

CHAPTER 11

In this chapter,

- I.** Christ teaches his disciples to pray, and quickens and encourages them to be frequent, instant, and importunate in prayer (v. 1-13).
- II.** He fully answers the blasphemous imputation of the Pharisees, who charged him with casting out devils by virtue of a compact and confederacy with Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, and shows the absurdity and wickedness of it (v. 14-26).
- III.** He shows the honour of obedient disciples to be greater than that of his own mother (v. 27, 28).
- IV.** He upbraids the men of that generation for their infidelity and obstinacy, notwithstanding all the means of conviction offered to them (v. 29-36).
- V.** He severely reproveth the Pharisees and consciences of those that submitted to them, and their hating and persecuting those that witnessed against their wickedness (v. 37-54).

~~~~LUKE 11:1-13

THE DISCIPLES TAUGHT TO PRAY

Prayer is one of the great laws of natural religion. That man is a brute, is a monster, that never prays, that never gives glory to his Maker, nor feels his favour, nor owns his dependence upon him. One great design therefore of Christianity is to *assist us in prayer*, to enforce the duty upon us, to instruct us in it, and encourage us to expect advantage by it. Now here,

I. We find Christ himself *praying in a certain place*, probably where he used to pray, v. 1. As God, he was *prayed to*; as man, he *prayed*; and, though he was a Son, yet learned he this obedience. This evangelist has taken particular notice of Christ's *praying often*, more than any other of the evangelists: when he was baptized (~~~~Luke 3:21), he was *praying*; he *withdrew into the wilderness, and prayed* (~~~~Luke 5:16); he *went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer* (~~~~Luke 6:12); he

was *alone praying* (⁴¹⁸Luke 9:18); soon after, he *went up into a mountain to pray*, and *as he prayed he was transfigured* (⁴¹⁸Luke 9:28, 29); and here he was *praying in a certain place*. Thus, like a genuine son of David, he *gave himself unto prayer*, ⁴⁹⁰Psalms 109:4. Whether Christ was now *alone* praying, and the disciples only knew that he was so, or whether he prayed with them, is uncertain; it is most probable that they were joining with him.

II. His disciples applied themselves to him for direction in prayer. When he was praying, they asked, *Lord, teach us to pray*. Note, The gifts and graces of others should excite us to covet earnestly the same. Their zeal should provoke us to a holy imitation and emulation; why should not we do as well as they? Observe, They came to him with this request, *when he ceased*; for they would not disturb him when he was at prayer, no, not with this good motion. Every thing is beautiful in its season. *One of his disciples*, in the name of the rest, and perhaps by their appointment, said, *Lord, teach us*. Note, Though Christ is *apt to teach*, yet he will for this be enquired of, and his disciples must attend him for instruction.

Now,

1. Their request is, “*Lord, teach us to pray*; give us a rule or model by which to go in praying, and put words into our mouths.” Note, It becomes the disciples of Christ to apply themselves to him for instruction in prayer. *Lord, teach us to pray*, is itself a good prayer, and a very needful one, for it is a hard thing to *pray well* and it is Jesus Christ only that can *teach us*, by his word and Spirit, *how to pray*. “*Lord, teach me what it is to pray*; *Lord, excite and quicken me to the duty*; *Lord, direct me what to pray for*; *Lord, give me praying graces, that I may serve God acceptably in prayer*; *Lord, teach me to pray in proper words*; *give me a mouth and wisdom in prayer, that I may speak as I ought*; *teach me what I shall say*.”

2. Their plea is, “*As John also taught his disciples*. He took care to instruct his disciples in this necessary duty, and we would be taught as they were, for we have a better Master than they had.” Dr. Lightfoot's notion of this is, That whereas the Jews' prayers were generally adorations, and praises of God, and doxologies, John taught his disciples such prayers as were more filled up with petitions and requests; for it is said of them that they did *deeseis poiountai* — *make prayers*, ⁴⁵³Luke 5:33. The word signifies such prayers as are properly petitionary. “*Now, Lord, teach us*

this, to be added to those benedictions of the name of God which we have been accustomed to from our childhood.” According to this sense, Christ did there teach them a prayer consisting wholly of petitions, and even omitting the doxology which had been affixed; and the *Amen*, which was usually said in the *giving of thanks* (⁴³⁴⁶1 Corinthians 14:16), and in the Psalms, is added to doxologies only. This disciple needed not to have urged John Baptist's example: Christ was more ready to teach than ever John Baptist was, and particularly taught to pray better than John did, or could, teach his disciples.

III. Christ gave them direction, much the same as he had given them before in his sermon upon the mount, ⁴¹⁰⁹Matthew 6:9, etc. We cannot think that they had forgotten it, but they ought to have had further and fuller instructions, and he did not, as yet, think fit to give them any; when the Spirit should be poured out upon them from on high, they would find all their requests couched in these few words, and would be able, in words of their own, to expatiate and enlarge upon them. In Matthew he had directed them to pray *after this manner*; here, *When ye pray, say*; which intimates that the Lord's prayer was intended to be used both as a form of prayer and a directory.

