

CHAPTER 12

The apostle, having at large cleared and confirmed the prime fundamental doctrines of Christianity, comes in the next place to press the principal duties. We mistake our religion if we look upon it only as a system of notions and a guide to speculation. No, it is a practical religion, that tends to the right ordering of the conversation. It is designed not only to inform our judgments, but to reform our hearts and lives. From the method of the apostle's writing in this, as in some other of the epistles (as from the management of the principal ministers of state in Christ's kingdom) the stewards of the mysteries of God may take direction how to divide the word of truth: not to press duty abstracted from privilege, nor privilege abstracted from duty; but let both go together, with a complicated design, they will greatly promote and befriend each other. The duties are drawn from the privileges, by way of inference. The foundation of Christian practice must be laid in Christian knowledge and faith. We must first understand how we receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and then we shall know the better how to walk in him. There is a great deal of duty prescribed in this chapter. The exhortations are short and pithy, briefly summing up what is good, and what the Lord our God in Christ requires of us. It is an abridgment of the Christian directory, an excellent collection of rules for the right ordering of the conversation, as becomes the gospel. It is joined to the foregoing discourse by the word "therefore." It is the practical application of doctrinal truths that is the life of preaching. He had been discoursing at large of justification by faith, and of the riches of free grace, and the pledges and assurances we have of the glory that is to be revealed. Hence carnal libertines would be apt to infer."Therefore we may live as we list, and walk in the way of our hearts and the sight of our eyes." Now this does not follow; the faith that justifies is a faith that "works by love." And there is no other way to heaven but the way of holiness and obedience. Therefore what God hath joined together let no man put asunder. The particular exhortations of this chapter are reducible to the three principal heads of Christian duty: our duty to God to ourselves, and to our brother. The grace of God teaches us, in general, to live "godly, soberly, and righteously;" and to deny all that which is contrary hereunto. Now this chapter will give us to understand what

godliness, sobriety, and righteousness, are though somewhat intermixed.

ROMANS 12:1-21

CONSECRATION TO GOD

We may observe here, according to the scheme mentioned in the contents, the apostle's exhortations,

I. Concerning our duty to God, We see what is godliness.

1. It is to surrender ourselves to God, and so to lay a good foundation. We must first give our own selves unto the Lord, ²2 Corinthians 8:5. This is here pressed as the spring of all duty and obedience, v. 1, 2. Man consists of body and soul, ²Genesis 2:7; ²Ecclesiastes 12:7.

(1.) The body must be presented to him, v. 1. *The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body,* ¹1 Corinthians 6:13, 14. The exhortation is here introduced very pathetically: *I beseech you, brethren.* Though he was a great apostle, yet he calls the meanest Christians *brethren*, a term of affection and concern. He uses entreaty; this is the gospel way: *As though God did beseech you by us,* ²2 Corinthians 5:20. Though he might with authority command, yet for love's sake he rather beseeches, ¹Philemon 1:8, 9. *The poor useth entreaty,* ¹⁸Proverbs 18:23. This is to insinuate the exhortation, that it might come with the more pleasing power. Many are sooner wrought upon if they be accosted kindly, are more easily led than driven. Now observe,

[1.] The duty pressed — to present our *bodies a living sacrifice*, alluding to the sacrifices under the law, which were presented or set before God at the altar, ready to be offered to him. *Your bodies* — your whole selves; so expressed because under the law the bodies of beasts were offered in sacrifice, ¹1 Corinthians 6:20. Our bodies and spirits are intended. The offering was sacrificed by the priest, but presented by the offerer, who transferred to God all his right, title, and interest in it, by laying his hand on the head of it. Sacrifice is here taken for whatsoever is by God's own appointment dedicated to himself; see ¹1 Peter 2:5. We are temple, priest, and sacrifice, as Christ was in his peculiar sacrificing. There were sacrifices of atonement and sacrifices of acknowledgment. Christ, who

was once offered to bear the sins of many, is the only sacrifice of atonement; but our persons and performances, tendered to God through Christ our priest, are as sacrifices of acknowledgment to the honour of God. Presenting them denotes a voluntary act, done by virtue of that absolute despotic power which the will has over the body and all the members of it. It must be a free-will offering. Your bodies; not your beasts. Those legal offerings, as they had their power from Christ, so they had their period in Christ. The presenting of the body to God implies not only the avoiding of the sins that are committed with or against the body, but the using of the body as a servant of the soul in the service of God. It is to *glorify God with our bodies* (^{<4160>}1 Corinthians 6:20), to engage our bodies in the duties of immediate worship, and in a diligent attendance to our particular callings, and be willing to suffer for God with our bodies, when we are called to it. It is to yield the members of our bodies as instruments of righteousness, ^{<4163>}Romans 6:13. Though bodily exercise alone profits little, yet in its place it is a proof and product of the dedication of our souls to God. *First*, Present them a living sacrifice; not killed, as the sacrifices under the law. A Christian makes his body a sacrifice to God, though he does not give it to be burned. A body sincerely devoted to God is a living sacrifice. A living sacrifice, by way of allusion — that which was dead of itself might not be eaten, much less sacrificed, ^{<5121>}Deuteronomy 14:21; and by ways of opposition — “The sacrifice was to be slain, but you may be sacrificed, and yet live on” — an unbloody sacrifice. The barbarous heathen sacrificed their children to their idol-gods, not living, but slain sacrifices: but God will have mercy, and not such sacrifice, though life is forfeited to him. A *living* sacrifice, that is, inspired with the spiritual life of the soul. It is Christ living in the soul by faith that makes the body a living sacrifice, ^{<4120>}Galatians 2:20. Holy love kindles the sacrifices, puts life into the duties; see ^{<4163>}Romans 6:13. *Alive*, that is, to God, v. 11. *Secondly*, They must be holy. There is a relative holiness in every sacrifice, as dedicated to God. But, besides this, there must be that real holiness which consists in an entire rectitude of heart and life, by which we are conformed in both to the nature and will of God: even our bodies must not be made the instruments of sin and uncleanness, but set apart for God, and put to holy uses, as the vessels of the tabernacle were holy, being devoted to God's service. It is the soul that is the proper subject of holiness; but a sanctified soul communicates a holiness to the body it actuates and animates. That is holy which is according to the will of God; when the bodily actions are no, the body is holy. They are the

temples of the Holy Ghost, ^{<408>}1 Corinthians 6:19. Possess the body in sanctification, ^{<504>}1 Thessalonians 4:4, 5.

