

CHAPTER 6

Christ having, in the former chapter, armed his disciples against the corrupt doctrines and opinions of the scribes and Pharisees, especially in their expositions of the law (that was called their leaven, 16:12), comes in this chapter to warn them against their corrupt practices, against the two sins which, though in their doctrine they did not justify, yet in their conversation they were notoriously guilty of, and so as even to recommend them to their admirers: these were hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness, sins which, of all others, the professors of religion need most to guard against, as sins that most easily beset those who have escaped the grosser pollutions that are in the world through lust, and which are therefore highly dangerous. We are here cautioned,

I. Against hypocrisy; we must not be as the hypocrites are, nor do as the hypocrites do.

1. In the giving of alms (v. 1-4).
2. In prayer (v. 5-8). We are here taught what to pray for, and how to pray (v. 9-13); and to forgive in prayer (v. 14, 15).
3. In fasting (v. 16-18).

II. Against worldly-mindedness,

1. In our choice, which is the destroying sin of hypocrites (v. 19-24).
2. In our cares, which is the disquieting sin of many good Christians (v. 25-34).

~~THE~~ MATTHEW 6:1-4

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

As we must do better than the scribes and Pharisees in avoiding heart-sins, heart-adultery, and heart-murder, so likewise in maintaining and keeping up heart-religion, doing what we do from an inward, vital principle, that we may be approved of God, not that we may be applauded of men; that is, we must watch against hypocrisy, which was the leaven of the Pharisees, as well as against their doctrine, ~~THE~~ Luke 12:1. *Almsgiving,*

prayer, and *fasting*, are three great Christian duties — the three foundations of the law, say the Arabians: by them we do homage and service to God with our three principal interests; by *prayer* with our *souls*, by *fasting* with our *bodies*, by *alms-giving* with our *estates*. Thus we must not only *depart from evil*, but *do good*, and do it well, and so *dwell for evermore*.

Now in these verses we are cautioned against hypocrisy in giving alms. *Take heed* of it. Our being bid to *take heed* of it intimates that it is sin.

1. We are in *great danger of*; it is a subtle sin; vain-glory insinuates itself into what we do ere we are aware. The disciples would be tempted to it by the power they had to do many wondrous works, and their living with some that admired them and others that despised them, both which are temptations to covet to make a fair show in the flesh.

2. It is a sin we are *in great danger by*. Take heed of hypocrisy, for if it reign in you, it will ruin you. It is the dead fly that spoils the whole box of precious ointment.

Two things are here supposed,

I. The *giving of alms* is a great duty, and a duty which all the disciples of Christ, according to their ability, must abound in. It is prescribed by the law of nature and of Moses, and great stress is laid upon it by the prophets. Divers ancient copies here for *ten eleemosynen* — *your alms*, read *ten dikaiosynen* — *your righteousness*, for *alms* are *righteousness*, ^{<489>}Psalm 112:9; ^{<102>}Proverbs 10:2. The Jews called the *poor's box* the *box of righteousness*. That which is given to the poor is said to be their due, ^{<102>}Proverbs 3:27. The duty is not the less necessary and excellent for its being abused by hypocrites to serve their pride. If superstitious papists have placed a merit in works of charity, that will not be an excuse for covetous protestants that are barren in such good works. It is true, our alms-deeds do not deserve heaven; but it is as true that we cannot go to heaven without them. It is *pure religion* (^{<102>}James 1:27), and will be the test at the great day; Christ here takes it for granted that his disciples *give alms*, nor will he own those that do not.

II. That it is such a duty as has a great reward attending it, which is lost if it be done in hypocrisy. It is sometimes rewarded in temporal things with *plenty* (^{<102>}Proverbs 11:24, 25; 19:17); *security from want* (^{<102>}Proverbs

28:27; ~~1872~~ Psalm 37:21, 25); *succour in distress* (~~1901~~ Psalm 41:1, 2); *honour and a good name*, which follow those most that least covet them, ~~1889~~ Psalm 112:9. However, it shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just (~~1944~~ Luke 14:14), in *eternal riches*.

Quas dederis, solas semper habebis, opes.

*The riches you impart form the only wealth you
will always retain. — Martial*

This being supposed, observe now,

1. What was the *practice of the hypocrites* about this duty. They did it indeed, but not from any principle of obedience to God, or love to man, but in pride and vain-glory; not in compassion to the poor, but purely for ostentation, that they might be extolled as good men, and so might gain an interest in the esteem of the people, with which they knew how to serve their own turn, and to get a great deal more than they gave. Pursuant to this intention, they chose to give their alms *in the synagogues, and in the streets*, where there was the greatest concourse of people to observe them, who applauded their liberality because they shared in it, but were so ignorant as not to discern their abominable pride. Probably they had collections for the poor in the synagogues, and the common beggars haunted the streets and highways, and upon these public occasions they chose to give their alms. Not that it is unlawful to give alms *when men see us*; we may do it; but not *that men may see us*; we should rather choose those objects of charity that are less observed. The hypocrites, if they gave alms to their own houses, *sounded a trumpet*, under pretence of calling the poor together to be served, but really to proclaim their charity, and to have that taken notice of and made the subject of discourse.

Now the doom that Christ passes upon this is very observable; *Verily I say unto you, they have their reward*. At first view this seems a promise — If they have their reward they have enough, but two words in it make it a threatening.

(1.) It is a reward, but it is *their* reward; not the reward which God promises to them that do good, but the reward which they promise themselves, and a poor reward it is; they did it to be *seen of men*, and they *are* seen of men; they *chose their own delusions* with which they cheated themselves, and they shall have what they chose. Carnal professors stipulate with God for preferment, honour, wealth, and they shall have

their bellies filled with those things (^{<3174>}Psalm 17:14); but let them expect no more; these are their consolation (^{<41624>}Luke 6:24), their good things (^{<4165>}Luke 16:25), and they shall be put off with these. “*Didst thou not agree with me for a penny?* It is the bargain that thou art likely to abide by.”

(2.) It is a reward, but it is a *present reward*, they *have* it; and there is none reserved for them in the future state. They now have all that they are likely to have from God; they have their reward here, and have none to hope for hereafter. *Apechousi ton mishon*. It signifies a *receipt in full*. What rewards the godly have in this life are but *in part of payment*; there is more behind, much more; but hypocrites have their *all* in this world, so shall their doom be; themselves have decided it. The world is but for *provision* to the saints, it is their spending-money; but it is *pay* to hypocrites, it is their portion.

2. What is the *precept of our Lord Jesus* about it, v. 3, 4. He that was himself such an example of humility, pressed it upon his disciples, as absolutely necessary to the acceptance of their performances. “*Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth* when thou givest alms.” Perhaps this alludes to the placing of the Corban, the poor man's box, or the chest into which they cast their free-will offerings, *on the right hand* of the passage into the temple; so that they put their gifts into it with the *right-hand*. Or the giving of alms with the *right hand*, intimates readiness to it and resolution in it; do it dexterously, not awkwardly nor with a sinister intention. The *right hand* may be used in helping the poor, lifting them up, writing for them, dressing their sores, and other ways besides giving to them; but, “whatever kindness thy right hand doeth to the poor, *let not thy left hand know it*: conceal it as much as possible; industriously keep it private. Do it because it is a good work, not because it will give thee a good name.” *In omnibus factis, re, non teste, moveamur* — *In all our actions, we should be influenced by a regard to the object, not to the observer*. Cic. de Fin. It is intimated,

(1.) That we must not let *others* know what we do; no, not those that stand *at our left hand*, that are very near us. Instead of acquainting them with it, keep it from them if possible; however, appear so desirous to keep it from them, as that in civility they may seem not to take notice of it, and keep it to themselves, and let it go no further.

(2.) That we must not observe it too much *ourselves*: the left hand is a part of ourselves; we must not within ourselves take notice too much of the good we do, must not applaud and admire ourselves. Self-conceit and self-complacency, and an adoring of our own shadow, are branches of pride, as dangerous as vain-glory and ostentation before men. We find those had their good works remembered to their honour, who had themselves forgotten them: *When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst?*

3. What is the *promise to those who are thus sincere and humble* in their alms-giving. Let *thine alms be in secret*, and then *thy Father who seeth in secret* will observe them. Note, When we take least notice of our good deeds ourselves, God takes most notice of them. As God hears the wrongs done to us when we do not hear them (^{<1884>}Psalm 38:14, 15), so he sees the good done by us, when we do not see it. As it is a terror to hypocrites, so it is a comfort to sincere Christians, that God *sees in secret*. But this is not all; not only the observation and praise, but the recompence is of God, *himself shall reward thee openly*. Note, They who in their alms-giving study to approve themselves to God, only turn themselves over to him as their Paymaster. The hypocrite catches at the shadow, but the upright man makes sure of the substance. Observe how emphatically it is expressed; *himself shall reward*, he will himself be the Rewarder, ^{<5116>}Hebrews 11:6. Let him alone to make it up in kind or kindness; nay, he will *himself be the Reward* (^{<0181>}Genesis 15:1), *thine exceeding great reward*. He will reward thee as thy Father, not as a master who gives his servant just what he earns and no more, but as a father who gives abundantly more, and without stint, to his son that serves him. Nay, he shall reward thee *openly*, if not in the present day, yet in the great day; *then shall every man have praise of God*, open praise, thou shall be confessed *before men*. If the work be not open, the reward shall, and that is better.

^{<4065>}MATTHEW 6:5-8

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

In *prayer* we have more immediately to do with God than in *giving alms*, and therefore are yet more concerned to be *sincere*, which is what we are here directed to. *When thou prayest* (v. 5). It is taken for granted that all the disciples of Christ *pray*. As soon as ever Paul was converted, *behold*

he prayeth. You may as soon find a living man that does not breathe, as a living Christian that does not pray. *For this shall every one that is godly pray.* If prayerless, then graceless. “*Now, when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, nor do as they do,*” v. 2. Note, Those who would not do as the hypocrites do in their ways and actions must not be as the hypocrites are in their frame and temper. He names nobody, but it appears by ^{<423>}Matthew 23:13, that by the hypocrites here he means especially the scribes and Pharisees.

Now there were two great faults they were guilty of in prayer, against each of which we are here cautioned — vain-glory (v. 5, 6); and vain repetitions, v. 7, 8.

I. We must not be *proud* and *vain-glorious* in prayer, nor aim at the praise of men. And here observe,

1. What was the *way and practice of the hypocrites*. In all their exercises of devotion, it was plain, the chief thing they aimed at was to be commended by their neighbours, and thereby to make an interest for themselves. When they seemed to *soar upwards* in prayer (and if it be right, it is the soul's ascent toward God), yet even then their eye was *downwards* upon this as their *prey*. Observe,

(1.) What the *places* were which they chose for their devotions; they prayed in the *synagogues*, which were indeed proper places for public prayer, but not for personal. They pretended hereby to do honour to the place of their assemblies, but intended to do honour to themselves. They prayed in *the corners of the streets*, the broad streets (so the word signifies), which were most frequented. They withdrew thither, as if they were under a pious impulse which would not admit delay, but really it was to cause themselves to be taken notice of. There, where two streets met, they were not only within view of both, but every passenger turning close upon them would observe them, and hear what they said.