1. There are some differences between the Lord's prayer in Matthew and Luke, by which it appears that it was not the design of Christ that we should be *tied up* to these very words, for then there would have been no variation. Here is one difference in the translation only, which ought not to have been, when there is none in the original, and that is in the third petition: *As in heaven, so in earth*; whereas the words are the very same, and in the same order, as in Matthew. But there is a difference in the fourth petition. In Matthew we pray, “Give us daily bread *this day*:” here, “Give it us *day by day*” — *kath' hemeran. Day by day*; that is, “Give us *each day* the bread which our bodies require, as they call for it:” not, “Give us *this day* bread for many days to come;” but as the Israelites had manna, “Let us have bread *to-day* for *to-day*, and *to-morrow* for *to-morrow*;” for thus we may be kept in a *continual dependence* upon God, as children upon their parents, and may have our mercies fresh from his hand daily, and may find ourselves under *fresh* obligations to do the work of every day in the day, according as the *duty of the day requires*, because we have from God the supplies of every day in the day, according as the *necessity of the day requires*. Here is likewise some difference in the fifth petition. In Matthew it is, *Forgive us our debts*, as we forgive: here it is,

Forgive us our sins; which proves that our sins are our debts. *For we forgive*; not that our forgiving those that have offended us can *merit* pardon from God, or be an inducement to him to forgive us (he forgives for his own name's sake, and his Son's sake); but this is a very necessary qualification for forgiveness, and, if God have wrought it in us, we may plead that work of his grace for the enforcing of our petitions for the pardon of our sins: "Lord, forgive us, for thou hast thyself inclined us to forgive others." There is another addition here; we plead not only in general, We forgive *our debtors*, but in particular, "We profess to *forgive every one that is indebted to us*, without exception. We so *forgive our debtors* as not to bear malice or ill-will to any, but true love to all, without any exception whatsoever." Here also the doxology in the close is wholly omitted, and the *Amen*; for Christ would leave them at liberty to use that or any other doxology fetched out of David's psalms; or, rather, he left a vacuum here, to be filled up by a doxology more peculiar to the Christian institutes, ascribing glory to *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*.

2. Yet it is, for substance, the same; and we shall therefore here only gather up some general lessons from it.

(1.) That in prayer we ought to come to God as children to a *Father*, a common Father to us and *all mankind*, but in a peculiar manner a Father to all the disciples of Jesus Christ. Let us therefore in our requests both for others and for ourselves, come to him with a humble boldness, confiding in his power and goodness.

(2.) That at the same time, and in the same petitions, which we address to God for *ourselves*, we should take in with us *all the children of men*, as God's creatures and our fellow-creatures. A rooted principle of *catholic charity*, and of *Christian sanctified humanity*, should go along with us, and dictate to us throughout this prayer, which is so worded as to be accommodated to that noble principle.

(3.) That in order to the confirming of the habit of heavenly-mindedness in us, which ought to actuate and govern us in the whole course of our conversation, we should, in all our devotions, with an eye of faith look *heavenward*, and view the God we pray to as our Father *in heaven*, that we may make the *upper world* more familiar to us, and may ourselves become better prepared for the future state.

(4.) That in prayer, as well as in the tenour of our lives, we must *seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof*, by ascribing honour to his name, his *holy* name, and power to his government, both that of his providence in the world and that of his grace in the church. O that both the one and the other may be more manifested, and we and others more manifestly brought into subjection to both!

(5.) That the *principles* and *practices* of the *upper* world, the *unseen* world (which therefore by *faith* only we are *apprized of*), are the *great original* — the *archetypon*, to which we should desire that the principles and practices of this *lower* world, both in others and in ourselves, may be more conformable. Those words, *As in heaven, so on earth*, refer to all the first three petitions: “Father, let *thy name be sanctified and glorified*, and thy kingdom prevail, and thy will be done on this earth that is now alienated from thy service, as it is in yonder heaven that is entirely devoted to thy service.”

(6.) That those who faithfully and sincerely mind the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, may humbly hope that *all other things*, as far as to Infinite Wisdom seems good, *shall be added to them*, and they may in faith pray for them. If our first chief desire and care be that God's name may be sanctified, his kingdom come, and his will be done, we may then come boldly to the throne of grace for our *daily bread*, which will *then* be sanctified to us when we are sanctified to God, and God is sanctified by us.

(7.) That in our prayers for temporal blessings we must *moderate* our desires, and confine them to a *competency*. The expression here used of *day by day* is the very same with our *daily bread*; and therefore some think that we must look for another signification of the word *epiousios* than that of *daily*, which we give it, and that it means our *necessary* bread, that bread that is *suit*ed to the craving of our nature, the fruit that is brought out of the earth for our bodies that are made of the earth and are earthly, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 104:14.

(8.) That sins are debts which we are daily contracting, and which therefore we should every day pray for the forgiveness of. We are not only going behind with our rent every day by *omissions* of duty and in duty, but are daily incurring the penalty of the law, as well as the forfeiture of our bond, by our *commissions*. Every day adds to the score of our guilt, and it is a miracle of mercy that we have so much encouragement given us to

come every day to the throne of grace, to pray for the pardon of our sins of daily infirmity. God *multiplies to pardon* beyond seventy times seven.

(9.) That we have no reason to expect, nor can with any confidence pray, that God would forgive our sins against him, if we do not *sincerely*, and from a truly Christian principle of *charity*, forgive those that have at any time affronted us or been injurious to us. Though the *words of our mouth* be even *this* prayer to God, if the meditation of our heart at the same time be, as often it is, malice and revenge to our brethren, we are not accepted, nor can we expect an answer of peace.

(10.) That temptations to sin should be as much dreaded and deprecated by us as ruin by sin; and it should be as much our care and prayer to get the power of sin broken in us as to get the guilt of sin removed from us; and though temptation may be a charming, fawning, flattering thing, we must be as earnest with God that we may not be led into it as that we may not be led by that to sin, and by sin to ruin.

(11.) That God is to be depended upon, and sought unto, for our deliverance *from all evil*; and we should pray, not only that we may not be left to ourselves to run into evil, but that we may not be left to Satan to bring evil upon us. Dr. Lightfoot understands it of being delivered *from the evil one*, that is, the devil, and suggests that we should pray particularly against the apparitions of the devil and his possessions. The disciples were employed to *cast out devils*, and therefore were concerned to pray that they might be guarded against the particular spite he would always be sure to have against them.

