs lick his sores did not let them gnaw his bones. But the rich man had a pompous funeral, lay in state, had a train of mourners to attend him to his grave, and a stately monument set up over it; probably he had a funeral oration in praise of him, and his generous way of living, and the good table he kept, which those would commend that had been feasted at it. It is said of the wicked man that he is *brought to the grave* with no small ado, and *laid in the tomb*, and *the clods of the valley*, were it possible, are made *sweet to him*, ~~Job~~ Job 21:32, 33. How foreign is the ceremony of a funeral to the happiness of the man!

4. The beggar died and was *carried by angels into Abraham's bosom*. How much did the honour done to his soul, by this convoy of it to its rest, exceed the honour done to the rich man, by the carrying of his body with so much magnificence to its grave! Observe,

(1.) His soul *existed* in a state of separation from the body. It did not *die*, or *fall asleep*, with the body; his candle was not put out with him; but lives, and acted, and knew what it did, and what was done to it.

(2.) His soul *removed* to another world, to the world of spirits; it returned to God who gave it, to its native country; this is implied in its being *carried*. The spirit of a man goes upward.

(3.) Angels took care of it; it was *carried by angels*. They are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, not only while they live, but when they die, and have a charge concerning them, to *bear them up in their hands*, not only in their journeys to and fro on earth, but in their great journey to their long home in heaven, to be both their guide and their guard through regions unknown and unsafe. The soul of man, if not chained to this earth and clogged by it as unsanctified souls are, has in itself an elastic virtue, by which it *springs upward* as soon as it gets clear of the body; but Christ will not trust those that are his to that, and therefore will send special messengers to fetch them to himself. One angel one would think sufficient, but here are more, as many were sent for Elijah. Amasis king of Egypt had his chariot drawn by kings; but what was that honour to this? Saints ascend in the virtue of Christ's ascension; but this convoy of angels is added for state and decorum. Saints shall be brought home, not only safely, but honourably. What were the bearers at the rich man's funeral, though, probably, those of the first rank, compared with Lazarus's bearers? The angels were not shy of touching him, for his sores were on his *body*, not on his *soul*; that was presented to God *without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*. "Now, blessed angels," said a good man just expiring, "now come and do your office."

(4.) It was carried *into Abraham's bosom*. The Jews expressed the happiness of the righteous at death three ways: — they to go *to the garden of Eden*: they go *to be under the throne of glory*; and they go *to the bosom of Abraham*, and it is this which our Saviour here makes use of. Abraham was the *father of the faithful*; and whither should the souls of the faithful be gathered but to him, who, as a tender father, lays them *in his bosom*, especially at their first coming, to bid them welcome, and to refresh them when newly come from the sorrows and fatigues of this world? He was carried *to his bosom*, that is, to feast with him, for at feasts the guests are said to lean on one another's breasts; and the saints in heaven *sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob*. Abraham was a great and rich man, yet in heaven he does not disdain to lay poor Lazarus in his bosom. Rich saints and poor meet in heaven. This poor Lazarus, who might not be admitted within the rich man's gate, is conducted into the dining-room, into the bed-chamber, of the heavenly palace; and *he* is laid in the bosom

of Abraham, whom the rich glutton scorned to *set with the dogs of his flock*.

5. The next news you hear of the *rich man*, after the account of his *death and burial*, is, that *in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment*, v. 23.

(1.) His state is very miserable. *He is in hell*, in *hades*, in the state of separate souls, and there he is in *the utmost misery and anguish* possible. As the souls of the faithful, immediately *after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity*, so wicked and unsanctified souls, immediately after they are fetched from the pleasures of the flesh by death, are in misery and torment endless, useless, and remediless, and which will be much increased and completed at the resurrection. This *rich man* had entirely devoted himself to the pleasures of the *world of sense*, was wholly *taken up* with them, and *took up with them* for his portion, and therefore was wholly unfit for the pleasures of the *world of spirits*; to such a carnal mind as his they would indeed be no pleasure, nor could he have any relish of them, and therefore he is of course excluded from them. Yet this is not all; he was hard-hearted to God's poor, and therefore he is not only cut off from mercy, but he has *judgment without mercy*, and falls under a punishment of *sense* as well as a punishment of *loss*.