(2.) The *posture* they used in prayer; they prayed standing; this is a lawful and proper posture for prayer (^{<4125>}Mark 11:25, *When ye stand praying*), but kneeling being the more humble and reverent gesture, ^{<4241>}Luke 22:41; ^{<4100>}Acts 7:60; ^{<4184>}Ephesians 3:14, their standing seemed to savour of pride and confidence in themselves (^{<4081>}Luke 18:11), *The Pharisee stood and prayed.*

(3.) Their *pride* in choosing these public places, which is expressed in two things:

[1.] They *love* to pray there. They did not love prayer for its own sake, but they loved it when it gave them an opportunity of making themselves noticed. Circumstances may be such, that our good deeds must needs be done openly, so as to fall under the observation of others, and be commended by them; but the sin and danger is when we love it, and are pleased with it, because it feeds the proud humour.

[2.] It is that they may be *seen of men*; not that God might accept them, but that men might admire and applaud them; and that they might easily get the estates of widows and orphans into their hands (who would not trust such devout, praying men?) and that, when they had them, they might devour them without being suspected (¹⁷³⁴Matthew 23:14); and effectually carry on their public designs to enslave the people.

(4.) The *product* of all this, *they have their reward*; they have all the recompence they must ever expect from God for their service, and a poor recompence it is. What will it avail us to have the good word of our fellow-servants, if our Master do not say, *Well done?* But if in so great a transaction as is between us and God, when we are at prayer, we can take in so poor a consideration as the praise of men is, it is just that that should be all our reward. They did it to be *seen of men*, and they are so; and much good may it do them. Note, Those that would approve themselves to God by their integrity in their religion, must have to regard to the praise of men; it is not to men that we pray, nor from them that we expect an answer; they are not to be our judges, they are dust and ashes like ourselves, and therefore we must not have our eye to them: what passes between God and our own souls must be out of sight. In our synagogue-worship, we must avoid every thing that tends to make our personal devotion remarkable, as they that caused their *voice to be heard on high*, ²⁸⁰⁴Isaiah 58:4. Public places are not proper for private solemn prayer.

2. What is the *will of Jesus Christ* in opposition to this. Humility and sincerity are the two great lessons that Christ teaches us; *Thou, when thou prayest*, do so and so (v. 6); *thou* in particular by thyself, and for thyself. Personal prayer is here supposed to be the duty and practice of all Christ's disciples.

Observe,

(1.) The directions here given about it.

[1.] Instead of praying in *the synagogues* and in the *corners of the streets*, enter into *thy closet*, into some place of privacy and retirement. Isaac went into the field (^{402B}Genesis 24:63), Christ to a mountain, Peter to a housetop. No place amiss in point of ceremony, if it do but answer the end. Note, Secret prayer is to be performed in retirement, that we may be unobserved, and so may avoid ostentation; undisturbed, and so may avoid distraction; unheard, and so may use greater freedom; yet if the circumstances be such that we cannot possibly avoid being taken notice of, we must not therefore neglect the duty, lest the omission be a greater scandal than the observation of it.

[2.] Instead of doing it to be *seen of men*, pray to thy Father who is in secret; to me, even to me, ^{301B}Zechariah 7:5, 6. The Pharisees prayed rather to men than to God; whatever was the form of their prayer, the scope of it was to beg the applause of men, and court their favours. “Well, do thou pray to God, and let that be enough for thee. Pray to him as a Father, as thy Father, ready to hear and answer, graciously inclined to pity, help, and succour thee. Pray to thy Father *who is in secret*.” Note, In secret prayer we must have an eye to God, as present in all places; he is there in thy closet when no one else is there; there especially nigh to thee in what thou *callest upon him for*. By *secret* prayer we give God the glory of his universal presence (^{447A}Acts 17:24), and may take to ourselves the comfort of it.

(2.) The encouragements here given us to it.

[1.] Thy Father *seeth in secret*; his eye is upon thee to accept thee, when the eye of no man is upon thee to applaud thee; *under the fig-tree, I saw thee*, said Christ to Nathaniel, ^{408B}John 1:48. He saw Paul at prayer in such a street, at such a house, ^{441B}Acts 9:11. There is not a secret, sudden breathing after God, but he observes it.

[2.] He *will reward thee openly*; they have their reward that do it openly, and thou shalt not lose thine for thy doing it in secret. It is called a *reward*, but it is *of grace*, not *of debt*; what merit can there be in begging? The reward will be open; they shall not only have it, but have it honourably: the open reward is that which hypocrites are fond of, but they have not patience to stay for it; it is that which the sincere are dead to, and they shall have it over and above. Sometimes secret prayers are rewarded

openly in this world by signal answers to them, which manifests God's praying people in the consciences of their adversaries; however, at the great day there will be an open reward, when all praying people shall *appear in glory* with the great Intercessor. The Pharisees ha their reward *before all the town*, and it was a *mere flash and shadow*; true Christians shall have theirs *before all the world*, angels and men, and it shall be a *weight of glory*.

II. We must not *use vain repetitions* in prayer, v. 7, 8. Though the life of prayer lies in *lifting up the soul and pouring out the heart*, yet there is some interest which words have in prayer, especially in joint prayer; for in that, words are necessary, and it should seem that our Saviour speaks here especially of that; for before he said, *when thou prayest*, he here, when *ye pray*; and the Lord's prayer which follows is a joint prayer, and in that, he that is the mouth of others is most tempted to an ostentation of language and expression, against which we are here warned; *use not vain repetitions*, either alone or with others: the Pharisees affected this, *they made long prayers* (^{<4294>}Matthew 23:14), all their care was to make them long. Now observe,

1. What the *fault* is that is here reproved and condemned; it is making a mere lip-labour of the duty of prayer, the service of the tongue, when it is not the service of the soul. This is expressed here by two words, *Battologia, polylogia*.

(1.) *Vain repetitions* — tautology, battology, idle babbling over the same words again and again to no purpose, like *Battus, Sub illis montibus erant, erant sub montibus illis*; like that imitation of the wordiness of a fool, ^{<2114>}Ecclesiastes 10:14, *A man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him who can tell?* which is indecent and nauseous in any discourse, much more in speaking to God. It is not all repetition in prayer that is here condemned, but vain repetitions. Christ himself prayed, saying the same words (^{<4264>}Matthew 26:44), out of more than ordinary fervour and zeal, ^{<2724>}Luke 22:44. So Daniel, ^{<2708>}Daniel 9:18, 19. And there is a very elegant repetition of the same words, Psalm 136. It may be of use both to express our own affections, and to excite the affections of others. But the superstitious rehearsing of a tale of words, without regard to the sense of them, as the papists saying by their beads so many Ave-Marys and Paternosters; or the barren and dry going over of the same things again and again, merely to drill out the prayer to such a length, and to make a show

of affection when really there is none; these are the vain repetitions here condemned. When we would fain say much, but cannot say much to the purpose; this is displeasing to God and all wise men.

(2.) *Much speaking*, an affectation of prolixity in prayer, either out of pride or superstition, or an opinion that God needs either to be informed or argued with by us, or out of mere folly and impertinence, because men love to *hear themselves talk*. Not that all long prayers are forbidden; Christ prayed all night, ^{<4162>}Luke 6:12. Solomon's was a long prayer. There is sometimes need of long prayers when our errands and our affections are extraordinary; but merely to prolong the prayer, as if it would make it more pleasing or more prevailing with God, is that which is here condemned; it is not much *praying* that is condemned; no, we are bid to *pray always*, but much *speaking*; the danger of this error is when we only *say* our prayers, and not when we *pray* them. This caution is explained by that of Solomon (^{<2182>}Ecclesiastes 5:2), *Let thy words be few*, considerate and well weighed; *take with you words* (^{<2342>}Hosea 14:2), *choose out words* (^{<2194>}Job 9:14), and do not say every thing that comes uppermost.

2. What reasons are given against this.

(1.) This is the way of the heathen, *as the heathen do*; and it ill becomes Christians to worship their God as the Gentiles worship theirs. The heathen were taught by the light of nature to worship God; but becoming vain in their imaginations concerning the object of their worship, no wonder they became so concerning the manner of it, and particularly in this instance; thinking God altogether such a one as themselves, they thought he needed many words to make him understand what was said to him, or to bring him to comply with their requests; as if he were weak and ignorant, and hard to be entreated. Thus Baal's priests were hard at it from morning till almost night with their *vain repetitions*; *O Baal, hear us; O Baal, hear us*; and vain petitions they were; but Elijah, in a grave, composed frame, with a very concise prayer, prevailed for fire from heaven first, and then water, ^{<1185>}1 Kings 18:26, 36. *Lip-labour* in prayer, though ever so well *laboured*, if that be all, is but *lost labour*.

(2.) "It need not be your way, *for your Father in heaven knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him*, and therefore there is no occasion for such abundance of words. It does not follow that therefore ye need not pray; for God requires you by prayer to own your need of him and dependence on him, and to please his promises; but therefore you are

to open your case, and pour out your hearts before him, and then leave it with him." Consider,

[1.] The God we pray to is our Father by creation, by covenant; and therefore our addresses to him should be easy, natural, and unaffected; children do not use to make long speeches to their parents when they want any thing; it is enough to say, *my head, my head*. Let us come to him with the disposition of children, with love, reverence, and dependence; and then they need not say many words, that are taught by the Spirit of adoption to say that one aright, *Abba, Father*.

[2.] He is a Father that knows our case and knows our wants better than we do ourselves. *He knows what things we have need of*; his eyes run to and fro through the earth, to observe the necessities of his people (^{<400>}2 Chronicles 16:9), and he often gives *before we call* (^{<2524>}Isaiah 65:24), and *more than we ask for* (^{<400>}Ephesians 3:20), and if he do not give his people what they ask, it is because he knows they do not need it, and that it is not for their good; and of that he is fitter to judge for us than we for ourselves. We need not be long, nor use many words in representing our case; God knows it better than we can tell him, only he will know it *from us* (*what will ye that I should do unto you?*); and when we have told him what it is, we must refer ourselves to him, *Lord, all my desire is before thee*, ^{<289>}Psalms 38:9. So far is God from being wrought upon by the length or language of our prayers, that the most powerful intercessions are those which are made with *groanings that cannot be uttered*, ^{<400>}Romans 8:26. We are not to *prescribe*, but *subscribe* to God.

^{<400>}MATTHEW 6:9-15

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

When Christ had condemned what was amiss, he directs to do better; for his are reproofs of instruction. Because we know not what to pray for as we ought, he here helps our infirmities, by putting words into our mouths; *after this manner therefore pray ye*, v. 9. So many were the corruptions that had crept into this duty of prayer among the Jews, that Christ saw it needful to give a new directory for prayer, to show his disciples what must ordinarily be the matter and method of their prayer, which he gives in words that may very well be used as a form; as the summary or contents of

the several particulars of our prayers. Not that we are tied up to the use of this form only, or of this always, as if this were necessary to the consecrating of our other prayers; we are here bid to pray after this manner, with these words, or to this effect. That in Luke differs from this; we do not find it used by the apostles; we are not here taught to pray in the name of Christ, as we are afterward; we are here taught to pray that the kingdom might come which did come when the Spirit was poured out: yet, without doubt, it is very good to use it as a form, and it is a pledge of the communion of saints, it having been used by the church in all ages, at least (says Dr. Whitby) from the third century. It is our Lord's prayer, it is of his composing, of his appointing; it is very compendious, yet very comprehensive, in compassion to our infirmities in praying. The matter is choice and necessary, the method instructive, and the expression very concise. It has much in a little, and it is requisite that we acquaint ourselves with the sense and meaning of it, for it is used acceptably no further than it is used with understanding and without vain repetition.