IV. He stirs up and encourages importunity, fervency, and constancy, in prayer, by showing,

1. That importunity will go far in our dealings with men, v. 5-8. Suppose a man, upon a sudden emergency, goes to borrow a loaf or two of bread of a neighbour, at an unseasonable time of night, not for himself, but for his friend that came unexpectedly to him. His neighbour will be loth to accommodate him, for he has wakened him with his knocking, and put him out of humour, and he has a great deal to say in his excuse. The door is shut and locked, his children are asleep in bed, in the same room with him, and, if he make a noise, he shall disturb them. His servants are asleep, and he cannot make them hear; and, for his own part, he shall catch cold if he rise to give him. But his neighbour will have no nay, and

therefore he continues *knocking* still, and tells him he will do so till he has what he comes for; so that he must give it to him, to be rid of him: *He will rise, and give him as many as he needs, because of his importunity*. He speaks this parable with the same intent that he speaks that in ~~281~~Luke 18:1: *That men ought always to pray, and not to faint*. Not that God can be wrought upon by importunity; we cannot be troublesome to him, nor by being so change his counsels. We prevail with men by importunity because they are *displeased* with it, but with God because he is *pleased* with it. Now this similitude may be of use to us,

(1.) To *direct* us in prayer.

[1.] We must come to God with *boldness* and *confidence* for what we need, as a man does to the house of his neighbour or friend, who, he knows, loves him, and is inclined to be kind to him.

[2.] We must come for *bread*, for that which is *needful*, and which we cannot be without.

[3.] We must come to him by prayer *for others* as well as *for ourselves*. This man did not come for bread for himself, but for his friend. The Lord *accepted Job*, when he prayed for his friends, ~~282~~Job 42:10. We cannot come to God upon a more pleasing errand than when we come to him for grace to enable us to do good, to *feed many with our lips*, to entertain and edify those that come to us.

[4.] We may come with the more boldness to God in a strait, if it be a strait that we have not brought ourselves into by our own folly and carelessness, but Providence has led us into it. This man would not have wanted bread if his friend had not come in *unexpectedly*. The care which Providence casts upon us, we may with cheerfulness cast back upon Providence.

[5.] We ought to *continue instant* in prayer, and watch in the same with all perseverance.

(2.) To *encourage* us in prayer. If importunity could prevail thus with a *man* who was angry at it, much more with a God who is infinitely more kind and ready to do good *to us* than we are *to one another*, and is not angry at our importunity, but accepts it, especially when it is for spiritual mercies that we are importunate. If he do not answer our prayers presently, yet he will in due time, if we continue to pray.

2. That God has promised to give us what we ask of him. We have not only the goodness of nature to take comfort from, but the word which he has spoken (v. 9, 10): “*Ask, and it shall be given you; either the thing itself you shall ask or that which is equivalent; either the thorn in the flesh removed, or grace sufficient given in.*” — We had this before, ⁴⁰⁰⁰Matthew 7:7, 8. *I say unto you.* We have it from Christ's own mouth, who knows his Father's mind, and in whom all promises are yea and amen. We must not only *ask*, but we must *seek*, in the use of means, must second our prayers with our endeavours; and, in *asking* and *seeking*, we must continue *pressing*, still knocking at the same door, and we shall at length prevail, not only by our prayers in concert, but by our particular prayers: *Every one that asketh receiveth*, even the meanest saint that asks in faith. *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him,* ¹³⁴⁶Psalm 34:6. When we ask of God those things which Christ has here directed us to ask, that his name may be sanctified, that his kingdom may come, and his will be done, in these requests we must be importunate, must *never hold our peace day or night*; we must not *keep silence*, nor *give God any rest, until he establish, until he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth,* ²³¹⁶Isaiah 62:6, 7.

V. He gives us both instruction and encouragement in prayer from the consideration of our relation to God as a Father. Here is,

1. An *appeal to the bowels of earthly fathers*: “Let any of you that *is a father*, and knows the heart of a father, a father's affection to a child and care for a child, tell me, if his son *ask bread* for his breakfast, *will he give him a stone* to breakfast on? *If he ask a fish* for his dinner (when it may be a fish-day), *will he for a fish give him a serpent*, that will poison and sting him? Or, *if he shall ask an egg* for his supper (an egg and to bed), *will he offer him a scorpion*? You know you could not be so unnatural to your own children,” v. 11, 12.

2. An *application* of this to the *blessings* of our *heavenly Father* (v. 13): *If ye then, being evil, give, and know how to give, good gifts to your children, much more shall God give you the Spirit.* He shall give *good things*; so it is in Matthew. Observe,

(1.) The direction he gives us what to *pray for*. We must ask for the *Holy Spirit*, not only a necessary in order to our *praying well*, but as inclusive of all the good things we are to pray for; we need no more to make us happy, for the Spirit is the worker of spiritual life, and the earnest of eternal life.

Note, The gift of the Holy Ghost is a gift we are every one of us concerned earnestly and constantly to pray for.

(2.) The *encouragement* he gives us to hope that we shall speed in this prayer: *Your heavenly Father will give*. It is *in his power* to give the Spirit; he has all good things to bestow, wrapped up in that one; but that is not all, it is *in his promise*, the gift of *the Holy Ghost* is in the covenant, ~~400~~ Acts 1:33, 38, and it is here inferred from parents' readiness to *supply* their children's *needs*, and *gratify* their *desires*, when they are natural and proper. If the child ask for a *serpent*, or a *scorpion*, the father, in kindness, will deny him, but not if he ask for what is *needful*, and will be *nourishing*. When God's children ask for the Spirit, they do, in effect, ask for *bread*; for the Spirit is the staff of life; nay, he is the Author of the soul's life. If our earthly parents, though *evil*, be yet so kind, if they, though *weak*, be yet so *knowing*, that they not only give, but give with discretion, give what is best, in the best manner and time, much more will our *heavenly Father*, who infinitely excels the fathers of our flesh both in wisdom and goodness, give us his *Holy Spirit*. If earthly parents be willing to lay out for the education of their children, to whom they design to leave their estates, much more will our heavenly Father give the spirit of sons to all those whom he has predestinated to the inheritance of sons.