(2.) The misery of his state is aggravated by his knowledge of the happiness of Lazarus: He *lifts up his eyes*, and *sees Abraham afar off*, and *Lazarus in his bosom*. It is the soul that is *in torment*, and they are the eyes of the mind that are lifted up. He now began to consider what was become of Lazarus. He does not find him where he himself is, nay, he plainly sees him, and with as much assurance as if he had seen him with his bodily eyes, afar off in the bosom of Abraham. This same aggravation of the miseries of the damned we had before (⁴²³Luke 13:28): *Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out*.

[1.] He saw *Abraham afar off*. To see Abraham we should think a pleasing sight; but to see him afar off was a tormenting sight. Near himself he saw devils and damned companions, frightful sights, and painful ones; afar off he saw Abraham. Note, Every sight in hell is aggravating.

[2.] He saw *Lazarus in him bosom*. That same Lazarus whom he had looked upon with so much scorn and contempt, as not worthy his notice, he now sees preferred, and to be envied. The sight of him brought to his

mind his own cruel and barbarous conduct towards him; and the sight of him in that happiness made his own misery the more grievous.

III. Here is an account of what passed between the rich man and Abraham in the separate state — a state of separation one from another, and of both from this world. Though it is probable that there will not be, nor are, any such dialogues or discourses between glorified saints and damned sinners, yet it is very proper, and what is usually done in descriptions, especially such as are designed to be pathetic and moving, by such dialogues to represent what will be the mind and sentiments both of the one and of the other. And since we find damned sinners tormented *in the presence of the Lamb* (⁽⁶⁴⁰⁾Revelation 14:10), and the faithful servants of God looking upon them that have *transgressed the covenant*, there where their *worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched* (⁽²⁶²⁾Isaiah 66:23, 24), such a discourse as this is not incongruous to be supposed. Now in this discourse we have,

1. The request which the rich man made to Abraham for some mitigation of his present misery, v. 24. Seeing Abraham afar off, *he cried to him*, cried aloud, as one in earnest, and as one in pain and misery, mixing shrieks with his petitions, to enforce them by moving compassion. He that used to *command* aloud now *begs* aloud, louder than ever Lazarus did at his gate. The songs of his riot and revels are all turned into lamentations. Observe here,

(1.) The title he gives to Abraham: *Father Abraham*. Note, There are many in hell that can call Abraham *father*, that were Abraham's seed after the flesh, nay, and many that were, in name and profession, the children of the covenant made with Abraham. Perhaps this rich man, in his carnal mirth, had ridiculed Abraham and the story of Abraham, as the scoffers of the latter days do; but now he gives him a title of respect, *Father Abraham*. Note, The day is coming when wicked men will be glad to scrape acquaintance with the righteous, and to claim kindred to them, though now they slight them. Abraham in this description represents Christ, for to him all judgment is committed, and it is his mind that Abraham here speaks. Those that now slight Christ will shortly make their court to him, *Lord, Lord*.

(2.) The representation he makes to him of his present deplorable condition: *I am tormented in this flame*. It is the torment of his soul that he

complains of, and therefore such a fire as will operate upon souls; and such a fire the *wrath of God* is, fastening upon a guilty conscience; such a fire horror of mind is, and the reproaches of a self-accusing self-condemning heart. Nothing is more painful and terrible to the body than to be tormented with fire; by this therefore the miseries and agonies of damned souls are represented.