[2.] The arguments to enforce this, which are three: — *First*, Consider the mercies of God: *I beseech you by the mercies of God*. An affectionate obtestation, and which should melt us into a compliance: *dia ton oiktirmon tou Theou*. This is an argument most sweetly cogent. There is the mercy that is in God and the mercy that is from God — mercy in the spring and mercy in the streams: both are included here; but especially gospel-mercies (mentioned Romans 11), the transferring of what the Jews forfeited and lost by their unbelief unto us Gentiles (^{<408>}Ephesians 3:4-6): the sure mercies of David, ^{<258>}Isaiah 55:3. God is a merciful God, therefore let us present our bodies to him; he will be sure to use them kindly, and knows how to consider the frames of them, for he is of infinite compassion. We receive from him every day the fruits of his mercy, particularly mercy to our bodies: he made them, he maintains them, he bought them, he has put a great dignity upon them. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, that our souls are held in life; and the greatest mercy of all is that Christ hath made not his body only, but his soul, an offering for sin, that he gave himself for us and gives himself to us. Now surely we cannot but be studying what we shall render to the Lord for all this. And what shall we render? Let us render ourselves as an acknowledgment of all these favours — all we are, all we have, all we can do; and, after all, it is but very poor returns for very rich receivings: and yet, because it is what we have, *Secondly*, It is *acceptable to God*. The great end we should all labour after is to be accepted of the Lord (^{<408>}2 Corinthians 5:9), to have him well-pleased with our persons and performances. Now these living sacrifices are acceptable to God; while the sacrifices of the wicked, though fat and costly, are an abomination to the Lord. It is God's great condescension that he will vouchsafe to accept of any thing in us; and we can desire no more to make us happy; and, if the presenting of ourselves will but please him, we may easily conclude that we cannot bestow ourselves better. *Thirdly*, It is our *reasonable service*. There is an act of reason in it; for it is the soul that presents the body. Blind devotion, that has ignorance for the mother and nurse of it, is fit to be paid only to those dunghill-gods that have eyes and see not. Our God must be served in the spirit and with the understanding. There is all the reason in the world for it, and no good reason can possibly be produced against it. *Come now, and let us reason together*, ^{<218>}Isaiah 1:18. God does

not impose upon us any thing hard or unreasonable, but that which is altogether agreeable to the principles of right reason. *Ten logiken latreian hymon* — *your service according to the word*; so it may be read. The word of God does not leave out the body in holy worship. That service only is acceptable to God which is according to the written word. It must be gospel worship, spiritual worship. That is a reasonable service which we are able and ready to give a reason for, in which we understand ourselves. God deals with us as with rational creatures, and will have us so to deal with him. Thus must the body be presented to God.

(2.) The mind must be renewed for him. This is pressed (v. 2): “*Be you transformed by the renewing of your mind*; see to it that there be a saving change wrought in you, and that it be carried on.” Conversion and sanctification are the renewing of the mind, a change not of the substance, but of the qualities of the soul. It is the same with making a new heart and a new spirit — new dispositions and inclinations, new sympathies and antipathies; the understanding enlightened, the conscience softened, the thoughts rectified; the will bowed to the will of God, and the affections made spiritual and heavenly: so that the man is not what he was — old things are passed away, all things are become new; he acts from new principles, by new rules, with new designs. The mind is the acting ruling part of us; so that the renewing of the mind is the renewing of the whole man, for out of it are the *issues of life*, ^{<1023>}Proverbs 4:23. The progress of sanctification, dying to sin more and more and living to righteousness more and more, is the carrying on of this renewing work, till it be perfected in glory. This is called the *transforming* of us; it is like putting on a new shape and figure. *Metamorphousthe* — *Be you metamorphosed*. The transfiguration of Christ is expressed by this word (^{<477>}Matthew 17:2), when he put on a heavenly glory, which made his face to shine like the sun; and the same word is used ^{<478>}2 Corinthians 3:18, where we are said to be *changed into the same image from glory to glory*. This transformation is here pressed as a duty; not that we can work such a change ourselves: we could as soon make a new world as make a new heart by any power of our own; it is God's work, ^{<519>}Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26, 27. But *be you transformed*, that is, “use the means which God hath appointed and ordained for it.” It is God that turns us, and then we are turned; but we must *frame our doings to turn*, ^{<384>}Hosea 5:4. “Lay your souls under the changing transforming influences of the blessed Spirit; seek unto God for grace in the use of all the means of grace.” Though the

new man be created of God, yet we must put it on (^{<402>}Ephesians 4:24), and be pressing forward towards perfection. Now in this verse we may further observe,

[1.] What is the great enemy to this renewing, which we must avoid; and that is, conformity to this world: *Be not conformed to this world*. All the disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus must be nonconformists to this world. *Me syschematizesthe* — *Do not fashion yourselves* according to the world. We must not conform to the things of the world; they are mutable, and the fashion of them is passing away. Do not conform either to the lusts of the flesh or the lusts of the eye. We must not conform to the men of the world, of that world which lies in wickedness, not walk according to *the course of this world* (^{<403>}Ephesians 2:2); that is, we must not follow a multitude to do evil, (^{<421>}Exodus 23:2. If sinners entice us, we must not consent to them, but in our places witness against them. Nay, even in things indifferent, and which are not in themselves sinful, we must so far not conform to the custom and way of the world as not to act by the world's dictates as our chief rule, nor to aim at the world's favours as our highest end. True Christianity consists much in a sober singularity. Yet we must take heed of the extreme of affected rudeness and moroseness, which some run into. In civil things, the light of nature and the custom of nations are intended for our guidance; and the rule of the gospel in those cases is a rule of direction, not a rule of contrariety.

[2.] What is the great effect of this renewing, which we must labour after: *That you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*. by the will of God here we are to understand his revealed will concerning our duty, what the Lord our God requires of us. This is the will of God in general, even our sanctification, that will which we pray may be done by us as it is done by the angels; especially his will as it is revealed in the New Testament, where he hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son. *First*, The will of God is *good, and acceptable, and perfect*; three excellent properties of a law. It is good (^{<308>}Micah 6:8); it is exactly consonant to the eternal reason of good and evil. It is good in itself. It is good for us. Some think the evangelical law is here called good, in distinction from the ceremonial law, which consisted of *statutes that were not good*, (^{<315>}Ezekiel 20:25. It is acceptable, it is pleasing to God; that and that only is so which is prescribed by him. The only way to attain his favour as the end is to conform to his will as the rule. It is perfect, to which nothing can be added. The revealed will of God is a sufficient rule

of faith and practice, containing all things which tend to the perfection of the man of God, to furnish us thoroughly to every good work, ^{<5186>} Timothy 3:16, 17. *Secondly*, That it concerns Christians to prove what is that will of God which is good, and acceptable, and perfect; that is, to know it with judgment and approbation, to know it experimentally, to know the excellency of the will of God by the experience of a conformity to it. It is to approve *things that are excellent* (^{<5100>}Philippians 1:10); it is *dokimazein* (the same word that is used here) *to try* things that differ, in doubtful cases readily to apprehend what the will of God is and to close in with it. It is to be *of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*, ^{<5103>} Isaiah 11:3. *Thirdly*, That those are best able to prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, who are transformed by the renewing of their mind. A living principle of grace is in the soul, as far as it prevails, an unbiassed unprejudiced judgment concerning the things of God. It disposes the soul to receive and entertain the revelations of the divine will. The promise is (^{<4177>}John 7:17), *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine*. A good wit can dispute and distinguish about the will of God; while an honest, humble heart, that has spiritual senses exercised, and is delivered into the mould of the word, loves it, and practises it, and has the relish and savour of it. Thus to be godly is to surrender ourselves to God.