~~411~~ LUKE 11:14-26

CHRIST ACCUSED OF LEAGUING WITH SATAN

The substance of these verses we had in ~~402~~ Matthew 12:22, etc. Christ is here giving a general proof of his divine mission, by a particular proof of his power over Satan, his conquest of whom was an indication of his great design in coming into the world, which was, to *destroy the works of the devil*. Here too he gives an earnest of the success of that undertaking. He is here casting out *a devil* that made the poor possessed man *dumb*: in Matthew we are told that he was *blind* and *dumb*. When the devil was forced out by the word of Christ, the *dumb* spoke immediately, echoed to Christ's word, and the lips were opened to show forth his praise. Now,

I. Some were *affected* with this miracle. The people *wondered*; they admired the power of God, and especially that it should be exerted by the hand of one who made so small a figure, that one who did the work of the

Messiah should have so little of that pomp of the Messiah which they expected.

II. Others were *offended* at it, and, to justify their infidelity, suggested that it was by virtue of a league with Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, that he did this, v. 15. It seems, in the devil's kingdom there are chiefs, which supposes that there are subalterns. Now they would have it *thought*, or *said* at least, that there was a correspondence settled between Christ and the devil, that the devil should have the advantage in the main and be victorious at last, but that in order hereto, in particular instances, he should yield Christ the advantage and retire by consent. Some, to *corroborate* this suggestion, and *confront* the evidence of Christ's miraculous power, challenged him to *give them a sign from heaven* (v. 16), to confirm his doctrine by some appearance in the *clouds*, such as was upon mount Sinai when the law was given; as if a *sign from heaven*, not disprovable by any sagacity of theirs, could not have been given them as well by a compact and collusion with *the prince of the power of the air, who works with power and lying wonders*, as the *casting out of a devil*; nay, that would not have been any present prejudice to his interest, which this manifestly was. Note, Obstinate infidelity will never be at a loss for something to say in its own excuse, though ever so frivolous and absurd. Now Christ here returns a full and direct answer to this cavil of theirs; in which he shows,

1. That it can by no means be imagined that such a subtle prince as Satan is should ever agree to measures that had such a direct tendency to his own overthrow, and the undermining of his own kingdom, v. 17, 18. What they objected they kept to themselves, afraid to speak it, lest it should be answered and baffled; but Jesus *knew their thoughts*, even when they industriously thought to conceal them, and he said, "You yourselves cannot but see the groundlessness, and consequently the spitefulness, of this charge; for it is an allowed maxim, confirmed by every day's experience, that no interest can stand that is divided against itself; not the more *public* interest of a *kingdom*, nor the *private* interest of a house or family; if either the one or the other be *divided against itself*, it cannot stand. Satan would herein act against himself; not only by the miracle which turned him out of possession of the bodies of people, but much more in the doctrine for the explication and confirmation of which the miracle was wrought, which had a direct tendency to the ruin of Satan's interest in the minds of men, by mortifying sin, and turning men to the service of God. Now, if Satan should thus be *divided against himself*, he

would hasten his own overthrow, which you cannot suppose an enemy to do that acts so subtly for his own establishment, and is so solicitous to have his kingdom stand.”

2. That was a very partial ill-natured thing for them to impute that in him to a compact with Satan which yet they applauded and admired in others that were of their own nation (v. 19): “*By whom do your sons cast them out? Some of your own kindred, as Jews, nay, and some of your own followers, as Pharisees, have undertaken, in the name of the God of Israel, to cast out devils, and they were never charged with such a hellish combination as I am charged with.*” Note, It is gross hypocrisy to *condemn* that in those who *reprove* us which yet we *allow* in those that *flatter* us.

3. That, in opposing the conviction of this miracle, they were enemies to themselves, stood in their own light, and put a bar in their own door, for they thrust from them the kingdom of God (v. 20): “*If I with the finger of God cast out devils, as you may assure yourselves I do, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you, the kingdom of the Messiah offers itself and all its advantages to you, and, if you receive it not, it is at your peril.*” In Matthew it is *by the Spirit of God*, here *by the finger of God*; the Spirit is the *arm of the Lord*, ²⁵¹Isaiah 53:1. His greatest and most mighty works were wrought by *his Spirit*; but, if the Spirit in this work is said to be the *finger of the Lord*, it perhaps may intimate how *easily* Christ did and could conquer Satan, even with the *finger of God*, the exerting of the divine power in a less and lower degree than in many other instances. He needed not make bare his *everlasting arm*; that roaring lion, when *he* pleases, is crushed, like a moth, with a touch of *a finger*. Perhaps here is an allusion to the acknowledgment of Pharaoh's magicians, when they were run aground (¹⁸⁸Exodus 8:19): This is *the finger of God*. “Now if the *kingdom of God* be herein *come to you*, and you be found by those cavils and blasphemies fighting against it, it will come *upon you* as a victorious force which you cannot stand before.”