The Lord's prayer (as indeed every prayer) is a letter sent from earth to heaven. Here is the inscription of the letter, the person to whom it is directed, *our Father*; the where, *in heaven*; the contents of it in several errands of request; the close, *for thine is the kingdom*; the seal, *Amen*; and if you will, the date too, *this day*.

Plainly thus: there are three parts of the prayer.

I. *The preface, Our Father who art in heaven.* Before we come to our business, there must be a solemn address to him with whom our business lies; *Our Father*. Intimating, that we must pray, not only alone and for ourselves, but with and for others; for we are members one of another, and are called into fellowship with each other. We are here taught *to whom to pray*, to God only, and not to saints and angels, for they are ignorant of us, are not to have the high honours we give in prayer, nor can give favours we expect. We are taught how to address ourselves to God, and what title to give him, that which speaks him rather beneficent than magnificent, for we are to come boldly to the throne of grace.

1. We must address ourselves to him as *our Father*, and must call him so. He is a common Father to all mankind by creation, ³⁰⁰Malachi 2:10; ^{417B}Acts 17:28. He is in a special manner a Father to the saints, by adoption and regeneration (^{401B}Ephesians 1:5; ⁴⁰⁶Galatians 4:6); and an unspeakable

privilege it is. Thus we must eye him in prayer, keep up good thoughts of him, such as are encouraging and not affrighting; nothing more pleasing to God, nor pleasant to ourselves, than to call God *Father*. Christ in prayer mostly called God *Father*. If he be our Father, he will pity us under our weaknesses and infirmities (^{<4933>}Psalm 103:13), will spare us (^{<3087>}Malachi 3:17), will make the best of our performances, though very defective, will deny us nothing that is good for us, ^{<4111>}Luke 11:11-13. We have access with boldness to him, as to a father, and have an *advocate with the Father*, and the Spirit of adoption. When we come repenting of our sins, we must eye God as a Father, as the prodigal did (^{<4258>}Luke 15:18; ^{<3489>}Jeremiah 3:19); when we come begging for grace, and peace, and the inheritance and blessing of sons, it is an encouragement that we come to God, not as an unreconciled, avenging Judge, but as a loving, gracious, reconciled Father in Christ, ^{<2434>}Jeremiah 3:4.

2. As our Father *in heaven*: so in heaven as to be every where else, for the heaven cannot contain him; yet so in heaven as there to manifest his glory, for it is his throne (^{<4939>}Psalm 103:19), and it is to believers a throne of grace: thitherward we must direct our prayers, for Christ the Mediator is now in heaven, ^{<3801>}Hebrews 8:1. Heaven is out of sight, and a world of spirits, therefore our converse with God in prayer must be spiritual; it is on high, therefore in prayer we must be raised above the world, and lift up our hearts, ^{<4981>}Psalm 5:1. Heaven is a place of perfect purity, and we must therefore lift up pure hands, must study to sanctify his name, who is the Holy One, and dwells in that holy place, ^{<6103>}Leviticus 10:3. From heaven God beholds the children of men, ^{<4933>}Psalm 33:13, 14. And we must in prayer see his eye upon us: thence he has a full and clear view of all our wants and burdens and desires, and all our infirmities. It is the firmament of his power likewise, as well as of his prospect, ^{<4901>}Psalm 150:1. He is not only, as a Father, able to help us, able to do great things for us, more than we can ask or think; he has wherewith to supply our needs, for every good gift is from above. He is a Father, and therefore we may come to him with boldness, but a Father in heaven, and therefore we must come with reverence, Ecclesiastes v. 2. 5:2. Thus all our prayers should correspond with that which is our great aim as Christians, and that is, to be with God in heaven. God and heaven, the end of our whole conversation, must be particularly eyed in every prayer; there is the centre to which we are all tending. By prayer, we send before us thither, where we profess to be going.

II. *The petitions*, and those are six; the three first relating more immediately to God and his honour, the three last to our own concerns, both temporal and spiritual; as in the ten commandments, the four first teach us our duty toward God, and the last six our duty toward our neighbour. The method of this prayer teaches us to seek first the *kingdom of God and his righteousness*, and then to hope that *other things shall be added*.

1. *Hallowed be thy name*. It is the same word that in other places is translated *sanctified*. But here the old word *hallowed* is retained, only because people were used to it in the Lord's prayer. In these words,

(1.) We give glory to God; it may be taken not as a petition, but as an adoration; as that, *the Lord be magnified*, or *glorified*, for God's holiness is the greatness and glory of all his perfections. We must begin our prayers with praising God, and it is very fit he should be first served, and that we should give glory to God, before we expect to receive mercy and grace from him. Let him have praise of his perfections, and then let us have the benefit of them.

(2.) We fix our end, and it is the right end to be aimed at, and ought to be our chief and ultimate end in all our petitions, that God may be glorified; all our other requests must be in subordination to this, and in pursuance of it. "*Father, glorify thyself* in giving me my daily bread and pardoning my sins," etc. Since all is of him and through him, all must be to him and for him. In prayer our thoughts and affections should be carried out most to the glory of God. The Pharisees made their own name the chief end of their prayers (v. 5, *to be seen of men*), in opposition to which we are directed to make the name of God our chief end; let all our petitions centre in this and be regulated by it. "Do so and so for me, *for the glory of thy name*, and as far as is for the glory of it."

(3.) We desire and pray that the name of God, that is, God himself, in all that whereby he has made himself known, may be sanctified and glorified both by us and others, and especially by himself. "Father, let thy name be glorified as a Father, and a Father in heaven; glorify thy goodness and thy highness, thy majesty and mercy. *Let thy name be sanctified*, for it is a holy name; no matter what becomes of our polluted names, but, Lord, *what wilt thou do to thy great name?*" When we pray that God's name may be glorified,

[1.] We make a virtue of necessity; for God will *sanctify his own name*, whether we desire it or not; *I will be exalted among the heathen*, ^{PSALM} Psalm 46:10.

[2.] We ask for that which we are sure shall be granted; for when our Saviour prayed, *Father glorify thy name*, it was immediately answered, *I have glorified it, and will glorify it again*.

2. *Thy kingdom come*. This petition has plainly a reference to the doctrine which Christ preached at this time, which John Baptist had preached before, and which he afterwards sent his apostles out to preach — *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. The kingdom of your Father who is in heaven, the kingdom of the Messiah, this is at hand, pray that it may come. Note, We should turn the word we hear into prayer, our hearts should echo to it; does Christ promise, *surely I come quickly*? our hearts should answer, *Even so, come*. Ministers should pray over the word: when they preach, *the kingdom of God is at hand*, they should pray, *Father, thy kingdom come*. What God has promised we must pray for; for promises are given, not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage prayer; and when the accomplishment of a promise is near and at the door, when the kingdom of heaven is at hand, we should then pray for it the more earnestly; *thy kingdom come*; as Daniel set his face to pray for the deliverance of Israel, when he understood that the time of it was at hand, ^{DANIEL} Daniel 9:2. See ^{LUKE} Luke 19:11. It was the Jews' daily prayer to God, *Let him make his kingdom reign, let his redemption flourish, and let his Messiah come and deliver his people*. Dr. Whitby, *ex Vitringa*. “*Let thy kingdom come*, let the gospel be preached to all and embraced by all; let all be brought to subscribe to the record God has given in his word concerning his Son, and to embrace him as their Saviour and Sovereign. Let the bounds of the gospel-church be enlarged, the kingdom of the world be made Christ's kingdom, and all men become subjects to it, and live as becomes their character.”

3. *Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven*. We pray that God's kingdom being come, we and others may be brought into obedience to all the laws and ordinances of it. By this let it appear that Christ's kingdom is come, *let God's will be done*; and by this let it appear that it is come as a *kingdom of heaven*, let it introduce a *heaven upon earth*. We make Christ but a titular Prince, if we call him King, and do not do his will: having

prayed that he may rule us, we pray that we may in every thing be ruled by him. Observe,

(1.) The thing prayed for, *thy will be done*; “Lord, do what thou pleasest with me and mine; ⁽⁴⁰⁸⁾1 Samuel 3:18. I refer myself to thee, and am well satisfied that all thy counsel concerning me should be performed.” In this sense Christ prayed, *not my will, but thine be done*. “Enable me to do what is pleasing to thee; give me that grace that is necessary to the right knowledge of thy will, and an acceptable obedience to it. Let thy will be done conscientiously by me and others, not our own will, the will of the flesh, or the mind, not the will of men (⁽⁴⁰⁹⁾1 Peter 4:2), much less Satan's will (⁽⁴¹⁰⁾John 8:44), that we may neither displease God in any thing we do (*ut nihil nostrum displiceat Deo*), nor be displeased at any thing God does” (*ut nihil Dei displiceat nobis*).

(2.) The pattern of it, that it might be *done on earth*, in this place of our trial and probation (where our work must be done, or it never will be done), *as it is done in heaven*, that place of rest and joy. We pray that earth may be made more like heaven by the observance of God's will (this earth, which, through the prevalency of Satan's will, has become so near akin to hell), and that saints may be made more like the holy angels in their devotion and obedience. We are *on earth*, blessed be God, not yet *under the earth*; we pray for the *living only*, not for *the dead that have gone down into silence*.

4. *Give us this day our daily bread*. Because our natural being is necessary to our spiritual well-being in this world, therefore, after the things of God's glory, kingdom, and will, we pray for the necessary supports and comforts of this present life, which are the gifts of God, and must be asked of him, *Ton arton epiousion* — *Bread for the day approaching*, for all the remainder of our lives. *Bread for the time to come, or bread for our being and subsistence*, that which is agreeable to our condition in the world (⁽⁴¹¹⁾Proverbs 30:8), *food convenient for us* and our families, according to our rank and station.

Every word here has a lesson in it:

(1.) We ask for *bread*; that teaches us sobriety and temperance; we ask for *bread*, not dainties, not superfluities; that which is wholesome, though it be not nice.

(2.) We ask for *our* bread; that teaches us honesty and industry: we do not ask for the bread out of other people's mouths, not the *bread of deceit* (³¹¹⁷Proverbs 20:17), not the *bread of idleness* (³¹²⁷Proverbs 31:27), but the bread honestly gotten.

(3.) We ask for our *daily* bread; which teaches us not to *take thought for the morrow* (v. 34), but constantly to depend upon divine Providence, as those that live from hand to mouth.