2. When this is done, to serve him in all manner of gospel obedience. Some hints of this we have here (v. 11, 12), *Serving the Lord*. Wherefore do we present ourselves to him, but that we may serve him? ^{<4273>} Acts 27:23, *Whose I am*; and then it follows, *whom I serve*. To be religious is to serve God. How?

(1.) We must make a business of it, and not be slothful in that business. *Not slothful in business*. There is the business of the world, that of our particular calling, in which we must not be slothful, ^{<5111>} 1 Thessalonians 4:11. But this seems to be meant of the business of serving the Lord, our Father's business, ^{<4124>} Luke 2:49. Those that would approve themselves Christians indeed must make religion their business — must choose it, and learn it, and give themselves to it; they must love it, and employ themselves in it, and abide by it, as their great and main business. And, having made it our business, we must not be slothful in it: not desire our own ease, and consult that, when it comes in competition with our duty. We must not drive on slowly in religion. Slothful servants will be reckoned with us wicked servants.

(2.) We must be *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*. God must be served with the spirit (~~ROM~~ Romans 1:9; ~~JOH~~ John 4:24), under the influences of the Holy Spirit. Whatever we do in religion it is pleasing to God no further than it is done with our spirits wrought upon by the Spirit of God. And there must be fervency in the spirit — a holy zeal, and warmth, and ardency of affection in all we do, as those that love God not only with the heart and soul, but with all our hearts, and with all our souls. This is the holy fire that kindles the sacrifice, and carries it up to heaven, an offering of a sweet-smelling savour. — *Serving the Lord. To kairo douleuontes* (so some copies read it), *servng the time*, that is, improving your opportunities and making the best of them, complying with the present seasons of grace.

(3.) *Rejoicing in hope*. God is worshipped and honoured by our hope and trust in him, especially when we rejoice in that hope, take a complacency in that confidence, which argues a great assurance of the reality and a great esteem of the excellency of the good hoped for.

(4.) *Patient in tribulation*. Thus also God is served, not only by working for him when he calls us to work, but by sitting still quietly when he calls us to suffer. Patience for God's sake, and with an eye to his will and glory, is true piety. Observe, Those that rejoice in hope are likely to be patient in tribulation. It is a believing prospect of the joy set before us that bears up the spirit under all outward pressure.

(5.) *Continuing instant in prayer*. Prayer is a friend to hope and patience, and we do in it serve the Lord. *Proskarterountes*. It signifies both fervency and perseverance in prayer. We should not be cold in the duty, nor soon weary of it, ~~LUK~~ Luke 18:1; ~~1TH~~ 1 Thessalonians 5:17; ~~EPH~~ Ephesians 6:18; ~~COL~~ Colossians 4:2. This is our duty which immediately respects God.

II. Concerning our duty which respects ourselves; this is sobriety.

1. A sober opinion of ourselves, v. 3. It is ushered in with a solemn preface: *I say, through the grace given unto me*: the grace of wisdom, by which he understood the necessity and excellency of this duty; the grace of apostleship, by which he had authority to press and enjoin it. “I say it, who am commissioned to say it, in God's name. I say it, and it is not for you to gainsay it.” It is said to every one of us, one as well as another. Pride is a sin that is bred in the bone of all of us, and we have therefore each of us need to be cautioned and armed against it. — *Not to think of himself more*

highly than he ought to think. We must take heed of having too great an opinion of ourselves, or putting too high a valuation upon our own judgments, abilities, persons, performances. We must not be self-conceited, nor esteem too much our own wisdom and other attainments, not think ourselves to be something, ^{<486B>}Galatians 6:3. There is a high thought of ourselves which we may and must have to think ourselves too good to be the slaves of sin and drudges to this world. But, on the other hand, we should think soberly, that is, we must have a low and modest opinion of ourselves and our own abilities, our gifts and graces, according to what we have received from God, and not otherwise. We must not be confident and hot in matters of doubtful disputation; not stretch ourselves beyond our line; not judge and censure those that differ from us; not desire to make a fair show in the flesh. These and the like are the fruits of a sober opinion of ourselves. The words will bear yet another sense agreeable enough. *Of himself* is not in the original; therefore it may be read, *That no man be wise above what he ought to be wise, but be wise unto sobriety.* We must not exercise ourselves in things too high for us (^{<490B>}Psalm 131:1, 2), not intrude into those things which we have not seen (^{<502B>}Colossians 2:18), those secret things which belong not to us (^{<492B>}Deuteronomy 29:29), not covet to be wise above what is written. There is a knowledge that puffs up, which reaches after forbidden fruit. We must take heed of this, and labour after that knowledge which tends to sobriety, to the rectifying of the heart and the reforming of the life. Some understand it of the sobriety which keeps us in our own place and station, from intruding into the gifts and offices of others. See an instance of this sober modest care in the exercise of the greatest spiritual gifts, ^{<471B>}2 Corinthians 10:13-15. To this head refers also that exhortation (v. 16), *Be not wise in your own conceits.* It is good to be wise, but it is bad to think ourselves so; for there is more hope of a fool than of him that is wise in his own eyes. It was an excellent thing for Moses to have his face shine and not know it. Now the reasons why we must have such a sober opinion of ourselves, our own abilities and attainments, are these: —

(1.) Because whatever we have that is good, *God hath dealt* it to us; every good and perfect gift *comes from above*, ^{<5017>}James 1:17. What have we that we have not received? And, if we have received it, why then do we boast? ^{<4917>}1 Corinthians 4:7. The best and most useful man in the world is no more, no better, than what the free grace of God makes him every day. When we are thinking of ourselves, we must remember to think not how

we attained, as though our might and the power of our hand had gotten us these gifts; but think how kind God hath been to us, for it is he that gives us power to do any thing that is good, and in him is all our sufficiency.

(2.) Because God deals out his gifts in a certain measure: According to *the measure of faith*. Observe, The measure of spiritual gifts he calls the measure of faith, for this is the radical grace. What we have and do that is good is so far right and acceptable as it is founded in faith, and flows from faith, and no further. Now faith, and other spiritual gifts with it, are dealt by measure, according as Infinite Wisdom sees meet for us. Christ had the Spirit given him without measure, ^{<403>}John 3:34. But the saints have it by measure; see ^{<404>}Ephesians 4:7. Christ, who had gifts without measure, was meek and lowly; and shall we, that are stinted, be proud and self-conceited?