4. That his casting out devils was really the destroying of them and their power, for it confirmed a doctrine which had a direct tendency to the ruining of his kingdom, v. 21. 22. Perhaps there had been some who had cast out the inferior devils by compact with Beelzebub their chief, but that was without any real damage or prejudice to Satan and his kingdom, what he lost one way he gained another. The devil and such exorcists *played booty*, as we say, and, while the forlorn hope of his army *gave ground*, the

main body thereby *gained ground*; the interest of Satan in the souls of men was not weakened by it in the least. But, when Christ cast out devils, he needed not do it by any compact with them, for he was *stronger than they*, and could do it *by force*, and did it so as to ruin Satan's power and blast his great design by that doctrine and that grace which break the power of sin, and so rout Satan's main body, take from him *all his armour*, and *divide his spoils*, which no one devil ever did to another or ever will. Now this is applicable to Christ's victories over Satan both in the world and in the hearts of particular persons, by that power which went along with the preaching of his gospel, and does still. And so we may observe here,

(1.) The miserable condition of an unconverted sinner. In his heart, which was fitted to be a habitation of God, the devil has his palace; and all the powers and the faculties of the soul, being employed by him in the service of sin, are *his goods*. Note,

[1.] The heart of every unconverted sinner is the *devil's palace*, where he *resides* and where he *rules*; he *works* in the *children of disobedience*. The heart is a *palace*, a noble dwelling; but the unsanctified heart is the *devil's palace*. His will is obeyed, his interests are served, and the militia is in his hands; he *usurps* the throne in the soul.

[2.] The devil, as a *strong man armed*, *keeps* this palace, does all he can to secure it to himself, and to fortify it against Christ. All the prejudices with which he hardens men's hearts against truth and holiness are the *strongholds* which he erects for the *keeping of his palace*; this palace is his *garrison*.

[3.] There is a kind of *peace* in the palace of an unconverted soul, while the devil, as a *strong man armed*, keeps it. The sinner has a good opinion of himself, is very secure and merry, has no doubt concerning the goodness of his state nor any dread of the judgment to come; he flatters himself in his own eyes, and cries peace to himself. Before Christ appeared, all was quiet, because all *went one way*; but the preaching of the gospel disturbed the peace of the devil's palace.

(2.) The wonderful change that is made in conversion, which is Christ's victory over this usurper. *Satan* is a *strong man armed*; but our Lord Jesus is *stronger than he*, as God, as Mediator. *If we speak of strength, he is strong*: more are *with us* than *against us*. Observe,

[1.] The manner of this victory: *He comes upon him* by surprise, when his *goods are in peace* and the devil thinks it is all *his own* for ever, and *overcomes* him. Note, The conversion of a soul to God is Christ's victory over the devil and his power in that soul, restoring the soul to its liberty, and recovering his own interest in it and dominion over it.

[2.] The evidences of this victory. *First, He takes from him all his armour wherein he trusted.* The devil is a *confident* adversary; he *trusts* to his *armour*, as Pharaoh to his rivers (²⁹⁸Ezekiel 29:3): but Christ disarms him. When the power of sin and corruption in the soul is broken, when the mistakes are rectified, the eyes opened, the heart humbled and changed, and made serious and spiritual, then Satan's *armour* is *taken away*. *Secondly, He divides the spoils; he takes possession* of them for himself. All the endowments of mind and body, the estate, power, interest, which before were made use of in the service of sin and Satan, are now converted to Christ's service and employed for him; yet this is not all; he *makes a distribution* of them among his followers, and, and having conquered Satan, gives to all believers the benefit of that victory. Hence Christ infers that, since the whole drift of his doctrine and miracles was to break the power of the devil, that great enemy of mankind, it was the duty of all to join with him and to follow his guidance, to receive his gospel and come heartily into the interests of it; for otherwise they would justly be reckoned as siding with the enemy (v. 23): *He that is not with me is against me*. Those therefore who rejected the doctrine of Christ, and slighted his miracles, were looked upon as adversaries to him, and in the devil's interest.

5. That there was a vast difference between the devil's *going out* by compact and his being *cast out* by compulsion. Those out of whom Christ *cast him* he never entered into again, for so was Christ's charge (⁴⁹²⁵Mark 9:25); whereas, if he had *gone out*, whenever he saw fit he would have made a re-entry, for that is the way of the unclean spirit, when he voluntarily and with design *goes out of a man*, v. 24-26. The prince of the devils may *give leave*, nay, may *give order*, to his forces to retreat, or make a feint, to draw the poor deluded soul into an *ambush*; but Christ, as he gives a *total*, so he gives a *final*, defeat to the enemy. In this part of the argument he has a further intention, which is to represent the state of those who have had fair offers made them, — among whom, and in whom, God has begun to break the devil's power and overthrow his kingdom, — but

they reject his counsel against themselves, and relapse into a state of subjection to Satan. Here we have,

(1.) The condition of a *formal hypocrite*, his *bright side* and his *dark side*. His heart still remains the *devil's house*; he calls it his own, and he retains his interest in it; and yet,

[1.] The *unclean spirit is gone out*. He was not *driven out* by the power of converting grace; there was none of that *violence* which the kingdom of heaven suffers; but he *went out*, withdrew for a time, so that the man seemed not to be under the power of Satan as formerly, nor so followed with his temptations. Satan is *gone*, or has *turned himself into an angel of light*.

[2.] The *house is swept* from common pollutions, by a forced confession of sin, as Pharaoh's — a feigned contrition for it, as Ahab's, — and a partial reformation, as Herod's. There are those that have *escaped the pollutions of the world*, and yet are still under the power of the *god of this world*, ^{<421>}2 Peter 2:20. The house is *swept*, but it is not *washed*; and Christ hath said, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me*; the house must be *washed*, or it is *none of his*. Sweeping takes off only the loose dirt, while the sin that *besets* the sinner, the beloved sin, is untouched. It is swept from the filth that lies open to the eye of the world, but it is not searched and ransacked for secret filthiness, ^{<425>}Matthew 23:25. It is *swept*, but the *leprosy is in the wall*, and will be till something more be done.