(3.) His request to Abraham, in consideration of this misery: *Have mercy on me*. Note, The day is coming when those that make light of divine mercy will beg hard for it. O for *mercy, mercy*, when the day of mercy is over, and offers of mercy are no more made. He that had no mercy on Lazarus, yet expects Lazarus should have mercy on him; “for,” thinks he, “Lazarus is better natured than ever I was.” The particular favour he begs is, *Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue*.

[1.] Here he complains of the torment of his *tongue* particularly, as if he were more tormented there than in any other part, the punishment answering the sin. The *tongue* is one of the organs of speech, and by the torment of that he is put in mind of all the wicked words that he had spoken against God and man, his cursing, and swearing, and blasphemy, all his *hard speeches*, and *filthy speeches*; by his words *he is condemned*, and therefore in his tongue he is tormented. The tongue is also one of the organs of *tasting*, and therefore the torments of that will remind him of his inordinate relish of the delights of sense, which he had *rolled under his tongue*.

[2.] He desires a *drop of water to cool his tongue*. He does not say, “Father Abraham, order me a release from this misery, help me out of this pit,” for he utterly *despaired* of this; but he asks as small a thing as could be asked, *a drop of water* to cool his tongue for one moment.

[3.] He sometimes suspected that he had herein an ill design upon Lazarus, and hoped, if he could get him within his reach, he should keep him from returning to the bosom of Abraham. The heart that is filled with rage against God is filled with rage against the people of God. But we will think more charitably even of a damned sinner, and suppose he intended here to show respect to Lazarus, as one to whom he would now gladly be beholden. He *names* him, because he *knows* him, and thinks Lazarus will not be unwilling to do him this good office for old acquaintance' sake. Grotius here quotes Plato describing the torments of wicked souls, and

among other things he says, They are *continually raving* on those whom they have *murdered*, or been any way *injurious to*, calling upon them to *forgive them* the wrongs they did them. Note, There is a day coming when those that now hate and despise the people of God would gladly receive kindness from them.

2. The reply which Abraham gave to this request. In general, he did not grant it. He would not allow him one *drop of water, to cool* his tongue. Note, The damned in hell shall not have any the least abatement or mitigation of their torment. If we now improve the day of our opportunities, we may have a full and lasting satisfaction in the streams of mercy; but, if we now slight the offer, it will be in vain in hell to expect the least drop of mercy. See how justly this rich man is paid in his own coin. He that denied a crumb is denied a drop. Now it is said to us, *Ask, and it shall be given you;* but, if we let slip this accepted time, we may ask, and it shall not be given us. But this is not all; had Abraham only said, “You shall have nothing to abate your torment,” it had been sad; but he says a great deal which would add to his torment, and make the flame the hotter, for every thing in hell will be tormenting.

(1.) He calls him *son*, a kind and civil title, but here it serves only to aggravate the denial of his request, which shut up the bowels of the compassion of a father from him. He had been a son, but a rebellious one, and now an abandoned disinherited one. See the folly of those who rely on that *plea, We have Abraham to our father*, when we find one in hell, and likely to be there for ever, whom Abraham calls *son*.

(2.) He puts him in mind of what had been both his own condition and the condition of Lazarus, in their *life-time: Son, remember;* this is a cutting word. The memories of damned souls will be their tormentors, and conscience will then be awakened and stirred up to do its office, which here they would not suffer it to do. Nothing will bring more oil to the flames of hell than *Son, remember*. Now sinners are called upon to *remember*, but they do not, they will not, they find ways to avoid it. “*Son, remember thy Creator, thy Redeemer, remember thy latter end;*” but they can turn a deaf ear to these *mementos*, and forget that for which they have their memories; justly therefore will their everlasting misery arise from a *Son, remember*, to which they will not be able to turn a deaf ear. What a dreadful peal will this ring in our ears, “*Son, remember* the many warnings that were given thee not to come to this place of torment, which

thou wouldest not regard; remember the fair offers made thee of eternal life and glory, which thou wouldest not accept!" But that which he is here put in mind of is,