(3.) Because God has dealt out gifts to others as well as to us: *Dealt to every man*. Had we the monopoly of the Spirit, or a patent to be sole proprietors of spiritual gifts, there might be some pretence for this conceitedness of ourselves; but others have their share as well as we. God is a common Father, and Christ a common root, to all the saints, who all drive virtue from him; and therefore it ill becomes us to lift up ourselves, and to despise others, as if we only were the people in favour with heaven, and wisdom should die with us. This reasoning he illustrates by a comparison taken from the members of the natural body (as ^{<402>}1 Corinthians 12:12; ^{<405>}Ephesians 4:16): *As we have many members in one body*, etc. etc., v. 4, 5. Here observe,

[1.] All the saints make up one body in Christ, who is the head of the body, and the common centre of their unity. Believers lie not in the world as a confused disorderly heap, but are organized and knit together, as they are united to one common head, and actuated and animated by one common Spirit.

[2.] Particular believers are members of this body, constituent parts, which speak them less than the whole, and in relation to the whole, deriving life and spirits from the head. Some members in the body are bigger and more useful than others, and each receives spirits from the head according to its proportion. if the little finger should receive as much nourishment as the leg, how unseemly and prejudicial would it be! We must remember that we are not the whole; we think above what is meet if we think so; we are but parts and members.

[3.] All *the members have not the same office* (v. 4), but each hath its respective place and work assigned it. The office of the eye is to see, the office of the hand is to work, etc. So in the mystical body, some are qualified for, and called to, one sort of work; others are, in like manner, fitted for, and called to, another sort of work. Magistrates, ministers, people, in a Christian commonwealth, have their several offices, and must not intrude one upon another, nor clash in the discharge of their several offices.

[4.] Each member hath its place and office, for the good and benefit of the whole, and of every other member. We are not only members of Christ, but we are *members one of another*, v. 5. We stand in relation one to another; we are engaged to do all the good we can one to another, and to act in conjunction for the common benefit. See this illustrated at large, ~~1~~1 Corinthians 12:14, etc. Therefore we must not be puffed up with a conceit of our own attainments, because, whatever we have, as we received it, so we received it not for ourselves, but for the good of others.

2. A sober use of the gifts that God hath given us. As we must not on the one hand be proud of our talents, so on the other hand we must not bury them. Take heed lest, under a pretence of humility and self-denial, we be slothful in laying out ourselves for the good of others. We must not say, “I am nothing, therefore I will sit still, and do nothing;” but, “I am nothing in myself, and therefore I will lay out myself to the utmost in the strength of the grace of Christ.” He specifies the ecclesiastical offices appointed in particular churches, in the discharge of which each must study to do his own duty, for the preserving of order and the promotion of edification in the church, each knowing his place and fulfilling it. *Having then gifts*. The following induction of particulars supplies the sense of this general. *Having gifts*, let us use them. Authority and ability for the ministerial work are the gift of God. — *Gifts differing*. The immediate design is different, though the ultimate tendency of all is the same. *According to the grace, charismata kata ten charin*. The free grace of God is the spring and original of all the gifts that are given to men. It is grace that appoints the office, qualifies and inclines the person, works both to will and to do. There were in the primitive church extraordinary gifts of tongues, of discerning, of healing; but he speaks here of those that are ordinary. Compare ~~1~~1 Corinthians 12:4; ~~1~~1 Timothy 4:14; ~~1~~1 Peter 4:10. Seven particular gifts he specifies (v. 6-8), which seem to be meant of so many distinct offices, used by the prudent constitution of many of the

primitive churches, especially the larger. There are two general ones here expressed by prophesying and ministering, the former the work of the bishops, the latter the work of the deacons, which were the only two standing officers, ^{<301>}Philippians 1:1. But the particular work belonging to each of these might be, and it should seem was, divided and allotted by common consent and agreement, that it might be done the more effectually, because that which is every body's work is nobody's work, and he despatches his business best that is *vir unius negotii* — a man of one business. Thus David sorted the Levites (^{<1204>}1 Chronicles 23:4, 5), and in this wisdom is profitable to direct. The five latter will therefore be reduced to the two former.

(1.) *Prophecy. Whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.* It is not meant of the extraordinary gifts of foretelling things to come, but the ordinary office of preaching the word: so *prophesying* is taken, ^{<441>}1 Corinthians 14:1-3, etc.; 11:4; ^{<5150>}1 Thessalonians 5:20. The work of the Old-Testament prophets was not only to foretel future things, but to warn the people concerning sin and duty, and to be their remembrancers concerning that which they knew before. And thus gospel preachers are prophets, and do indeed, as far as the revelation of the word goes, foretel things to come. Preaching refers to the eternal condition of the children of men, points directly at a future state. Now those that preach the word must do it *according to the proportion of faith* — *kata ten analogian tes pisteos*, that is,

[1.] As to the manner of our prophesying, it must be according to the proportion of the grace of faith. He had spoken (v. 3) of the measure of faith dealt to every man. Let him that preaches set all the faith he hath on work, to impress the truths he preaches upon his own heart in the first place. As people cannot hear well, so ministers cannot preach well, without faith. First believe and then speak, ^{<4350>}Psalms 116:10; ^{<4043>}2 Corinthians 4:13. And we must remember the proportion of faith — that, though all men have not faith, yet a great many have besides ourselves; and therefore we must allow others to have a share of knowledge and ability to instruct, as well as we, even those that in less things differ from us. “*Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself; and do not make it a ruling rule to others, remembering that thou hast but thy proportion.*”

[2.] As to the matter of our prophesying, it must be according to the proportion of the doctrine of faith, as it is revealed in the holy scriptures of