[3.] The house is *garnished* with common gifts and graces. It is not *furnished* with any true grace, but *garnished* with the pictures of all graces. Simon Magus was *garnished* with faith, Balaam with good desires, Herod with a respect for John, the Pharisees with many external performances. It is garnished, but it is like a *potsherd covered with silver dross*, it is all paint and varnish, not real, not lasting. The house is *garnished*, but the property is not altered; it was never surrendered to Christ, nor inhabited by the Spirit. Let us therefore take heed of resting in that which a man may have and yet come short.

(2.) Here is the condition of a *final apostate*, into whom the devil returns after he had *gone out*: *Then goes he, and takes seven other spirits more wicked than himself* (v. 26); a certain number for an uncertain, as *seven devils* are said to be cast out of Mary Magdalene. *Seven wicked spirits* are opposed to the *seven spirits of God*, ^{<431>}Revelation 3:1. These are said to

be more wicked than himself. It seems, even devils are not all alike wicked; probably, the degrees of their wickedness, now that they are *fallen*, are as the degrees of their holiness were while they stood. When the devil would do mischief most effectually, he employs those that are more mischievous than himself. These *enter in* without any difficulty or opposition; they are welcomed, and they *dwell there*; there they *work*, there they *rule*; and the *last state of that man is worse than the first*. Note,

[1.] Hypocrisy is the high road to apostasy. If the heart remains in the interest of sin and Satan, the shows and shadows will *come to nothing*; those that have not set that right will not long be steadfast. Where secret haunts of sin are kept up, under the cloak of a visible profession, conscience is debauched, God is provoked to withdraw his restraining grace, and the *close* hypocrite commonly proves an *open* apostate,

[2.] The last state of such is *worse than the first*, in respect both of sin and punishment. Apostates are usually the worst of men, the most vain and profligate, the most bold and daring; their consciences are seared, and their sins of all others the most aggravated. God often sets marks of his displeasure upon them in *this* world, and in the other world they will *receive the greater damnation*. Let us therefore hear, and fear, and hold fast our integrity.

LUKE 11:27-28

WATCHFULNESS INCULCATED

We had not this passage in the other evangelists, nor can we tack it, as Dr. Hammond does, to that of Christ's mother and brethren desiring to speak with him (for this evangelist also has related that in ⁴¹⁸³Luke 8:19), but it contains an interruption much like that, and, like that, occasion is taken from it for instruction.

1. The applause which an affectionate, honest, well-meaning woman gave to our Lord Jesus, upon hearing his excellent discourses. While the scribes and Pharisees despised and blasphemed them, this good woman (and probably she was a person of some quality) admired them, and the wisdom and power with which he spoke: *As he spoke these things* (v. 27), with a convincing force and evidence, a *certain woman of the company* was so

pleased to hear how he had confounded the Pharisees, and conquered them, and put them to shame, and cleared himself from their vile insinuations, that she could not forbear crying out, “*Blessed is the womb that bore thee*. What an admirable, what an excellent man is this! Surely never was there a greater or better born of a woman: happy the woman that has him for her son. I should have thought myself very happy to have been the mother of one that *speaks as never man spoke*, that has so much of the grace of heaven in him, and is so great a blessing to this earth.” This was *well said*, as it expressed her high esteem of Christ, and that for the sake of his doctrine; and it was not amiss that it reflected honour upon the virgin Mary his mother, for it agreed with what she herself had said (⁴¹⁴⁸Luke 1:48), *All generations shall call me blessed*; some even of this generation, bad as it was. Note, To all that believe the word of Christ the person of Christ is precious, and he is *an honour*, ⁴¹¹⁷1 Peter 2:7. Yet we must be careful, lest, as this good woman, we too much magnify the honour of his natural kindred, and so *know him after the flesh*, whereas we must now henceforth *know him so no more*.

2. The occasion which Christ took from this to pronounce *them* more happy who are his faithful and obedient followers than she was who bore and nursed him. He does not deny what this woman said, nor refuse her respect to him and his mother; but leads her from this to that which was of higher consideration, and which more concerned her: *Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it*, v. 28. He thinks them so; and his saying that they are so makes them so, and should make us of his mind. This is intended partly as a *check* to her, for doting so much upon his bodily presence and his human nature, partly as an *encouragement* to her to hope that she might be as happy as his own mother, whose happiness she was ready to envy, if she would *hear the word of God and keep it*. Note, Though it is a great privilege to hear the word of God, yet those only are truly blessed, that is, blessed of the Lord, that hear it and *keep it*, that keep it in memory, and keep to it as their way and rule.

⁴¹¹⁹LUKE 11:29-36

THE SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAS

Christ's discourse in these verses shows two things: —

I. What is the *sign* we may *expect* from God for the *confirmation* of our *faith*. The great and most convincing proof of Christ's being sent of God, and which they were yet to wait for, after the many signs that had been given them, was the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Here is,

1. A reproof to the people for demanding other signs than what had already been given them in great plenty: *The people were gathered thickly together* (v. 29), a vast crowd of them, expecting not so much to have their consciences informed by the doctrine of Christ as to have their curiosity gratified by his miracles. Christ knew what brought such a multitude together; they came *seeking a sign*, they came to gaze, to have something to talk of when they went home; and it is an *evil generation* which nothing will awaken and convince, no, not the most sensible demonstrations of divine power and goodness.