[1.] That *thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things*. He does not tell him that he had *abused* them, but that he had *received* them: "Remember what a bountiful benefactor God has been to thee, how ready he was to do thee good; thou canst not therefore say he owes thee any thing, no, not a *drop of water*. What he gave thee *thou receivedst*, and that was all; thou never gavest him a receipt for them, in a thankful acknowledgment of them, much less didst thou ever make any grateful return for them or improvement of them; thou hast been the grave of God's blessings, in which they were buried, not the field of them, in which they were sown. Thou receivedst *thy good things*; thou receivedst them, and usedst them, as if they had been *thine own*, and thou hadst not been at all accountable for them. Or, rather, they were the things which thou didst choose for *thy good things*, which were in thine eye the *best things*, which thou didst content thyself with, and portion thyself in. Thou hadst meat, and drink, and clothes of the richest and finest, and these were the things thou didst place thy happiness in; they were *thy reward, thy consolation, the penny* thou didst *agree for*, and thou hast had it. Thou wast for the *good things of thy life-time*, and hadst no thought of better things in another life, and therefore hast no reason to expect them. The day of thy *good things* is past and gone, and now is the day of thy *evil things*, of recompence for all thy evil deeds. Thou hast already had the last drop of the *vials of mercy* that thou couldest expect to fall to thy share; and there remains nothing but *vials of wrath* without mixture."

[2.] "Remember too what *evil things Lazarus received*. Thou enviest him his happiness here; but think what a large share of miseries he had *in his life-time*. Thou hast *as much good* as could be thought to fall to the lot of *so bad a man*, and he *as much evil* as could be thought to fall to the lot of *so good a man*. He *received* his evil things; he bore them patiently, received them from the hand of God, as Job did (^{<800>}Job 2:10, *Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil also?*) — he *received* them as physic appointed for the cure of his spiritual distempers, and the cure was effected." As wicked people have *good things* in this life only, and at death they are for ever separated from all good, so godly people have evil things only *in this life*, and at death they are for ever put out of the reach of them. Now Abraham, by putting him in

mind of both these together, awakens his conscience to remind him how he had behaved towards Lazarus, when he was reveling in his *good things* and Lazarus groaning under his *evil things*; he cannot forget that then he would not help Lazarus, and how then could he expect that Lazarus should now help him? Had Lazarus in his life-time afterwards grown rich, and he poor, Lazarus would have thought it his duty to relieve him, and not to have upbraided him with his former unkindness; but, in the future state of recompence and retribution, those that are now dealt with, both by God and man, better than they deserve, must expect to be rewarded *every man according to his works*.

(3.) He puts him in mind of Lazarus's present bliss, and his own misery: *But now the tables are turned, and so they must abide for ever; now he is comforted, and thou art tormented*. He did not need to be told that he was *tormented*; he felt it to his cost. He knew likewise that one who lay in the bosom of Abraham could not but be comforted there; yet Abraham puts him in mind of it, that he might, by comparing one thing with another, observe the *righteousness of God*, in recompensing *tribulation to them who trouble his people, and to those who are troubled rest*, ^{<506>}2 Thessalonians 1:6, 7. Observe,

[1.] Heaven is *comfort*, and hell is *torment*: heaven is *joy*, hell is *weeping, and wailing*, and pain in perfection.

[2.] The soul, as soon as it leaves the body, goes either to heaven or hell, to comfort or torment, immediately, and does not sleep, or go into purgatory.

[3.] Heaven will be heaven indeed to those that go thither through many and great calamities in this world; of those that had grace, but had little of the comfort of it here (perhaps their souls refused to be comforted), yet, when they are fallen asleep in Christ, you may truly say, “Now *they are comforted*: now *all their tears are wiped away*, and all their fears are vanished.” In heaven there is everlasting consolation. And, on the other hand, hell will be hell indeed to those that go thither from the midst of the enjoyment of all the delights and pleasures of sense. To them the torture is the greater, as temporal calamities are described to be to the *tender and delicate woman, that would not set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground, for tenderness and delicacy*. ^{<535>}Deuteronomy 28:56.