the Old and New Testament. By this rule of faith the Bereans tried Paul's preaching, ^{<417>}Acts 17:11. Compare ^{<422>}Acts 26:22; ^{<419>}Galatians 1:9. There are some staple-truths, as I may call them, some *prima axiomata* — *first axioms*, plainly and uniformly taught in the scripture, which are the touchstone of preaching, by which (though we must not despise prophesying) we must *prove all things*, and then *hold fast that which is good*, ^{<351>}1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21. Truths that are more dark must be examined by those that are more clear; and then entertained when they are found to agree and comport with the analogy of faith; for it is certain one truth can never contradict another. See here what ought to be the great care of preachers — to preach sound doctrine, according to the form of wholesome words, ^{<308>}Titus 2:8; ^{<313>}2 Timothy 1:13. It is not so necessary that the prophesying be according to the proportion of art, the rules of logic and rhetoric; but it is necessary that it be according to the proportion of faith: for it is the word of faith that we preach. Now there are two particular works which he that prophesieth hath to mind — teaching and exhorting, proper enough to be done by the same person at the same time, and when he does the one let him mind that, when he does the other let him do that too as well as he can. If, by agreement between the ministers of a congregation, this work be divided, either constantly or interchangeably, so that one teaches and the other exhorts (that is, in our modern dialect, one expounds and the other preaches), let each do his work according to the proportion of faith. *First*, let him that teacheth wait on teaching. Teaching is the bare explaining and proving of gospel truths, without practical application, as in the expounding of the scripture. *Pastors and teachers* are the same office (^{<401>}Ephesians 4:11), but the particular work is somewhat different. Now he that has a faculty of teaching, and has undertaken that province, let him stick to it. It is a good gift, let him use it, and give his mind to it. *He that teacheth, let him be in his teaching*; so some supply it, *Ho didaskon, en te didaskalia*. Let him be frequent and constant, and diligent in it; let him abide in that which is his proper work, and be in it as his element. See ^{<345>}1 Timothy 4:15, 16, where it is explained by two words, *en toutois isthi*, and *epimene autois*, *be in these things* and *continue in them*. *Secondly*, Let him that *exhorteth* wait on *exhortation*. Let him give himself to that. This is the work of the pastor, as the former of the teacher; to apply gospel truths and rules more closely to the case and condition of the people, and to press upon them that which is more practical. Many that are very accurate in teaching may yet be very cold and unskilful in exhorting; and on the contrary. The one requires a

clearer head, the other a warmer heart. Now where these gifts are evidently separated (that the one excels in the one and the other in the other) it conduces to edification to divide the work accordingly; and, whatsoever the work is that we undertake, let us mind it. To wait on our work is to bestow the best of our time and thoughts upon it, to lay hold of all opportunities for it, and to study not only to do it, but to do it well.

(2.) Ministry. If a man hath *diakonian* — *the office of a deacon*, or assistant to the pastor and teacher, let him use that office well — a churchwarden (suppose), an elder, or an overseer of the poor; and perhaps there were more put into these offices, and there was more solemnity in them, and a greater stress of care and business lay upon them in the primitive churches, than we are now well aware of. It includes all those offices which concern the *ta exo* of the church, *the outward business of the house of God*. See ^{<4316>}Nehemiah 11:16. *Serving tables*, ^{<406>}Acts 6:2. Now let him on whom this care of ministering is devolved attend to it with faithfulness and diligence; particularly,

[1.] *He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity.* Those church-officers that were the stewards of the church's alms, collected money, and distributed it according as the necessities of the poor were. Let them do it *en aploreti* — *liberally* and faithfully; not converting what they receive to their own use, nor distributing it with any sinister design, or with respect of person: not froward and peevish with the poor, nor seeking pretences to put them by; but with all sincerity and integrity, having no other intention in it than to glorify God and do good. Some understand it in general of all almsgiving: He that hath wherewithal, let him give, and give plentifully and liberally; so the word is translated, ^{<406>}2 Corinthians 8:2; 9:13. God loves a cheerful bountiful giver.

[2.] *He that ruleth with diligence.* It should seem, he means those that were assistants to the pastors in exercising church-discipline, as their eyes, and hands, and mouth, in the government of the church, or those ministers that in the congregation did chiefly undertake and apply themselves to this ruling work; for we find those ruling that laboured in the word and doctrine, ^{<4317>}1 Timothy 5:17. Now such must do it with diligence. The word denotes both care and industry to discover what is amiss, to reduce those that go astray, to reprove and admonish those that have fallen, to keep the church pure. Those must take a great deal of pains that will

approve themselves faithful in the discharge of this trust, and not let slip any opportunity that may facilitate and advance that work.

[3.] *He that showeth mercy with cheerfulness.* Some think it is meant in general of all that in any thing show mercy: Let them be willing to do it, and take a pleasure in it; God loves a cheerful giver. But it seems to be meant of some particular church-officers, whose work it was to take care of the sick and strangers; and those were generally widows that were in this matter servants to the church — deaconesses (^{518B}1 Timothy 5:9, 10), though others, it is likely, might be employed. Now this must be done with cheerfulness. A pleasing countenance in acts of mercy is a great relief and comfort to the miserable; when they see it is not done grudgingly and unwillingly, but with pleasant looks and gentle words, and all possible indications of readiness and alacrity. Those that have to do with such as are sick and sore, and commonly cross and peevish, have need to put on not only patience, but cheerfulness, to make the work the more easy and pleasant to them, and the more acceptable to God.

III. Concerning that part of our duty which respects our brethren, of which we have many instances, in brief exhortations. Now all our duty towards one another is summer up in one word, and that a sweet work, *love*. In that is laid the foundation of all our mutual duty; and therefore the apostle mentions this first, which is the livery of Christ's disciples, and the great law of our religion: *Let love be without dissimulation*; not in compliment and pretence, but in reality; *not in word and tongue only*, ^{618B}1 John 3:18. The right love is love unfeigned; not as the kisses of an enemy, which are deceitful. We should be glad of an opportunity to *prove the sincerity of our love*, ^{418B}2 Corinthians 8:8. More particularly, there is a love owing to our friends, and to our enemies. He specifies both.

1. To our friends. He that hath friends must show himself friendly. There is a mutual love that Christians owe, and must pay.

(1.) An affectionate love (v. 10): *Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, philostorgoi* — it signifies not only love, but a readiness and inclination to love, the most genuine and free affection, kindness flowing out as from a spring. It properly denotes the love of parents to their children, which, as it is the most tender, so it is the most natural, of any, unforced, unconstrained; such must our love be to one another, and such it will be where there is a new nature and the law of love

is written in the heart. This kind affection puts us on to express ourselves both in word and action with the greatest courtesy and obligingness that may be. — *One to another*. This may recommend the grace of love to us, that, as it is made our duty to love others, so it is as much their duty to love us. And what can be sweeter on this side heaven than to love and be beloved? He that thus watereth shall be watered also himself.

(2.) A respectful love: *In honour preferring one another*. Instead of contending for superiority, let us be forward to give to others the pre-eminence. This is explained, ^{<518B>}Philippians 2:3, *Let each esteem other better than themselves*. And there is this good reason for it, because, if we know our own hearts, we know more evil by ourselves than we do by any one else in the world. We should be forward to take notice of the gifts, and graces, and performances of our brethren, and value them accordingly, be more forward to praise another, and more pleased to hear another praised, than ourselves; *te time allelous proegoumenoi* — *going before, or leading one another in honour*; so some read it: not in taking honour, but in giving honour. “Strive which of you shall be most forward to pay respect to those to whom it is due, and to perform all Christian offices of love (which are all included in the word honour) to your brethren, as there is occasion. Let all your contention be which shall be most humble, and useful, and condescending.” So the sense is the same with ^{<518A>}Titus 3:14, *Let them learn, proistasthai* — *to go before in good works*. For though we must prefer others (as our translation reads it), and put on others, as more capable and deserving than ourselves, yet we must not make that an excuse for our lying by and doing nothing, nor under a pretence of honouring others, and their serviceableness and performances, indulge ourselves in ease and slothfulness. Therefore he immediately adds (v. 11), *Not slothful in business*.