(4.) We beg of God to *give* it us, not sell it us, nor lend it us, but *give* it. The greatest of men must be beholden to the mercy of God for their *daily bread*,

(5.) We pray, "Give it to *us*; not to me only, but to others in common with me." This teaches us charity, and a compassionate concern for the poor and needy. It intimates also, that we ought to pray with our families; we and our households eat together, and therefore ought to pray together.

(6.) We pray that God would give us *this day*; which teaches us to renew the desire of our souls toward God, as the wants of our bodies are renewed; as duly as the day comes, we must pray to our heavenly Father, and reckon we could as well go a day without meat, as without prayer.

5. *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*, This is connected with the former; and *forgive*, intimating, that unless our sins be pardoned, we can have no comfort in life, or the supports of it. *Our daily bread* does but feed us *as lambs for the slaughter*, if our sins be not pardoned. It intimates, likewise, that we must pray for daily *pardon*, as duly as we pray for daily *bread*. *He that is washed, needeth to wash his feet*. Here we have,

(1.) A petition; *Father in heaven forgive us our debts*, our debts to thee.
Note,

[1.] Our sins are our debts; there is a debt of duty, which, as creatures, we owe to our Creator; we do not pray to be discharged from that, but upon the non-payment of that there arises a debt of punishment; in default of obedience to the will of God, we become obnoxious *to the wrath of God*; and for not observing the precept of the law, we stand obliged to the penalty. A debtor is liable to process, so are we; a malefactor is a debtor to the law, so are we.

[2.] Our hearts' desire and prayer to our heavenly Father every day should be, that he would *forgive us our debts*; that the obligation to punishment may be cancelled and vacated, that we may *not come into condemnation*; that we may be discharged, and have the comfort of it. In suing out the pardon of our sins, the great plea we have to rely upon is the satisfaction that was made to the justice of God for the sin of man, by the dying of the Lord Jesus our Surety, or rather Bail to the action, that undertook our discharge.

(2.) An argument to enforce this petition; *as we forgive our debtors*. This is not a plea of merit, but a plea of grace. Note, Those that come to God for the forgiveness of their sins against him, must make conscience of forgiving those who have offended them, else they curse themselves when they say the Lord's prayer. Our duty is to *forgive our debtors*; as to debts of money, we must not be rigorous and severe in exacting them from those that cannot pay them without ruining themselves and their families; but this means debt of injury; our debtors are those that *trespass against us*, that *smite us* (^{<105>}Matthew 5:39, 40), and in strictness of law, might be prosecuted for it; we must forbear, and forgive, and forget the affronts put upon us, and the wrongs done us; and this is a moral qualification for pardon and peace; it encourages to hope, that God will *forgive us*; for if there be in us this gracious disposition, it is wrought of God, and therefore is a perfection eminently and transcendently in himself; it will be an evidence to us that he has forgiven us, having wrought in us the condition of forgiveness.

6. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. This petition is expressed,

(1.) Negatively: *Lead us not into temptation*. Having prayed that the guilt of sin may be removed, we pray, as it is fit, that we may never return again to folly, that we may not be tempted to it. It is not as if God tempted any to sin; but, "Lord, do not let Satan loose upon us; chain up that *roaring lion*, for he is subtle and spiteful; Lord, do not leave us to ourselves (^{<100>}Psalm 19:13), for we are very weak; Lord, do not *lay stumbling-blocks* and snares before us, nor put us into circumstances that may be *an occasion of falling*." Temptations are to be prayed against, both because of the discomfort and trouble of them, and because of the danger we are in of being overcome by them, and the guilt and grief that then follow.

(2.) Positively: *But deliver us from evil; apo tou ponerou* — from the evil one, the devil, the tempter; “keep us, that either we may not be assaulted by him, or we may not be overcome by those assaults:” Or *from the evil thing*, sin, the worst of evils; an evil, an only evil; that evil thing which God hates, and which Satan tempts men to and destroys them by. “Lord, deliver us from the evil of the world, the corruption that is in the world through lust; from the evil of every condition in the world; from the evil of death; from the *sting of death, which is sin*: deliver us from ourselves, from our own evil hearts: deliver us from evil men, that they may not be a snare to us, nor we a prey to them.”

III. The conclusion: *For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever. Amen.* Some refer this to David's doxology, ^{<1391>}1 Chronicles 29:11. *Thine, O Lord, is the greatness.* It is,

1. A form of plea to enforce the foregoing petitions. It is our duty to plead with God in prayer, to fill our mouth with arguments (^{<1392>}Job 23:4) not to move God, but to affect ourselves; to encourage the faith, to excite our fervency, and to evidence both. Now the best pleas in prayer are those that are taken from God himself, and from that which he has made known of himself. We must wrestle with God in his own strength, both as to the nature of our pleas and the urging of them. The plea here has special reference to the first three petitions; “*Father in heaven, thy kingdom come, for thine is the kingdom; thy will be done, for thine is the power; hallowed be thy name, for thine is the glory.*” And as to our own particular errands, these are encouraging: “*Thine is the kingdom; thou hast the government of the world, and the protection of the saints, thy willing subjects in it;*” God gives and saves like a king. “*Thine is the power, to maintain and support that kingdom, and to make good all thine engagements to thy people.*” *Thine is the glory*, as the end of all that which is given to, and done for, the saints, in answer to their prayers; for their *praise waiteth* for him. This is matter of comfort and holy confidence in prayer.

2. It is a form of praise and thanksgiving. The best pleading with God is praising of him; it is the way to obtain further mercy, as it qualifies us to receive it. In all our addresses to God, it is fit that praise should have a considerable share, for *praise becometh the saints*; they are to be our God *for a name and for a praise*. It is just and equal; we praise God, and give him glory, not because he needs it — he is praised by a world of angels, but because he deserves it; and it is our duty to give him glory, in

compliance with his design in revealing himself to us. Praise is the work and happiness of heaven; and all that would go to heaven hereafter, must begin their heaven now. Observe, how full this doxology is, *The kingdom, and the power, and the glory*, it is all thine. Note, It becomes us to be copious in praising God. A true saint never thinks he can speak honourably enough of God: here there should be a gracious fluency, and this *for ever*. Ascribing glory to God *for ever*, intimates an acknowledgement, that it is eternally due, and an earnest desire to be eternally doing it, with angels and saints above, ^{<3714>} Psalm 71:14.

Lastly, To all this we are taught to affix our *Amen*, so be it. God's *Amen* is a grant; his *fiat* is, it shall be so; our *Amen* is only a summary desire; our *fiat* is, let it be so: it is in the token of our desire and assurance to be heard, that we say *Amen*. *Amen* refers to every petition going before, and thus, in compassion to our infirmities, we are taught to knit up the whole in one word, and so to gather up, in the general, what we have lost and let slip in the particulars. It is good to conclude religious duties with some warmth and vigour, that we may go from them with a sweet savour upon our spirits. It was of old the practice of good people to say, *Amen*, audibly at the end of every prayer, and it is a commendable practice, provided it be done with understanding, as the apostle directs (^{<4346>} 1 Corinthians 14:16), and uprightly, with life and liveliness, and inward expressions, answerable to that outward expression of desire and confidence.

Most of the petitions in the Lord's prayer had been commonly used by the Jews in their devotions, or words to the same effect: but that clause in the fifth petition, *As we forgive our debtors*, was perfectly new, and therefore our Saviour here shows for what reason he added it, not with any personal reflection upon the peevishness, litigiousness, and ill nature of the men of that generation, though there was cause enough for it, but only from the necessity and importance of the thing itself. God, in forgiving us, has a peculiar respect to our forgiving those that have injured us; and therefore, when we pray for pardon, we must mention our making conscience of that duty, not only to remind ourselves of it, but to bind ourselves to it. See that parable, ^{<483>} Matthew 18:23 — 35. Selfish nature is loth to comply with this, and therefore it is here inculcated, v. 14, 15.

1. In a promise. *If ye forgive, your heavenly Father will also forgive*. Not as if this were the only condition required; there must be repentance and faith, and new obedience; but as where other graces are in truth, there will

be this, so this will be a good evidence of the sincerity of our other graces. He that relents toward his brother, thereby shows that he repents toward his God. Those which in the prayer are called *debts*, are here called *trespasses*, *debts* of injury, wrongs done to us in our bodies, goods, or reputation: *trespasses* is an extenuating term for offences, *paraptomata* — *stumbles*, *slips*, *falls*. Note, It is a good evidence, and a good help of our forgiving others, to call the injuries done us by a mollifying, excusing name. Call them not *treasons*, but *trespasses*; not wilful injuries, but casual inadvertencies; *peradventure it was an oversight* (^{<OR2>}Genesis 43:12), therefore make the best of it. We must forgive, as we hope to be forgiven; and therefore must not only bear no malice, nor mediate revenge, but must not upbraid our brother with the injuries he has done us, nor rejoice in any hurt that befalls him, but must be ready to help him and do him good, and if he repent and desire to be friends again, we must be free and familiar with him, as before.

2. In a threatening. “*But if you forgive not* those that have injured you, that is a bad sign you have not the other requisite conditions, but are altogether unqualified for pardon: and therefore *your Father*, whom you call Father, and who, as a father, offers you his grace upon reasonable terms, will nevertheless *not forgive you*. And if other grace be sincere, and yet you be defective greatly in forgiving, you cannot expect the comfort of your pardon, but to have your spirit brought down by some affliction or other to comply with this duty.” Note, Those who would have found mercy with God must show mercy to their brethren; no can we expect that he should stretch out the hands of his favour to us, unless we lift up to him *pure hands, without wrath*, ^{<ERR>}1 Timothy 2:8. If we pray in anger, we have reason to fear God will answer in anger. It has been said, Prayers made in wrath are written in gall. What reason is it that God should forgive us the talents we are indebted to him, if we forgive not our brethren the pence they are indebted to us? Christ *came into the world* as the great Peace-Maker, and not only *to reconcile us to God*, but one to another, and in this we must comply with him. It is great presumption and of dangerous consequence, for any to make a light matter of that which Christ here lays such a stress upon. Men's passions shall not frustrate God's word.

Ⓜ MATTHEW 6:16-18

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

We are here cautioned against hypocrisy in fasting, as before in almsgiving, and in prayer.

I. It is here supposed that religious fasting is a duty required of the disciples of Christ, when God, in his providence, calls to it, and when the case of their own souls upon any account requires it; *when the bridegroom is taken away, then shall they fast*, Ⓜ Matthew 9:15. Fasting is here put last, because it is not so much a duty for its own sake, as a means to dispose us for other duties. Prayer comes in between almsgiving and fasting, as being the life and soul of both. Christ here speaks especially of private fasts, such as particular persons prescribe to themselves, as free-will offerings, commonly used among the pious Jews; some fasted one day, some two, every week; others seldomer, as they saw cause. On those days they did not eat till sun-set, and then very sparingly. It was not the Pharisee's fasting *twice in the week*, but his boasting of it, that Christ condemned, Ⓛ Luke 18:12. It is a laudable practice, and we have reason to lament it, that is so generally neglected among Christians. Anna was much in fasting, Ⓛ Luke 2:37. Cornelius fasted and prayed, Ⓜ Acts 10:30. The primitive Christians were much in it, see Ⓜ Acts 13:3; 14:23. Private fasting is supposed, Ⓛ 1 Corinthians 7:5. It is an act of self-denial, and mortification of the flesh, a holy revenge upon ourselves, and humiliation under the hand of God. The most grown Christians must hereby own, they are so far from having any thing to be proud of, that they are unworthy of their daily bread. It is a means to curb the flesh and the desires of it, and to make us more lively in religious exercises, as fulness of bread is apt to make us drowsy. Paul was *in fastings often*, and so he *kept under this body, and brought it into subjection*.