(4.) He assures him that it was to no purpose to think of having any relief by the ministry of Lazarus; for (v. 26), *Besides all this, worse yet, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, an impassable one, a great chasm,* that so there can be no communication between glorified saints and damned sinners.

[1.] The kindest saint in heaven cannot make a visit to the congregation of the dead and damned, to comfort or relieve any there who once were their friends. *“They that would pass hence to you cannot; they cannot leave beholding the face of their Father, nor the work about his throne, to fetch water for you; that is no part of their business.”*

[2.] The most daring sinner in hell cannot force his way out of that prison, cannot get over that great gulf. *They cannot pass to us that would come thence.* It is not to be expected, for the door of mercy is shut, the bridge is drawn; there is no coming out upon parole or bail, no, not for one hour. In this world, blessed be God, there is no gulf fixed between a state of nature and grace, but we may pass from the one to the other, from sin to God; but if we die in our sins, if we throw ourselves into the pit of destruction, there is no coming out. It is a pit *in which there is no water, and out of which there is no redemption.* The decree and counsel of God have fixed this gulf, which all the world cannot unfix. This abandons this miserable creature to despair; it is now too late for any change of his condition, or any the least relief: it might have been prevented *in time*, but it cannot now be remedied *to eternity*. The state of damned sinners is fixed by an irreversible and unalterable sentence. A stone is rolled to the door of the pit, which cannot be rolled back.

3. The further request he had to make to his father Abraham, not for himself, his mouth is stopped, and he has not a word to say in answer to Abraham's denial of a drop of water. Damned sinners are made to know that the sentence they are under is just, and they cannot alleviate their own misery by making any objection against it. And, since he cannot obtain a drop of water to *cool his tongue*, we may suppose he *gnawed his tongue for pain*, as those are said to do on whom one of the *vials* of God's wrath is *poured out*, ⁽⁶⁶⁰⁾ Revelation 16:10. The shrieks and outcries which we may suppose to be now uttered by him were hideous; but, having an opportunity of speaking to Abraham, he will improve it for his relations whom he has left behind, since he cannot improve it for his own advantage. Now as to this,

(1.) He begs that Lazarus might be *sent to his father's house*, upon an errand thither: *I pray thee therefore, father*, v. 27. Again he calls upon Abraham, and in this request he is importunate: "*I pray thee*. O deny me not this." When he was on earth he might have prayed and been heard, but now he prays in vain. "*Therefore*, because thou hast denied me the former request, surely thou wilt be so compassionate as not to deny this:" or, "*Therefore*, because *there is a great gulf fixed*, seeing there is no getting out hence when they are once here, O send to prevent their coming hither:" or, "Though there is a *great gulf fixed* between you and me, yet, since there is no such gulf fixed between you and them, send them hither. Send him back *to my father's house*; he knows well enough where it is, has been there many a time, having been denied the crumbs that fell from the table. He knows I have *five brethren* there; if he appear to them, they will *know him*, and will regard what he saith, for they knew him to be an honest man. Let him *testify to them*; let him tell them what condition I am in, and that I brought myself to it by my luxury and sensuality, and my unmercifulness to the poor. Let him warn them not to tread in my steps, nor to go on in the way wherein I led them, and left them, *lest they also come into this place of torment*," v. 28. Some observe that he speaks only of *five brethren*, whence they infer that he had *no children*, else he would have mentioned them, and then it was an aggravation of his uncharitableness that he had no children to provide for. Now he would have them stopped in their sinful course. He does not say, "Give me leave to go to them, that I may testify to them;" for he knew that there was a *gulf fixed*, and despaired of a permission so favourable to himself: his going would frighten them out of their *wits*; but, "Send Lazarus, whose address will be less terrible, and yet his testimony sufficient to frighten them out of their *sins*." Now he desired the preventing of their ruin, partly in tenderness to *them*, for whom he could not but retain a *natural affection*; he knew their temper, their temptations, their ignorance, their infidelity, their inconsideration, and wished to prevent the destruction they were running into: but it was partly in tenderness to *himself*, for their coming to him, to that *place of torment*, would but aggravate the misery to him, who had helped to show them the way thither, as the sight of Lazarus helped to aggravate his misery. When partners in sin come to be sharers in woe, as tares bound in bundles for the fire, they will be a terror to one another.