(3.) A liberal love (v. 13): *Distributing to the necessities of saints*. It is but a mock love which rests in the verbal expressions of kindness and respect, while the wants of our brethren call for real supplies, and it is in the power of our hands to furnish them.

[1.] It is no strange thing for saints in this world to want necessities for the support of their natural live. In those primitive times prevailing persecutions must needs reduce many of the suffering saints to great extremities; and still the poor, even the poor saints, we have always with us. Surely the things of this world are not the best things; if they were, the

saints, who are the favourites of heaven, would not be put off with so little of them.

[2.] It is the duty of those who have wherewithal to *distribute*, or (as it might better be read) to *communicate* to those necessities. It is not enough to draw out the soul, but we must draw out the purse, to the hungry. See ^{<S105>}James 2:15, 16; ^{<S107>}1 John 3:17. *Communicating* — *koinonountes*. It intimates that our poor brethren have a kind of interest in that which God hath given us; and that our relieving them should come from a sense and fellow-feeling of their wants, as though we suffered with them. The charitable benevolence of the Philippians to Paul is called their communicating with his affliction, ^{<S104>}Philippians 4:14. We must be ready, as we have ability and opportunity, to relieve any that are in want; but we are in a special manner bound to communicate to the saints. There is a common love owing to our fellow-creatures, but a special love owing to our fellow-christians (^{<S100>}Galatians 6:10), *Especially to those who are of the household of faith*. *Communicating*, *tais mneiais* — *to the memories of the saints*; so some of the ancients read it, instead of *tais chreiais*. There is a debt owing to the memory of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises — to value it, to vindicate it, to embalm it. Let the memory of the just be blessed; so some read ^{<S106>}Proverbs 10:7. He mentions another branch of this bountiful love: *Given to hospitality*. Those who have houses of their own should be ready to entertain those who go about doing good, or who, for fear of persecution, are forced to wander for shelter. They had not then so much of the convenience of common inns as we have; or the wandering Christians durst not frequent them; or they had not wherewithal to bear the charges, and therefore it was a special kindness to bid them welcome on free-cost. Nor is it yet an antiquated superseded duty; as there is occasion, we must welcome strangers, for we know not the heart of a stranger. *I was a stranger, and you took me in*, is mentioned as one instance of the mercifulness of those that shall obtain mercy: *ten philoxenian diokontes* — *following or pursuing hospitality*. It intimates, not only that we must take opportunity, but that we must seek opportunity, thus to show mercy. As Abraham, who sat at the tent-door (^{<S101>}Genesis 18:1), and Lot, who sat in the gate of Sodom (^{<S102>}Genesis 19:1), expecting travellers, whom they might meet and prevent with a kind invitation, and so they entertained angels unawares, ^{<S103>}Hebrews 13:2.

(4.) A sympathizing love (v. 15): *Rejoice with those that do rejoice, and weep with those that weep*. Where there is a mutual love between the

members of the mystical body, there will be such a fellow-feeling. See ^{<412>}1 Corinthians 12:26. True love will interest us in the sorrows and joys of one another, and teach us to make them our own. Observe the common mixture in this world, some rejoicing, and others weeping (as the people, ^{<418>}Ezra 3:12, 13), for the trial, as of other graces, so of brotherly love and Christian sympathy. Not that we must participate in the sinful mirths or mournings of any, but only in just and reasonable joys and sorrows: not envying those that prosper, but rejoicing with them; truly glad that others have the success and comfort which we have not; not despising those that are in trouble, but concerned for them, and ready to help them, as being ourselves in the body. This is to do as God does, who not only has *pleasure in the prosperity of his servants* (^{<457>}Psalm 35:27), but is likewise *afflicted in all their afflictions*, ^{<439>}Isaiah 63:9.

(5.) A united love: “*Be of the same mind one towards another* (v. 16), that is, labour, as much as you can, to agree in apprehension; and, wherein you come short of this, yet agree in affection; endeavour to be all one, not affecting to clash, and contradict, and thwart one another; but keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, ^{<418>}Philippians 2:2; 3:15, 16; ^{<411>}1 Corinthians 1:10; *to auto eis allelous phronountes* — *wishing the same good* to others that you do to yourselves;” so some understand it. This is to love our brethren as ourselves, desiring their welfare as our own.

(6.) A condescending love: *Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate*, v. 16. True love cannot be without lowliness, ^{<400>}Ephesians 4:1, 2; ^{<418>}Philippians 2:3. When our Lord Jesus washed his disciples' feet, to teach us brotherly love (^{<435>}John 13:5; 14:34), it was designed especially to intimate to us that to love one another aright is to be willing to stoop to the meanest offices of kindness for the good of one another. Love is a condescending grace: *Non bene conveniunt — majestas et amor — Majesty and love do but ill assort with each other*. Observe how it is pressed here.

[1.] *Mind not high things*. We must not be ambitious of honour and preferment, nor look upon worldly pomp and dignity with any inordinate value or desire but rather with a holy contempt. When David's advancements were high, his spirit was humble (^{<411>}Psalm 131:1): *I do not exercise myself in great matters*. The Romans, living in the imperial city, which reigned over the kings of the earth (^{<478>}Revelation 17:18), and was at that time in the meridian of its splendour, were perhaps ready to take

occasion thence to think the better of themselves. Even the holy seed were tainted with this leaven. Roman Christians, as some citizens do upon the country; and therefore the apostle so often cautions them against high-mindedness; compare ^{<410>}Romans 11:20. They lived near the court, and conversed daily with the gaiety and grandeur of it: “Well,” saith he, “do not mind it, be not in love with it.”