II. We are cautioned not to do this *as the hypocrites* did it, lest we lose the reward of it; and the more difficulty attends the duty, the greater loss it is to lose the reward of it.

Now,

1. The *hypocrites* pretended fasting, when there was nothing of that contrition or humiliation of soul in them, which is the life and soul of the

duty. Theirs were mock-fasts, the show and shadow without the substance; they took on them to be more humbled than really they were, and so endeavored to put a cheat upon God, than which they could not put a greater affront upon him. The fast that God has chosen, is *a day to afflict the soul, not to hang down the head like a bulrush, nor for a man to spread sackcloth and ashes under him*; we are quite mistaken if we call this a fast, ²⁸⁰⁵Isaiah 58:5. Bodily exercise, if that be all, profits little, since that is not fasting to God, even to him.

2. They proclaimed their fasting, and managed it so that all who saw them might take notice that it was a fasting-day with them. Even on these days they appeared in the streets, whereas they should have been in their closets; and they affected a downcast look, a melancholy countenance, a slow and solemn pace; and perfectly disfigured themselves, that men might see how often they fasted, and might extol them as devout, mortified men. Note, It is sad that men, who have, in some measure, mastered their pleasure, which is sensual wickedness, should be ruined by their pride, which is spiritual wickedness, and no less dangerous. Here also *they have their reward*, that praise and applause of men which they court and covet so much; *they have it*, and it is their all.

III. We are directed how to manage a private fast; we must keep it in private, v. 17, 18. He does not tell us how often we must fast; circumstances vary, and wisdom is profitable therein to direct; the Spirit in the word has left that to the Spirit in the heart; but take this for a rule, whenever you undertake this duty, study therein to approve yourselves to God, and not to recommend yourselves to the good opinion of men; humility must evermore attend upon our humiliation. Christ does not direct to abate any thing of the reality of the fast; he does not say, "take a little meat, or a little drink, or a little cordial;" no, "let the body suffer, but lay aside the show and appearance of it; appear with thy ordinary countenance, guise, and dress; and while thou deniest thyself thy bodily refreshments, do it so as that it may not be taken notice of, no, not by those that are nearest to thee; look pleasant, *anoint thine head and wash thy face*, as thou dost on ordinary days, on purpose to conceal thy devotion; and thou shalt be no loser in the praise of it at last; for though it be not of men, it shall be of God." Fasting is the humbling of the soul (²⁸¹³Psalm 35:13), that is the inside of the duty; let that therefore be thy principal care, and as to the outside of it, covet not to let it be seen. If we be sincere in our solemn fasts, and humble, and trust God's omniscience for our

witness, and his goodness for our reward, we shall find, both that he did *see in secret*, and will *reward openly*. Religious fasts, if rightly kept, will shortly be recompensed with an everlasting feast. Our acceptance with God in our private fasts should make us dead, both to the applause of men (we must not do the duty in hopes of this), and to the censures of men too (we must not decline the duty for fear of them). David's fasting was turned to his reproach, ¹⁵⁰Psalm 69:10; and yet, v. 13, *As for me, let them say what they will of me, my prayer is unto thee in an acceptable time.*

~~4163~~ MATTHEW 6:19-24

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Worldly-mindedness is as common and as fatal a symptom of hypocrisy as any other, for by no sin can Satan have a surer and faster hold of the soul, under the cloak of a visible and passable profession of religion, than by this; and therefore Christ, having warned us against coveting *the praise of men*, proceeds next to warn us against coveting the wealth of the world; in this also we must take heed, lest we be as the hypocrites are, and do as they do: the fundamental error that they are guilty of is, that they choose the world for *their reward*; we must therefore take heed of hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness, in the choice we make of our treasure, our end, and our masters.

I. In choosing the *treasure we lay up*. Something or other every man has which he makes his *treasure*, his portion, which his heart is upon, to which he carries all he can get, and which he depends upon for futurity. It is *that good*, that chief good, which Solomon speaks of with such an emphasis, ²¹¹³Ecclesiastes 2:3. Something the soul will have, which it looks upon as the best thing, which it has a complacency and confidence in above other things. Now Christ designs not to deprive us of our treasure, but to direct us in the choice of it; and here we have,

1. A *good caution* against making *the things that are seen, that are temporal*, our best things, and placing our happiness in them. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth*. Christ's disciples had left all to follow him, let them still keep in the same good mind. A *treasure* is an abundance of something that is in itself, at least in our opinion, precious

and valuable, and likely to stand us in stead hereafter. Now we must *not lay up our treasures on earth*, that is,

(1.) We must not count these things the best things, nor the most valuable in themselves, nor the most serviceable to us: we must not call them glory, as Laban's sons did, but see and own that they have no glory in comparison with *the glory that excelleth*.

(2.) We must not covet an abundance of these things, nor be still grasping at more and more of them, and adding to them, as men do to that which is their treasure, as never knowing when we have enough.

(3.) We must not confide in them for futurity, to be our security and supply in time to come; we must not say to the gold, *Thou art my hope*.

(4.) We must not content ourselves with them, as all we need or desire: we must be content with a little for our passage, but not with all for our portion. These things must not be made *our consolation* (⁴⁰²⁴Luke 6:24), our *good things*, (⁴⁰⁶⁵Luke 16:25). Let us consider we are laying up, not for our *posterity* in this world, but for *ourselves* in the other world. We are put to our choice, and made in a manner our own carvers; that is ours which *we lay up for ourselves*. It concerns thee to choose wisely, for thou art choosing for thyself, and shalt have as thou chooseth. If we know and consider ourselves what we are, what we are made for, how large our capacities are, and how long our continuance, and that our souls are ourselves, we shall see it is foolish thing to *lay up our treasures on earth*.

2. Here is a *good reason* given why we should not look upon any thing *on earth* as our *treasure*, because it is liable to loss and decay:

(1.) From corruption within. That which is treasure *upon earth moth and rust do corrupt*. If the *treasure* be laid up in fine clothes, the *moth* frets them, and they are gone and spoiled insensibly, when we thought them most securely laid up. If it be in corn or other eatables, as his was who had his barns full (⁴⁰²⁶Luke 12:16, 17), *rust* (so we read it) *corrupts* that: *brosis* — *eating*, eating by men, for *as goods are increased they are increased that eat them* (⁴⁰⁶¹Ecclesiastes 5:11); eating by mice or other vermin; manna itself bred worms; or it grows mouldy and musty, is struck, or smutted, or blasted; fruits soon rot. Or, if we understand it of silver and gold, they tarnish and canker; they grow less with using, and grow worse with keeping (⁴⁰⁸²James 5:2, 3); the *rust and the moth* breed in the metal

itself and in the garment itself. Note, Worldly riches have in themselves a principal of corruption and decay; they wither of themselves, and *make themselves wings*.

(2.) From violence without. *Thieves break through and steal*. Every hand of violence will be aiming at the house where *treasure* is laid up; nor can any thing be laid up so safe, but we may be spoiled of it. *Numquam ego fortunae credidi, etiam si videretur pacem agere; omnia illa quae in me indulgentissime conferebat, pecuniam, honores, gloriam, eo loco posui, unde posset ea, sine metu meo, repetere* — *I never reposed confidence in fortune, even if she seemed propitious: whatever were the favours which her bounty bestowed, whether wealth, honours, or glory, I so disposed of them, that it was in her power to recall them without occasioning me any alarm*. Seneca. *Consol. ad Helv*. It is folly to make that our *treasure* which we may so easily be robbed of.

3. *Good counsel*, to make the joys and glories of the other world, those *things not seen* that are *eternal*, our best things, and to place our happiness in them. *Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*. Note,

(1.) There are *treasures in heaven*, as sure as there are on this earth; and those in heaven are the only true *treasures*, the riches and glories and pleasures that are at God's right hand, which those that are sanctified truly arrive at, when they come to be sanctified perfectly.

(2.) It is our wisdom to *lay up* our *treasure in those treasures*; to give all diligence to make sure our title to eternal life through Jesus Christ, and to depend upon that as our happiness, and look upon all things here below with a holy contempt, as not worthy to be compared with it. We must firmly believe there is such a happiness, and resolve to be content with that, and to be content with nothing short of it. If we thus make those *treasures* ours, they are laid up, and we may trust God to keep them safe for us; thither let us then refer all our designs, and extend all our desires; thither let us send before our best efforts and best affections. Let us not burthen ourselves with the cash of this world, which will but load and defile us, and be liable to sink us, but lay up in store good securities. The promises are bills of exchange, by which all true believers return their *treasure to heaven*, payable in the future state: and thus we make that sure that will be made sure.

(3.) It is a great encouragement to us to *lay up our treasure in heaven*, that there it is safe; it will not decay of itself, no *moth* nor *rust* will *corrupt* it; nor can we be by force or fraud deprived of it; *thieves do not break through and steal*. It is a happiness above and beyond the changes and chances of time, *an inheritance incorruptible*.

4. A good reason why we should thus choose, and an evidence that we have done so (v. 21), *Where your treasure is, on earth or in heaven, there will you heart be*. We are therefore concerned to be right and wise in the choice of our *treasure*, because the temper of our minds, and consequently the tenor of our lives, will be accordingly either carnal or spiritual, earthly or heavenly. The *heart* follows the *treasure*, as the needle follows the loadstone, or the sunflower the sun. *Where the treasure is there* the value and esteem are, *there* the love and affection are (^{510D}Colossians 3:2), that way the desires and pursuits go, thitherward the aims and intents are levelled, and all is done with that in view. *Where the treasure is, there* our cares and fears are, lest we come short of it; about that we are most solicitous; *there* our hope and trust are (^{510D}Proverbs 18:10, 11); *there* our joys and delights will be (^{510B}Psalm 119:111); and *there* our thoughts will be, *there* the *inward* thought will be, the *first* thought, the *free* thought, the *fixed* thought, the *frequent*, the *familiar* thought. The *heart* is God's due (^{510B}Proverbs 23:26), and that he may have it, our *treasure* must be laid up with him, and then our souls will be lifted up to him.