2. A promise that yet there should be *one sign* more given them, different from any that had yet been given them, even the *sign of Jonas the prophet*, which in Matthew is explained as meaning the *resurrection of Christ*. As Jonas being cast into the sea, and lying there three days, and then coming up alive and preaching repentance to the Ninevites, was a sign to them, upon which they turned from their evil way, so shall the death and resurrection of Christ, and the preaching of his gospel immediately after to the Gentile world, be the last warning to the Jewish nation. If they be provoked to a *holy jealousy* by this, well and good; but, if this do not work upon them, let them look for nothing but utter ruin: *The Son of Man shall be a sign to this generation* (v. 30), a sign speaking to them, though a sign spoken against by them.

3. A warning to them to improve this sign; for it was at their peril if they did not.

(1.) The *queen of Sheba* would *rise up in judgment against them*, and condemn *their unbelief*, v. 31. She was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, and yet so readily gave credit to the report she heard of the glories of a king of Israel, that, notwithstanding the prejudices we are apt to conceive against foreigners, she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to *hear his wisdom*, not only to satisfy her curiosity, but to inform her mind, especially in the knowledge of the true God and his worship, which is upon record, to her honour; and, behold, a *greater than Solomon is here*, *pleion Solomontos* — *more than a Solomon is here*; that is, says Dr.

Hammond, more of wisdom and more heavenly divine doctrine than ever was in all Solomon's words or writings; and yet these wretched Jews will give no manner of regard to what Christ says to them, though he be in the midst of them.

(2.) The Ninevites would rise up in judgment against them, and condemn their impenitency (v. 32): They *repented at the preaching of Jonas*; but here is preaching which far exceeds that of Jonas, is more powerful and awakening, and threatens a much sorer ruin than that of Nineveh, and yet none are startled by it, to turn *from their evil way*, as the Ninevites did.

II. What is the *sign* that God *expects* from us for the *evidencing* of our faith, and that is the serious practice of that religion which we profess to believe, and a readiness to entertain all divine truths, when brought to us in their proper evidence. Now observe,

1. They had *the light* with all the advantage they could desire. For God, having *lighted the candle* of the gospel, did not put it in a *secret place*, or *under a bushel*; Christ did not preach in corners. The apostles were ordered to preach the gospel to every creature; and both Christ and his ministers, Wisdom and her maidens, cry in the *chief places of concourse*, v. 33. It is a great privilege that the light of the gospel is put on a *candlestick*, so that all that come in may *see it*, and may *see by it* where they are and whither they are going, and what is the true, and sure, and only way to happiness.

2. Having the *light*, their concern was to have the *sight*, or else to what purpose had they the light? Be the *object* ever so *clear*, if the *organ* be not *right*, we are never the better: *The light of the body is the eye* (v. 34), which receives the light of the candle when it is brought into the room. So the light of the soul is the understanding and judgment, and its power of discerning between good and evil, truth and falsehood. Now, according as this is, so the light of divine revelation is to us, and our benefit by it; it is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.

(1.) If this eye of the soul be *single*, if it see *clear*, see things as they are, and judge impartially concerning them, if it aim at *truth* only, and seek it for its own sake, and have not any sinister by-looks and intentions, the *whole body*, that is, the whole soul, is *full of light*, it receives and entertains the gospel, which will bring along with it into the soul both *knowledge* and *joy*. This denotes the same thing with that of the good

ground, *receiving the word and understanding* it. If our understanding admits the gospel in its full light, it fills the soul, and it has enough to *fill* it. And if the soul be thus *filled* with the light of the gospel, *having no part dark*, — if all its powers and faculties be subjected to the government and influence of the gospel, and none left unsanctified, — then *the whole soul shall be full of light*, full of holiness and comfort. *It was darkness* itself, but now light in the Lord, *as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light*, v. 36. Note, The gospel will come into those souls whose doors and windows are thrown open to receive it; and where it comes it will bring light with it. But,

(2.) If the *eye of the soul be evil*, — if the judgment be *bribed and biassed* by the corrupt and vicious dispositions of the mind, by pride and envy, by the love of the world and sensual pleasures, — if the understanding be *prejudiced* against divine truths, and resolved not to admit them, though brought with ever so convincing an evidence, — it is no wonder that the *whole body*, the whole soul, should be *full of darkness*, v. 34. How can they have instruction, information, direction, or comfort, from the gospel, that wilfully shut their eyes against it? and what hope is there of such? what remedy for them? The inference hence therefore is, *Take heed that the light which is in thee be not darkness*, v. 35. Take heed that the eye of the mind be not blinded by partiality, and prejudice, and sinful aims. Be sincere in your enquiries after truth, and ready to receive it in the light, and love, and power of it; and not as the men of *this generation* to whom Christ preached, who never sincerely *desired* to know God's will, nor *designed* to do it, and therefore no wonder that they *walked on in darkness*, wandered *endlessly*, and perished *eternally*.

LUKE 11:37-54

THE PHARISEES REPROVED

Christ here says many of those things to a Pharisee and his guests, in a *private* conversation at table, which he afterwards said in a *public* discourse in the temple (Matthew 23); for what he said in public and private was *of a piece*. He would not say that in a corner which he durst not repeat and stand to in the great congregation; nor would he give those reproofs to any sort of sinners in general which he durst not apply to them

in particular as he met with them; for he was, and is, the *faithful Witness*. Here is,

I. Christ's going to dine with a Pharisee that very civilly invited him to his house (v. 37); *As he spoke*, even while he was speaking, a *certain Pharisee* interrupted him with a request to him to come and *dine with him*, to come *forthwith*, for it was dinner-time. We are willing to hope that the Pharisee was so well pleased with his discourse that he was willing to show him respect, and desirous to have more of his company, and therefore gave him this invitation and bade him truly welcome; and yet we have some cause to suspect that it was with an *ill design*, to break off his discourse to the people, and to have an opportunity of ensnaring him and getting something out of him which might serve for matter of accusation or reproach, v. 53, 54. We know not the mind of this Pharisee; but, whatever it was, Christ knew it: if he meant ill, he shall know Christ does not fear him; if well, he shall know Christ is willing to do him good: so *he went in, and sat down to meat*. Note, Christ's disciples must learn of him to be *conversable*, and not *morose*. Though we have need to be *cautious* what company we keep, yet we need not be *rigid*, nor must we therefore *go out of the world*.