[2.] *Condescend to men of low estate* — *Tois tapeinois synapagomenoi*.
First, It may be meant of *mean things*, to which we must condescend. If our condition in the world be poor and low, our enjoyments coarse and scanty, our employments despicable and contemptible, yet we must bring our minds to it, and acquiesce in it. So the margin: *Be contented with mean things*. Be reconciled to the place which God in his providence hath put us in, whatever it be. We must account nothing below us but sin: stoop to mean habitations, mean fare, mean clothing, mean accommodations when they are our lot, and not grudge. Nay, we must be carried with a kind of impetus, by the force of the new nature (so the word *synapagomai* properly signifies, and it is very significant), towards mean things, when God appoints us to them; as the old corrupt nature is carried out towards high things. We must accommodate ourselves to mean things. We should make a low condition and mean circumstances more the centre of our desires than a high condition. *Secondly*, It may be meant of *mean persons*; so we read it (I think both are to be included) *Condescend to men of low estate*. We must associate with, and accommodate ourselves to, those that are poor and mean in the world, if they be such as fear God. David, though a king upon the throne, was a companion for all such, ^{<415>}Psalm 119:63. We need not be ashamed to converse with the lowly, while the great God overlooks heaven and earth to look at such. True love values grace in rags as well as in scarlet. A jewel is a jewel, though it lie in the dirt. The contrary to this condescension is reprov'd, ^{<420>}James 2:1-4. *Condescend*; that is, suit yourselves to them, stoop to them for their good; as Paul, ^{<425>}1 Corinthians 9:19, etc. Some think the original word is a metaphor taken from travellers, when those that are stronger and swifter of foot stay for those that are weak and slow, make a halt, and take them with them; thus must Christians be tender towards their fellow travellers. As a means to promote this, he adds, *Be not wise in your own conceits*; to the same purport with v. 3. We shall never find in our hearts to condescend to others while we find there so great a conceit of ourselves: and therefore this must needs be mortified. *Me ginesthe phronimoi par' heautois* — “Be

not wise by yourselves, be not confident of the sufficiency of your own wisdom, so as to despise others, or think you have no need of them (^{<100>}Proverbs 3:7), nor be shy of communicating what you have to others. We are members one of another, depend upon one another, are obliged to one another; and therefore, *Be not wise by yourselves*, remembering it is the merchandise of wisdom that we profess; now merchandise consists in commerce, receiving and returning.”

(7.) A love that engages us, as much as lies in us, *to live peaceably with all men*, v. 18. Even those with whom we cannot live intimately and familiarly, by reason of distance in degree or profession, yet we must with such live peaceably; that is, we must be harmless and inoffensive, not giving others occasion to quarrel with us; and we must be gall-less and unvengeful, not taking occasion to quarrel with them. Thus must we labour to preserve the peace, that it be not broken, and to piece it again when it is broken. The wisdom from above is pure and peaceable. Observe how the exhortation is limited. It is not expressed so as to oblige us to impossibilities: *If it be possible, as much as lies in you*. Thus ^{<1024>}Hebrews 12:14, *Follow peace*. ^{<1003>}Ephesians 4:3, *Endeavouring to keep*. Study the things that make for peace. — *If it be possible*. It is not possible to preserve the peace when we cannot do it without offending God and wounding conscience: *Id possumus quod jure possumus* — *That is possible which is possible without incurring blame*. The wisdom that is from above is first pure and then peaceable, ^{<1007>}James 3:17. Peace without purity is the peace of the devil's palace. — *As much as lieth in you*. There must be two words to the bargain of peace. We can but speak for ourselves. We may be unavoidably striven with; as Jeremiah, who was a *man of contention* (^{<2150>}Jeremiah 15:10), and this we cannot help; our care must be that nothing be wanting on our parts to preserve the peace, ^{<1000>}Psalms 120:7. I am for peace, though, when I speak, they are for war.

2. To our enemies. Since men became enemies to God, they have been found very apt to be enemies one to another. Let but the centre of love be once forsaken, and the lines will either clash and interfere, or be at an uncomfortable distance. And, of all men, those that embrace religion have reason to expect to meet with enemies in a world whose smiles seldom concur with Christ's. Now Christianity teaches us how to behave towards our enemies; and in this instruction it quite differs from all other rules and methods, which generally aim at victory and dominion; but this at inward

peace and satisfaction. Whoever are our enemies, that wish us ill and seek to do us ill, our rule is to do them no hurt, but all the good we can.

(1.) To do them no hurt (v. 17): *Recompense to no man evil for evil*, for that is a brutish recompence, and befitting only those animals which are not conscious either of any being above them or of any state before them. Or, if mankind were made (as some dream) in a state of war, such recompences as these were agreeable enough; but we have not so learned God, who does so much for his enemies (⁴¹⁵⁵Matthew 5:45), much less have we so learned Christ, who died for us when we were enemies (⁴¹⁵⁸Romans 5:8, 10), so loved that world which hated him without a cause. — “*To no man*; neither to Jew nor Greek; not to one that has been thy friend, for by recompensing evil for evil thou wilt certainly lose him; not to one that has been thine enemy, for by not recompensing evil for evil thou mayest perhaps gain him.” To the same purport, v. 19, *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves*. And why must this be ushered in with such an affectionate compellation, rather than any other of the exhortations of this chapter? Surely because this is intended for the composing of angry spirits, that are hot in the resentment of a provocation. He addresses himself to such in this endearing language, to mollify and qualify them. Any thing that breathes love sweetens the blood, lays the storm, and cools the intemperate heat. Would you pacify a brother offended? Call him dearly beloved. Such a soft word, fitly spoken, may be effectual to turn away wrath. *Avenge not yourselves*; that is, when any body has done you any ill turn, do not desire nor endeavour to bring the like mischief or inconvenience upon him. it is not forbidden to the magistrate to do justice to those that are wronged, by punishing the wrong-doer; nor to make and execute just and wholesome laws against malefactors; but it forbids private revenge, which flows from anger and ill-will; and this is fitly forbidden, for it is presumed that we are incompetent judges in our own case. Nay, if persons wronged in seeking the defence of the law, and magistrates in granting it, act from any particular personal pique or quarrel, and not from a concern that public peace and order be maintained and right done, even such proceedings, though seemingly regular, will fall under this prohibited self-revenging. See how strict the law of Christ is in this matter, ⁴¹⁵⁵Matthew 5:38-40. It is forbidden not only to take it into our own hands to avenge ourselves, but to desire and thirst after event that judgment in our case which the law affords, for the satisfying of a

revengeful humour. This is a hard lesson to corrupt nature; and therefore he subjoins,

[1.] A remedy against it: *Rather give place unto wrath.* Not to our own wrath; to give place to this is to give place to the devil, ^{<4025>}Ephesians 4:26, 27. We must resist, and stifle, and smother, and suppress this; but, *First*, To the wrath of our enemy. “Give place to it, that is, be of a yielding temper; do not answer wrath with wrath, but with love rather. *Yielding pacifies great offences*, ^{<2104>}Ecclesiastes 10:4. Receive affronts and injuries, as a stone is received into a heap of wool, which gives way to it, and so it does not rebound back, nor go any further.” So it explains that of our Saviour (^{<4053>}Matthew 5:39), *Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.* Instead of meditating how to revenge one wrong, prepare to receive another. When men's passions are up, and the stream is strong, let it have its course, lest by an unseasonable opposition it be made to rage and swell the more. When others are angry, let us be calm; this is a remedy against revenge, and seems to be the genuine sense. But, *Secondly*, Many apply it to the wrath of God: “Give place to this, make room for him to take the throne of judgment, and let him alone to deal with thine adversary.”