This direction about laying up our *treasure*, may very fitly be applied to the foregoing caution, of not doing what we do in religion *to be seen of men*. Our *treasure* is our alms, prayers, and fastings, and the reward of them; if we have done these only to gain the applause of men, we have *laid up this treasure on earth*, have lodged it in the hands of men, and must never expect to hear any further of it. Now it is folly to do this, for *the praise of men* we covet so much is liable to corruption: it will soon be rusted, and moth-eaten, and tarnished; a little folly, like a dead fly, will spoil it all, ^{510B}Ecclesiastes 10:1. Slander and calumny are *thieves that break through and steal* it away, and so we lose all the *treasure* of our performances; we have run in vain, and laboured in vain, because we misplaced our intentions in doing of them. Hypocritical services lay up nothing in heaven (^{510B}Isaiah 58:3); the gain of them is gone, when the soul is called for, ^{510B}Job 27:8. But if we have prayed and fasted and given alms in truth and uprightness, with an eye to God and to his acceptance, and have approved ourselves to him therein, we have laid up that treasure *in*

heaven; a book of remembrance is written there (³⁰⁸⁶Malachi 3:16), and being there recorded, they shall be there rewarded, and we shall meet them again with comfort on the other side death and the grave. Hypocrites are written in the earth (²⁴⁷³Jeremiah 17:13), but God's faithful ones have their names written in heaven, (⁴⁰¹⁸Luke 10:20. Acceptance with God is *treasure in heaven*, which can neither be corrupted nor stolen. His *well done* shall stand for ever; and if we have thus laid up our *treasure* with him, with him our *hearts* will be; and where can they be better?

II. We must take heed of hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness in choosing the *end we look at*. Our concern as to this is represented by two sorts of eyes which men have, a *single eye* and an *evil eye*, v. 22, 23. The expressions here are somewhat dark because concise; we shall therefore take them in some variety of interpretation. *The light of the body is the eye*, that is plain; *the eye* is discovering and directing; the *light of the world* would avail us little without this *light of the body*; it is *the light of the eye* that *rejoiceth the heart* (³¹⁵⁰Proverbs 15:30), but what is that which is here compared to *the eye* in the *body*.

1. *The eye*, that is, *the heart* (so some) if that be *single* — *haplous* — *free and bountiful* (so the word is frequently rendered, as ⁶¹⁰⁸Romans 12:8; ⁴⁰⁸²2 Corinthians 8:2, 9:11, 13; ⁵⁰⁰⁵James 1:5, and we read of a *bountiful eye*, ⁴²¹⁹Proverbs 22:9). If the heart be liberally affected and stand inclined to goodness and charity, it will direct the man to Christian actions, the whole conversation *will be full of light*, full of evidences and instances of true Christianity, that *pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father* (³¹⁰⁷James 1:27), *full of light*, of good works, which are our *light shining before men*; but *if the heart be evil*, covetous, and hard, and envious, griping and grudging (such a temper of mind is often expressed by an *evil eye*, ⁴⁰¹⁵Matthew 20:15; ⁴¹⁷²Mark 7:22; ⁴²¹⁶Proverbs 23:6, 7), *the body will be full of darkness*, the whole conversation will be heathenish and unchristian. *The instruments of the churl are* and always will be *evil*, but *the liberal deviseth liberal things*, ²³³⁵Isaiah 32:5-8. *If the light that is in us*, those affections which should guide us to that which is good, be *darkness*, if these be corrupt and worldly, if there be not so much as good nature in a man, not so much as a kind disposition, *how great is the corruption of a man*, and the *darkness* in which he sits! This sense seems to agree with the context; we must *lay up treasure in heaven* by liberality in giving alms, and that not grudgingly but with cheerfulness, ⁴²³³Luke 12:33; ⁴⁰⁹²2 Corinthians 9:7. But these words in the parallel place do not

come in upon any such occasion, ^{<213>}Luke 11:34, and therefore the coherence here does not determine that to be the sense of them.

2. *The eye*, that is, *the understanding* (so some); the practical judgment, the conscience, which is to the other faculties of the soul, as *the eye* is to the *body*, to guide and direct their motions; now *if this eye be single*, if it make a true and right judgment, and discern things that differ, especially in the great concern of *laying up the treasure* so as to choose aright in that, it will rightly guide the affections and actions, which will all be *full of the light* of grace and comfort; *but if this be evil* and corrupt, and instead of leading the inferior powers, is led, and bribed, and biassed by them, if this be erroneous and misinformed, the heart and life must needs be *full of darkness*, and the whole conversation corrupt. They that *will not understand*, are said to *walk on in darkness*, ^{<395>}Psalm 82:5. It is sad when the spirit of a man, that should be *the candle of the Lord*, is an *ignis fatuus*: when the *leaders of the people*, the leaders of the faculties, *cause them to err*, for then *they that are led of them are destroyed*, ^{<296>}Isaiah 9:16. An error in the practical judgment is fatal, it is that which calls *evil good and good evil* (^{<350>}Isaiah 5:20); therefore it concerns us to understand things aright, to get our eyes anointed with eye-salve.

3. *The eye*, that is, *the aims and intentions*; by *the eye* we set our end before us, the mark we shoot at, the place we go to, we keep that in view, and direct our motion accordingly; in every thing we do in religion; there is something or other that we have in our *eye*; now *if our eye be single*, if we aim honestly, fix right ends, and move rightly towards them, if we aim purely and only at the glory of God, seek his honor and favour, and direct all entirely to him, then *the eye is single*; Paul's was so when he said, *To me to live is Christ*; and if we be right here, *the whole body will be full of light*, all the actions will be regular and gracious, pleasing to God and comfortable to ourselves; *but if this eye be evil*, if, instead of aiming only at the glory of God, and our acceptance with him, we look aside at the applause of men, and while we profess to honour God, contrive to honour ourselves, and seek our own things under colour of *seeking the things of Christ*, this spoils all, the whole conversation will be perverse and unsteady, and the foundations being thus out of course, there can be nothing but *confusion and every evil work* in the superstructure. Draw the lines from the circumference to any other point but the centre, and they will cross. *If the light that is in thee be not only dim*, but *darkness* itself, it is a fundamental error, and destructive to all that follows. The end

specifies the action. It is of the last importance in religion, that we be right in our aims, and make *eternal things*, not *temporal*, our scope, ^{<4048>}2 Corinthians 4:18. The hypocrite is like the waterman, that looks one way and rows another; the true Christian like the traveller, that has his journey's end in his eye. The hypocrite soars like the kite, with his eye upon the prey below, which he is ready to come down to when he has a fair opportunity; the true Christian soars like the lark, higher and higher, forgetting the things that are beneath.

III. We must take heed of hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness in choosing the master we serve, v. 24. *No man can serve two masters*. Serving *two masters* is contrary to *the single eye*; for *the eye* will be to the master's hand, ^{<4048>}Psalm 123:1, 2. Our Lord Jesus here exposes the cheat which those put upon their own souls, who think to divide between God and the world, to have a *treasure on earth*, and a *treasure in heaven* too, to please God and please men too. Why not? says the hypocrite; it is good to have two strings to one's bow. They hope to make their religion serve their secular interest, and so turn to account both ways. The pretending mother was for dividing the child; the Samaritans will compound between God and idols. No, says Christ, this will not do; it is but a supposition that *gain is godliness*, ^{<5485>}1 Timothy 6:5. Here is,

1. A general maxim laid down; it is likely it was a proverb among the Jews, *No man can serve two masters*, much less two gods; for their commands will some time or other cross or contradict one another, and their occasions interfere. While *two masters* go together, a servant may follow them both; but when they part, you will see to which he belongs; he cannot love, and observe, and cleave to both as he should. If to the one, not to the other; either this or that must be comparatively hated and despised. This truth is plain enough in common cases.

2. The application of it to the business in hand. *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon*. *Mammon* is a Syriac word, that signifies gain; so that whatever in this world is, or is accounted by us to be, *gain* (^{<308E>}Philippians 3:7), is *mammon*. *Whatever is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is mammon*. To some their belly is their *mammon*, and they serve that (^{<308D>}Philippians 3:19); to others their ease, their sleep, their sports and pastimes, are their *mammon* (^{<308B>}Proverbs 6:9); to others worldly riches (^{<3083>}James 4:13); to others honours and preferments; the praise and applause of men was the Pharisees' *mammon*; in a word, self,

the unity in which the world's trinity centres, sensual, secular self, is the *mammon* which cannot be served in conjunction with *God*; for if it be served, it is in competition with him and in contradiction to him. He does not say, *We must not* or *we should not*, but *we cannot serve God and Mammon*; *we cannot* love both (~~625~~ 1 John 2:15; ~~304B~~ James 4:4); or hold to both, or hold by both in observance, obedience, attendance, trust, and dependence, for they are contrary the one to the other. *God* says, “*My son, give me thy heart.*” *Mammon* says, “*No, give it me.*” *God* says, “*Be content with such things as ye have.*” *Mammon* says, “*Grasp at all that ever thou canst. Rem, rem, quocunq̄ue modo rem — Money, money; by fair means or by foul, money.*” *God* says, “*Defraud not, never lie, be honest and just in all thy dealings.*” *Mammon* says “*Cheat thine own Father, if thou canst gain by it.*” *God* says, “*Be charitable.*” *Mammon* says, “*Hold thy own: this giving undoes us all.*” *God* says, “*Be careful for nothing.*” *Mammon* says, “*Be careful for every thing.*” *God* says, “*Keep holy thy sabbath-day.*” *Mammon* says, “*Make use of that day as well as any other for the world.*” Thus inconsistent are the commands of *God and Mammon*, so that *we cannot serve both*. Let us not then *halt between God and Baal*, but *choose ye this day whom ye will serve*, and abide by our choice.

~~405~~ MATTHEW 6:25-34

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

There is scarcely any one sin against which our Lord Jesus more largely and earnestly warns his disciples, or against which he arms them with more variety of arguments, than the sin of disquieting, distracting, distrustful cares about the things of life, which are a bad sign that both the *treasure* and the heart are *on the earth*; and therefore he thus largely insists upon it. Here is,

I. The prohibition laid down. It is the counsel and command of the Lord Jesus, that *we take no thought* about the things of this world; *I say unto you*. He says it as our Lawgiver, and the Sovereign of our hearts; he says it as our Comforter, and the Helper of our joy. What is it that he says? It is this, and *he that hath ears to hear, let him hear it. Take no thought for your life, nor yet for your body* (v. 25). *Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat?* (v. 31) and again (v. 34), *Take no thought, me merimnate* —

Be not in care. As against hypocrisy, so against worldly cares, the caution is thrice repeated, and yet no vain repetition: *precept* must be *upon precept, and line upon line*, to the same purport, and all little enough; it is a *sin which doth so easily beset us*. It intimates how pleasing it is to Christ, and of how much concern it is to ourselves, that we should live without carefulness. It is the repeated command of the Lord Jesus to his disciples, that they should not divide and pull in pieces their own minds with care about the world. There is a *thought* concerning the things of this life, which is not only lawful, but duty, such as is commended in the virtuous woman. See ^{<1723>}Proverbs 27:23. The word is used concerning Paul's care of the churches, and Timothy's care for the state of souls, ^{<4103>}2 Corinthians 11:28; ^{<3520>}Philippians 2:20.