(2.) Abraham denies him this favour too. There is no request granted in hell. Those who make the rich man's praying to Abraham a justification of

their praying to saints departed, as they have far to seek for proofs, when the practice of a damned sinner must be valued for an example, so they have little encouragement to follow the example, when all his prayers were made *in vain*. Abraham leaves them to the testimony of Moses and the prophets, the ordinary means of conviction and conversion; they have the written word, which they may read and hear read. “*Let them attend to that sure word of prophecy, for God will not go out of the common method of his grace for them.*” Here is their privilege: *They have Moses and the prophets*; and their duty: “*Let them hear them, and mix faith with them, and that will be sufficient to keep them from this place of torment.*” By this it appears that there is sufficient evidence in the Old Testament, in Moses and *the prophets*, to convince those that will hear them impartially that there is another life after this, and a state of rewards and punishments for good and bad men; for that was the thing which the rich man would have his brethren assured of, and for that they are turned over to Moses and the prophets.

(3.) He urges his request yet further (v. 30): “*Nay, father Abraham, give me leave to press this. It is true, they have Moses and the prophets, and, if they would but give a due regard to them, it would be sufficient; but they do not, they will not; yet it may be hoped, if one went to them from the dead, they would repent, that would be a more sensible conviction to them. They are used to Moses and the prophets, and therefore regard them the less; but this would be a new thing, and more startling; surely this would bring them to repent, and to change their wicked habit and course of life.*” Note, Foolish men are apt to think any method of conviction better than that which God has chosen and appointed.

(4.) Abraham insists upon the denial of it, with a conclusive reason (v. 31): “*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, and will not believe the testimony nor take the warning they give, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead. If they regard not the public revelation, which is confirmed by miracles, neither would they be wrought upon by a private testimony to themselves.*”

[1.] The matter has been long since settled, upon trial, that God should speak by Moses and such prophets, and not by immediate messengers from heaven. Israel chose it in mount Sinai, because they could not bear the terrors of such expresses.

[2.] A messenger from the dead could say no more than what is said in the scriptures, nor say it with more authority.

[3.] There would be every jot as much reason to suspect that to be a cheat and a delusion as to suspect the scriptures to be so, and much more; and infidels in one case would certainly be so in another.

[4.] The same strength of corruption that breaks through the convictions of the written word would certainly triumph over those by a witness *from the dead*: and, though a sinner might be frightened at first by such a testimony, when the fright was over he would soon return to his hardness.

[5.] The scripture is now the ordinary way of God's making known his mind to us, and it is sufficient. It is presumption for us to prescribe any other way, nor have we any ground to expect or pray for the grace of God to work upon us in any other way abstracted from that and when that is rejected and set aside. What our Saviour here said was soon after verified in the unbelieving Jews, who would not hear Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, and then would not be persuaded, though *Lazarus rose from the dead* (and perhaps it was with some eye to him that Christ named this poor man Lazarus), nay, they consulted to put him to death, and would not be persuaded by him neither, though he also *rose from the dead*. When Eutychus was raised to life, the people that were present continued to hear Paul preach, but did not turn to enquire of him, ~~410~~ Acts 20:10, 11. Let us not therefore desire visions and apparitions, nor seek to the dead, but *to the law and to the testimony* (~~218~~ Isaiah 8:19, 20), for that is *the sure word of prophecy*, upon which we may depend.