[2.] A reason against it: *For it is written, Vengeance is mine.* We find it written, ^{<6253>}Deuteronomy 32:35. God is the sovereign King, the righteous Judge, and to him it belongs to administer justice; for, being a God of infinite knowledge, by him actions are weighed in unerring balances; and, being a God of infinite purity, he hates sin and cannot endure to look upon iniquity. Some of this power he hath trusted in the hands of the civil magistrates (^{<0006>}Genesis 9:6; ch. 13:4); their legal punishments therefore are to be looked upon as a branch of God's revengings. This is a good reason why we should not avenge ourselves; for, if vengeance be God's, then, *First*, We may not do it. We step into the throne of God if we do and take his work out of his hand. *Secondly*, We need not do it. For God will, if we meekly leave the matter with him; he will avenge us as far as there is reason or justice for it, and further we cannot desire it. See ^{<0384>}Psalms 38:14, 15, *I heard not, for thou wilt hear*; and if God hears what need is there for me to hear?

(2.) We must not only not to hurt to our enemies, but our religion goes higher, and teaches us to do them all the good we can. It is a command peculiar to Christianity, and which does highly commend it: *Love your*

enemies, ^{<1054>}Matthew 5:44. We are here taught to show that love to them both in word and deed.

[1.] In word: *Bless those who persecute you*, v. 14. It has been the common lot of God's people to be persecuted, either with a powerful hand or with a spiteful tongue. Now we are here taught to bless those that so persecute us. *Bless* them; that is, *First*, "Speak well of them. If there be any thing in them that is commendable and praiseworthy, take notice of it, and mention it to their honour." *Secondly*, "Speak respectfully to them, according as their place is, not rendering railing for railing, and bitterness for bitterness." And, *Thirdly*, We must wish well to them, and desire their good, so far from seeking any revenge. Nay, *Fourthly*, We must offer up that desire to God, by prayer for them. If it be not in the power of our hand to do any thing else for them, yet we can testify our good-will by praying for them, for which our master hath given us not only a rule, but an example to back that rule, ^{<1234>}Luke 23:34 — *Bless, and curse not*. It denotes a thorough good-will in all the instances and expressions of it; not, "bless them when you are at prayer, and curse them at other times;" but, "bless them always, and curse not at all." Cursing ill becomes the mouths of those whose work it is to bless God, and whose happiness it is to be blessed of him.

[2.] In deed (v. 20): "*If thine enemy hunger*, as thou hast ability and opportunity, be ready and forward to show him any kindness, and do him any office of love for his good; and be never the less forward for his having been thine enemy, but rather the more, that thou mayest thereby testify the sincerity of thy forgiveness of him." It is said of archbishop Cranmer that the way for a man to make him his friend was to do him an ill turn. The precept is quoted from ^{<1052>}Proverbs 25:21, 22; so that, high as it seems to be, the Old Testament was not a stranger to it. Observe here, *First*, What we must do. We must do good to our enemies. "*If he hunger*, do not insult over him, and say, Now God is avenging me of him, and pleading my cause; do not make such a construction of his wants. But *feed him*." *Then*, when he has need of thy help, and thou hast an opportunity of starving him and trampling upon him, then *feed him* (*psomize auton*, a significant word) — "feed him abundantly, nay, feed him carefully and indulgently:" *frustulatim pasce* — *feed him with small pieces*, "feed him, as we do children and sick people, with much tenderness. Contrive to do it so as to express thy love. *If he thirst, give him drink: potize auton* — *drink to him*, in token of reconciliation and friendship. So confirm your love to

him.” *Secondly*, Why we must do this. Because in so doing thou shalt heap *coals of fire on his head*. Two senses are given of this, which I think are both to be taken in disjunctively. *Thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head*; that is, “Thou shalt either,”

1. “Melt him into repentance and friendship, and mollify his spirit towards thee” (alluding to those who melt metals; they not only put fire under them, but heap fire upon them; thus Saul was melted and conquered with the kindness of David, ^{ORIG}1 Samuel 24:16; 26:21) — “thou wilt win a friend by it, and if thy kindness have not that effect then,”

2. “It will aggravate his condemnation, and make his malice against thee the more inexcusable. Thou wilt hereby hasten upon him the tokens of God’s wrath and vengeance.” Not that this must be our intention in showing him kindness, but, for our encouragement, such will be the effect. To this purpose is the exhortation in the last vers, which suggests a paradox not easily understood by the world, that in all matters of strife and contention those that revenge are the conquered, and those that forgive are the conquerors.

(1.) “*Be not overcome of evil*. Let not the evil of any provocation that is given you have such a power over you, or make such an impression upon you, as to dispossess you of yourselves, to disturb your peace, to destroy your love, to ruffle and discompose your spirits, to transport you to any indecencies, or to bring you to study or attempt any revenge.” He that cannot quietly bear an injury is perfectly conquered by it.

(2.) “*But overcome evil with good*, with the good of patience and forbearance, nay, and of kindness and beneficence to those that wrong you. Learn to defeat their ill designs against you, and either to change them, or at least to preserve your own peace.” He that hath this rule over his spirit is better than the mighty.

3. To conclude, there remain two exhortations yet untouched, which are general, and which recommend all the rest as good in themselves, and of good report.

(1.) As good in themselves (v. 9): *Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good*. God hath shown us what is good: these Christian duties are enjoined; and that is evil which is opposite to them. Now observe,

[1.] We must not only not do evil, but we must *abhor that which is evil*. We must hate sin with an utter and irreconcilable hatred, have an antipathy to it as the worst of evils, contrary to our new nature, and to our true interest — hating all the appearances of sin, even the garment spotted with the flesh.

[2.] We must not only do that which is good, but we must cleave to it. It denotes a deliberate choice of, a sincere affection for, and a constant perseverance in, that which is good. “So cleave to it as not to be allured nor affrighted from it, cleave *to him that is good*, even to the Lord (^{<4112>}Acts 11:23), with a dependence and acquiescence.” It is subjoined to the precept of brotherly love, as directive of it; we must love our brethren, but not love them so much as for their sakes to commit any sin, or omit any duty; not think the better of any sin for the sake of the person that commits it, but forsake all the friends in the world, to cleave to God and duty.

(2.) As of good report (v. 17): “*Provide things honest in the sight of all men*; that is, not only do, but study and forecast and take care to do, that which is amiable and creditable, and recommends religion to all with whom you converse.” See ^{<5008>}Philippians 4:8. These acts of charity and beneficence are in a special manner of good report among men, and therefore are to be industriously regarded by all that consult the glory of God and the credit of their profession.