But the *thought* here forbidden is,

- 1.** A disquieting, tormenting *thought*, which hurries the mind hither and thither, and hangs it in suspense; which disturbs our joy in God, and is a damp upon our hope in him; which breaks the sleep, and hinders our enjoyment of ourselves, of our friends, and of what God has given us.
- 2.** A distrustful, unbelieving *thought*. God has promised to provide for those that are his all things needful for life as well as godliness, *the life that now is*, food and a covering: not dainties, but necessaries. He never said, "They shall be feasted," but, "*Verily, they shall be fed.*" Now an inordinate care for time to come, and fear of wanting those supplies, spring from a disbelief of these promises, and of the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence; and that is the evil of it. As to present sustenance, we may and must use lawful means to get it, else we tempt God; we must be diligent in our callings, and prudent in proportioning our expenses to what we have, and we must pray for *daily bread*; and if all other means fail, we may and must ask relief of those that are able to give it. He was none of the best of men that said, *To beg I am ashamed* (^{<2163>}Luke 16:3); as he was, who (v. 21) *desired to be fed with the crumbs*; but for the future, we must *cast our care upon God*, and *take no thought*, because it looks like a jealousy of God, who knows how to give what we want when we know not now to get it. Let our souls dwell at ease in him! This gracious carelessness is the same with that sleep which God gives to his beloved, in opposition to the worldling's toil, ^{<3270>}Psalm 127:2. Observe the cautions here,

(1.) *Take no thought for your life.* Life is our greatest concern for this world; *All that a man has will he give for his life;* yet take no thought about it.

[1.] Not about the *continuance* of it; refer it to God to *lengthen* or *shorten* it as he pleases; *my times are in thy hand*, and they are in a good hand.

[2.] Not about the *comforts* of this life; refer it to God to embitter or sweeten it as he pleases. We must not be solicitous, no not about the necessary support of this life, *food* and *raiment*; these God has promised, and therefore we may more confidently expect; say not, *What shall we eat?* It is the language of one at a loss, and almost despairing; whereas, though many good people have the prospect of little, yet there are few but have present support.

(2.) *Take no thought for the morrow*, for the time to come. Be not solicitous for the future, how you shall live next year, or when you are old, or what you shall leave behind you. As we must not *boast* of to-morrow, so we must not *care for* to-morrow, or the events of it.

II. The reasons and arguments to enforce this prohibition. One would think the command of Christ was enough to restrain us from this foolish sin of disquieting, distrustful care, independently of the comfort of our own souls, which is so nearly concerned; but to show how much the heart of Christ is upon it, and what *pleasures he takes* in those that *hope in his mercy*, the command is backed with the most powerful arguments. If reason may but rule us, surely we shall ease ourselves of these thorns. To free us from anxious thoughts, and to expel them, Christ here suggests to us *comforting* thoughts, that we may be filled with them. It will be worth while to take pains with our own hearts, to argue them out of their disquieting cares, and to make ourselves ashamed of them. They may be weakened by right reason, but it is by an active faith only that they can be overcome. Consider then,

1. *Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?* v. 25. Yes, no doubt it is; so he says who had reason to understand the true value of present things, for he made them, he supports them, and supports us by them; and the thing speaks for itself. Note,

(1.) Our *life* is a greater blessing than our *livelihood*. It is true, life cannot subsist without a livelihood; but the meat and raiment which are here

represented as inferior to the life and body are such as are for ornament and delight; for about such as are for ornament and delight; for about such we are apt to be solicitous. Meat and raiment are in order to life, and the *end* is more noble and excellent than the *means*. The daintiest food and finest raiment are from the *earth*, but life from the *breath of God*. Life is the *light of men*; meat is but the *oil* that feeds that light: so that the difference between rich and poor is very inconsiderable, since, in the greatest things, they stand on the same level, and differ only in the less.

(2.) This is an encouragement to us to trust God for *food* and *raiment*, and so to ease ourselves of all perplexing cares about them. God has given us life, and given us the body; it was an act of power, it was an act of favour, it was done without our care: what cannot he do for us, who did that? — what will he not? If we take care about our souls and eternity, which are more than the body, and its life, we may leave it to God to provide for us food and raiment, which are less. God has maintained our lives hitherto; if sometimes with pulse and water, that has answered the end; he has protected us and kept us alive. He that guards us against the evils we are exposed to, will supply us with the *good things* we are in need of. If he had been pleased to kill us, to starve us, he would not so often have *given his angels a charge concerning us* to keep us.

2. *Behold the fowls of the air, and consider the lilies of the field.* Here is an argument taken from God's common providence toward the inferior creatures, and their dependence, according to their capacities, upon that providence. A fine pass fallen man has come to, that he must be sent to school to the *fowls of the air*, and that they must *teach him!* ^{131E} Job 12:7, 8.

(1.) Look upon the *fowls*, and learn to trust God *for food* (v. 26), and disquiet not yourselves with thoughts *what you shall eat*.

[1.] Observe the providence of God concerning them. Look upon them, and receive instruction. There are various sorts of fowls; they are numerous, some of them ravenous, but they are all fed, and fed with food convenient for them; it is rare that any of them perish for want of food, even in winter, and there goes no little to feed them all the year round. The fowls, as they are least serviceable to man, so they are least within his care; men often feed upon them, but seldom feed them; yet they are fed, we know not how, and some of them fed best in the hardest weather; and it is *your heavenly Father that feeds them*; he *knows all the wild fowls of the mountains*, better than you know the tame ones at your own barn-door,

^{<BRI>}Psalm 50:11. Not a sparrow lights to the ground, to pick up a grain of corn, but by the providence of God, which extends itself to the meanest creatures. But that which is especially observed here is, that they are fed without any care or project of their own; *they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns*. The ant indeed does, and the bee, and they are set before us as examples of prudence and industry; but the fowls of the air do not; they make no provision for the future themselves, and yet every day, as duly as the day comes, provision is made for them, and their *eyes wait on God*, that great and good Housekeeper, who *provides food for all flesh*.

[2.] Improve this for your encouragement to trust in God. *Are ye not much better than they?* Yes, certainly you are. Note, The *heirs* of heaven are much better than the *fowls* of heaven; nobler and more excellent beings, and, by faith, they soar higher; they are of a better nature and nurture, *wiser than the fowls of heaven* (^{<BRI>}Job 35:11): though the children of this world, that *know not the judgment of the Lord*, are not so wise as *the stork, and the crane, and the swallow* (^{<BRI>}Jeremiah 8:7), you are dearer to God, and nearer, though they fly in the open firmament of heaven. He is their Master and Lord, their Owner and Master; but besides all this, he is your Father, and in his account *ye are of more value than many sparrows*; you are his children, his first-born; now he that feeds his birds surely will not starve his babes. They trust your Father's providence, and will not you trust it? In dependence upon that, they are careless for the morrow; and being so, they live the merriest lives of all creatures; they *sing among the branches* (^{<BRI>}Psalm 104:12), and, to the best of their power, they praise their Creator. If we were, by faith, as unconcerned about the morrow as they are, we should sing as cheerfully as they do; for it is worldly care that mars our mirth and damps our joy, and silences our praise, as much as any thing.

(2.) Look upon the *lilies*, and learn to trust God for *raiment*. That is another part of our care, *what we shall put on*; for decency, to cover us; for defence, to keep us warm; yea, and, with many, for dignity and ornament, to make them look great and fine; and so much concerned are they for gaiety and variety in their clothing, that this care returns almost as often as that for their daily bread. Now to ease us of this care, let us *consider the lilies of the field*; not only *look upon* them (every eyes does that with pleasure), but *consider* them. Note, There is a great deal of good to be

learned from what we see every day, if we would but consider it,
⁴⁰⁶Proverbs 6:6; 24:32.

[1.] Consider how *frail* the lilies are; they are the *grass of the field*. Lilies, though distinguished by their colours, are still but *grass*. Thus *all flesh is grass*: though some in the endowments of body and mind are as lilies, much admired, still they are grass; the grass of the field in nature and constitution; they stand upon the same level with others. Man's days, at best, are *as grass*, as the *flower of the grass* ⁴⁰²1 Peter 1:24. This grass *to-day is*, and *to-morrow is cast into the oven*; in a little while the place that *knows us* will *know us no more*. The grave is the oven into which we shall be cast, and in which we shall be consumed as grass in the fire, ³⁹⁴Psalms 49:14. This intimates a reason why we should not take thought for the morrow, what we shall put on, because perhaps, by to-morrow, we may have occasion for our grave-clothes.

[2.] Consider how *free from care* the lilies are: they *toil not* as men do, to earn clothing; as servants, to earn their liveries; *neither do they spin*, as women do, to make clothing. It does not follow that we must therefore neglect, or do carelessly, the proper business of this life; it is the praise of the virtuous woman, that *she lays her hand to the spindle, makes fine linen and sells it*, ⁴¹⁸Proverbs 31:19, 24. Idleness *tempts* God, instead of *trusting* him; but he that provides for inferior creatures, without their labour, will much more provide for us, by blessing our labour, which he has made our duty. And if we should, through sickness, be unable to *toil and spin*, God can furnish us with what is necessary for us.

[3.] Consider how *fair*, how *fine* the lilies are; *how they grow*; what they *grow from*. The root of the lily or tulip, as other bulbous roots, is, in winter, lost and buried under ground, yet, when spring returns, it appears, and starts up in a little time; hence it is promised to God's Israel, that they should grow *as the lily*, ³⁴⁵Hosea 14:5. Consider what they *grow to*. Out of that obscurity in a few weeks they come to be so very gay, that even *Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these*. The array of Solomon was very splendid and magnificent: he that had the peculiar treasure of kings and provinces, and studiously affected pomp and gallantry, doubtless had the richest clothing, and the best made up, that could be got; especially when he appeared in his glory on high days. And yet, let him dress himself as fine as he could, he comes far short of the beauty of the lilies, and a bed of tulips outshines him. Let us, therefore, be

ambitious of the *wisdom* of Solomon, in which he was outdone by none (wisdom to do our duty in our places), rather than the *glory* of Solomon, in which he was outdone by the lilies. Knowledge and grace are the perfection of man, not beauty, much less fine clothes. Now God is here said thus to *clothe the grass of the field*. Note, All the excellences of the creature flow from God, the Fountain and spring of them. It was he that gave the horse his strength, and the lily its beauty; every creature is in itself, as well as to us, what he makes it to be.

[4.] Consider how instructive all this is to us, v. 30.

First, As to *fine* clothing, this teaches us not to care for it at all, not to covet it, nor to be proud of it, not to make the *putting on of apparel* our *adorning*, for after all our care in this the lilies will far outdo us; we cannot dress so fine as they do, why then should we attempt to vie with them? Their adorning will soon perish, and so will ours; they fade — *are to-day*, and *to-morrow are cast*, as other rubbish, *into the oven*; and the clothes we are proud of are wearing out, the gloss is soon gone, the color fades, the shape goes out of fashion, or in awhile the garment itself is worn out; such is man in all his pomp (^{<2406>}Isaiah 40:6, 7), especially rich men (^{<3010>}James 1:10); they *fade away in their ways*.

Secondly, As to *necessary* clothing; this teaches us to cast the care of it upon God — Jehovah-jireh; trust him that clothes the lilies, to provide for you what you shall *put on*. If he give such fine clothes to the grass, much more will he give fitting clothes to his own children; clothes that shall be warm upon them, not only *when he quieteth the earth with the south wind*, but when he disquiets it with the *north wind*, ^{<3377>}Job 37:17. He shall much more clothe you: for you are nobler creatures, of a more excellent being; if so he clothe the short-lived grass, much more will he clothe you that are made for immortality. Even the children of Nineveh are preferred before the gourd (^{<3040>}Jonah 4:10, 11), much more the sons of Zion, that are in covenant with God. Observe the title he gives them (v. 30), *O ye of little faith*. This may be taken,

1. As an encouragement to truth faith, though it be but weak; it entitles us to the divine care, and a promise of suitable supply. Great faith shall be commended, and shall procure great things, but little faith shall not be rejected, even that shall procure food and raiment. *Sound* believers shall be provided for, though they be not *strong* believers. The babes in the family are fed and clothed, as well as those that are grown up, and with a

special care and tenderness; say not, I am but a child, but a dry tree (^{<280B>}Isaiah 56:3, 5), for though *poor and needy* yet *the Lord thinketh on thee*. Or,

2. It is rather a rebuke to weak faith, though it be true, ^{<44B>}Matthew 14:31. It intimates what is at the bottom of all our inordinate care and thoughtfulness; it is owing to the weakness of our faith, and the remains of unbelief in us. If we had but more faith, we should have less care.

3. *Which of you, the wisest, the strongest of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature?* (v. 27) *to his age*, so some; but the measure of a cubit denotes it to be meant of the stature, and the age at longest is but a span, ^{<49B>}Psalms 39:5. Let us consider,

(1.) We did not arrive at the stature we are of by our own care and thought, but by the providence of God. An infant of a span long has grown up to be a man of six feet, and how was one cubit after another added to his stature? not by his own forecast or contrivance; he grew he knew not how, by the power and goodness of God. Now he that made our bodies, and made them of such size, surely will take care to provide for them. Note, God is to be acknowledged in the increase of our bodily strength and stature, and to be trusted for all needful supplies, because he has made it to appear, that he is mindful for the body. The growing age is the thoughtless, careless age, yet we grow; and shall not he who reared us to this, provide for us now we are reared?

(2.) We cannot alter the stature we are of, if we would: what a foolish and ridiculous thing would it be for a man of low stature to perplex himself, to break his sleep, and beat his brains, about it, and to be continually taking thought how he might be a cubit higher; when, after all, he knows he cannot effect it, and therefore he had better be content and take it as it is! We are not all of a size, yet the difference in stature between one and another is not material, nor of any great account; a little man is ready to wish he were as tall as such a one, but he knows it is to no purpose, and therefore does as well as he can with it. Now as we do in reference to our bodily stature, so we should do in reference to our worldly estate.

[1.] We should not covet an abundance of the wealth of this world, any more than we would covet the addition of a cubit to one's stature, which is a great deal in a man's height; it is enough to grow by inches; such an addition would but make one unwieldy, and a burden to one's self.

[2.] We must reconcile ourselves to our state, as we do to our stature; we must set the conveniences against the inconveniences, and so make a virtue of necessity: what cannot be remedied must be made the best of. We cannot alter the disposals of Providence, and therefore must acquiesce in them, accommodate ourselves to them, and relieve ourselves, as well as we can, against inconveniences, as Zaccheus against the inconvenience of his stature, by climbing into the tree.

4. *After all these things do the Gentiles seek*, v. 32. Thoughtfulness about the world is a *heathenish* sin, and unbecoming *Christians*. The *Gentiles* seek *these things*, because they know not *better things*; they are eager for this world, because they are strangers to a better; they seek these things with care and anxiety, because they are *without God in the world*, and understand not his providence. They fear and worship their idols, but know not how to trust them for deliverance and supply, and, therefore, are themselves full of care; but it is a shame for Christians, who build upon nobler principles, and profess a religion which teaches them not only that there is a Providence, but that there are promises made to the good of the life that now is, which teaches them a confidence in God and a contempt of the world, and gives such reasons for both; it is a shame for them to walk as Gentiles walk, and to fill their heads and hearts with these things.

5. *Your heavenly Father knows ye have need of all these things*; these necessary things, food and raiment; he knows our wants better than we do ourselves; though he be in heaven, and his children on earth, he observes what the least and poorest of them has occasion for (~~REV~~ Revelation 2:9), *I know thy poverty*. You think, if such a good friend did not but know your wants and straits, you would soon have relief: your God knows them; and he is your Father that loves you and pities you, and is ready to help you; your heavenly Father, who has wherewithal to supply all your needs: away, therefore, with all disquieting thoughts and cares; go to thy Father; tell him, *he knows that thou has need of such and such things*; he asks you, *Children, have you any meat?* ~~REV~~ John 21:5. Tell him whether you have or have not. Though he knows our wants, he will know them from us; and when we have opened them to him, let us cheerfully refer ourselves to his wisdom, power, and goodness, for our supply. Therefore, we should ease ourselves of the burthen of care, by casting it upon God, because it is he *that careth for us* (~~REV~~ 1 Peter 5:7), and what needs all this ado? If he care, why should be care?

6. *Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.* v. 33. Here is a double argument against the sin of *thoughtfulness; take no thought* for your life, the life of the body; for,

(1.) You have greater and better things to take thought about, the life of your soul, your eternal happiness; that is the *one thing needful* (~~☞~~ Luke 10:42), about which you should employ your thoughts, and which is commonly neglected in those hearts wherein worldly cares have the ascendant. If we were but more careful to please God, and to work out our own salvation, we should be less solicitous to please ourselves, and work out an estate in the world. Thoughtfulness for our souls in the most effectual cure of thoughtfulness for the world.

(2.) You have a surer and easier, a safer and more compendious way to obtain the necessaries of this life, than by carking, and caring, and fretting about them; and that is, by *seeking first the kingdom of God*, and making religion your business: say not that this is the way to starve, no, it is the way to be well provided for, even in this world. Observe here,

[1.] The great duty required: it is the sum and substance of our whole duty: “*Seek first the kingdom of God*, mind religion as your great and principle concern.” Our duty is to seek; to desire, pursue, and aim at these things; it is a word that has in it much of the constitution of the new covenant in favour of us; *though we have not attained*, but in many things fail and come short, sincere seeking (a careful concern and an earnest endeavor) is accepted. Now observe, *First*, The object of this seeking; *The kingdom of God, and his righteousness*; we must mind heaven as our end, and holiness as our way. “Seek the comforts of the kingdom of grace and glory as your felicity. Aim at the *kingdom of heaven*; press towards it; give diligence to make it sure; resolve not to take up short of it; seek for this glory, honour, and immortality; prefer heaven and heavenly blessings far before earth and earthly delights.” We make nothing of our religion, if we do not make heaven of it. And with the *happiness* of this kingdom, seek the *righteousness* of it; *God's righteousness*, the righteousness which he requires to be wrought *in* us, and wrought *by* us, such as exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees; we must *follow peace and holiness*, ~~☞~~ Hebrews 12:14. *Secondly*, The order of it. *Seek first the kingdom of God*. Let your care for your souls and another world take the place of all other cares: and let all the concerns of this life be made subordinate to those of the life to

come: we must seek the things of Christ more than our own things; and if every they come in competition, we must remember to which we are to give the preference. “Seek these things *first*; first in thy days: let the morning of thy youth be dedicated to God. Wisdom must be sought early; it is good beginning betimes to be religious. Seek the first every day; let waking thoughts be of God.” Let this be our principle, to do that first which is most needful, and let him that is the First, have the first.

[2.] The gracious promise annexed; *all these things*, the necessary supports of life, *shall be added unto you*; shall be *given over and above*; so it is in the margin. You shall have what you seek, the *kingdom of God and his righteousness*, for never any sought *in vain*, that sought *in earnest*; and besides that, you shall have food and raiment, by way of overplus; as he that buys goods has paper and packthread given him in the bargain. *Godliness has the promise of the life that now is*, ^{<50B>}1 Timothy 4:8. Solomon asked wisdom, and had that and other things added to him, ^{<411B>}2 Chronicles 1:11, 12. O what a blessed change would it make in our hearts and lives, did we but firmly believe this truth, that the best way to be comfortably provided for in this world, is to be most intent upon another world! We then begin at the right end of our work, when we begin with God. If we give diligence to make sure to ourselves the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, as to all the things of this life, Jehovah-jireh — the Lord will provide as much of them as he sees good for us, and more we would not wish for. Have we trusted in him for the *portion of our inheritance* at our end, and shall we not trust him for the *portion of our cup*, in the way to it? God's Israel were not only brought to Canaan at last, but had their charges borne through the wilderness. O that we were more thoughtful about the things that are not seen, that are eternal, and then the less thoughtful we should be, and the less thoughtful we should need to be, about the things that are seen, that are temporal! *Also regard not your stuff*, ^{<45B>}Genesis 45:20, 23.

7. *The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*, v. 34. We must not perplex ourselves inordinately about future events, because every day brings along with it its own burthen of cares and grievances, as, if we look about us, and suffer not our fears to betray the succours which grace and reason offer, it brings along with it its own strength and supply too. So that we are here told,

(1.) That *thoughtfulness* for the morrow is *needless*; *Let the morrow take thought for the things of itself*. If wants and troubles be renewed with the day, there are aids and provisions renewed likewise; *compassions*, that are *new every morning*, ^{<312>}Lamentations 3:22, 23. The saints have a Friend that is *their arm every morning*, and gives out fresh supplies daily (^{<2312>}Isaiah 33:2), according *as the business of every day requires* (^{<3104>}Ezra 3:4), and so he keeps his people in constant dependence upon him. Let us refer it therefore to the morrow's strength, to do the morrow's work, and bear the morrow's burthen. To-morrow, and the things of it, will be provided for without us; why need we anxiously care for that which is so wisely cared for already? This does not forbid a prudent foresight, and preparation accordingly, but a perplexing solicitude, and a prepossession of difficulties and calamities, which may perhaps never come, or if they do, may be easily borne, and the evil of them guarded against. The meaning is, let us *mind present duty*, and then *leave events to God*; do the *work of the day in its day*, and then let *to-morrow bring its work along with it*.

(2.) That *thoughtfulness* for the morrow is one of those *foolish and hurtful lusts*, which those that will be rich fall into, and one of the *many sorrows*, wherewith they *pierce themselves through*. *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*. This present day has trouble enough attending it, we need not *accumulate* burthens by *anticipating* our trouble, nor borrow perplexities from to-morrow's evils to add to those of this day. It is uncertain what to-morrow's evils may be, but whatever they be, it is time enough to take thought about them when they come. What a folly it is to take that trouble upon ourselves this day by care and fear, which belongs to another day, and will be never the lighter when it comes? Let us not pull that upon ourselves all together at once, which Providence has wisely ordered to be borne by parcels. The conclusion of this whole matter then is, that it is the will and command of the Lord Jesus, that his disciples should not be their own tormentors, nor make their passage through this world more dark and unpleasant, by their apprehension of troubles, than God has made it by the troubles themselves. By our daily prayers we may procure strength to bear us up under our daily troubles, and to arm us against the temptations that attend them, and then let none of these things move us.