II. The offence which the Pharisee took at Christ, as those of that sort had sometimes done at the disciples of Christ, for not *washing before dinner*, v. 38. He wondered that a man of his sanctity, a prophet, a man of so much devotion, and such a strict conversation, should sit down to meat, and not first *wash his hands*, especially being newly come out of a mixed company, and there being in the Pharisee's dining-room, no doubt, all accommodations set ready for it, so that he need not fear being *troublesome*; and the Pharisee himself and all his guests, no doubt, *washing*, so that he could not be *singular*; what, and yet not wash? What harm had it been if he had washed? Was it not strictly commanded by the canons of their church? It was so, and *therefore* Christ would not do it, because he would witness against their assuming a power to impose that as a matter of religion which *God commanded them not*. The ceremonial law consisted in *divers washings*, but this was none of them, and therefore Christ would not practise it, no not in *complaisance* to the Pharisee who invited him, nor though he knew that offence would be taken at his omitting it.

III. The sharp reproof which Christ, upon this occasion, gave to the Pharisees, without begging pardon even of the Pharisee whose guest he now was; for we must not flatter our best friends in any evil thing.

1. He reproofs them for placing religion so much in those instances of it which are only external, and fall under the eye of man, while those were not only *postponed*, but quite *expunged*, which respect the soul, and fall under the eye of God, v. 39, 40. Now observe here,

(1.) The absurdity they were guilty of: “*You Pharisees make clean the outside only, you wash your hands with water, but do not wash your hearts from wickedness; these are full of covetousness and malice, covetousness of men's goods, and malice against good men.*” Those can never be reckoned *cleanly* servants that wash only the *outside of the cup* out of which their master drinks, or *the platter* out of which he eats, and take no care to make clean the *inside*, the filth of which immediately *affects* the meat or drink. The frame or temper of the mind in every religious service is as the *inside* of the cup and platter; the impurity of this *infects* the services, and therefore to keep ourselves free from scandalous enormities, and yet to live under the dominion of spiritual wickedness, is as great an affront to God as it would be for a servant to give the cup into his master's hand, clean wiped from all the dust on the outside, but *within* full of cobwebs and spiders. *Ravening and wickedness*, that is, *reigning worldliness* and *reigning spitefulness*, which men think they can find some cloak and cover for, are the dangerous damning sins of many who have made the *outside of the cup* clean from the more gross, and scandalous, and inexcusable sins of whoredom and drunkenness.

(2.) A particular instance of the absurdity of it: “*Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?* v. 40. Did not that God who in the law of Moses appointed divers ceremonial washings, with which you justify yourselves in these practices and impositions, appoint also that you should cleanse and purify your hearts? He who made laws for that which is *without*, did not he even in those laws further intend something within, and by other laws show how little he regarded the *purifying of the flesh*, and the *putting away of the filth* of that, if the heart be not made clean?” Or, it may have regard to God not only as a *Lawgiver*, but (which the words seem rather to import) as a *Creator*. Did not God, who made us these bodies (and they *are fearfully and wonderfully made*), make us *these souls* also, which are more *fearfully and wonderfully made*?

Now, if he made both, he justly expects we should take care of both; and therefore not only wash the *body*, which he is the *former* of, and make the hands clean in honour of his work, but wash the spirit, which he is the Father of, and get the leprosy in the heart cleansed.

To this he subjoins a rule for making our creature-comforts clean to us (v. 41): “Instead of *washing your hands* before you go to meat, *give alms of such things as you have*” (*ta enonta* — *of such things as are set before you, and present with you*); “let the poor have their share out of them, and then *all things are clean to you*, and you may use them comfortably.” Here is a plain allusion to the law of Moses, by which it was provided that certain portions of the increase of their land should be given *to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow*; and, when that was done, what was reserved for their own use was *clean to them*, and they could in faith pray for a blessing upon it, ^{<R32>}Deuteronomy 26:12-15. *Then we can with comfort enjoy the gifts of God's bounty ourselves when we send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared,* ^{<R30>}Nehemiah 8:10. *Job ate not his morsel alone, but the fatherless ate thereof, and so it was clean to him* (^{<R317>}Job 31:17); *clean*, that is, permitted and allowed to be used, and then only can it be used comfortably. Note, What we have is not our own, unless God have his dues out of it; and it is by *liberality to the poor* that we clear up to ourselves our *liberty* to make use of our creature-comforts.

2. He reproves them for laying stress upon trifles, and neglecting the weighty matters of the law, v. 42.

(1.) Those laws which related only to the *means of religion* they were very exact in the observance of, as particularly those concerning the maintenance of the priests: *Ye pay tithe of mint and rue*, pay it in kind and to the full, and will not put off the priests with a *modus decimandi* or *compound* for it. By this they would gain reputation with the people as strict observers of the law, and would make an interest in the priests, in whose power it was many a time to do them a kindness; and no wonder if the priests and the Pharisees contrived how to strengthen one another's hands. Now Christ does not condemn them for being so exact in paying tithes (*these things ought ye to have done*), but to think that this would atone for the neglect of their greater duties; for,

(2.) Those laws which relate to the *essentials of religion* they made nothing of: *You pass over judgment and the love of God*, you make no conscience of giving men their *dues* and God your *hearts*.

3. He reproves them for their pride and vanity, and affectations of precedency and praise of men (v. 43): “*Ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues*” (or consistories where the elders met for government); “if you have not those seats, you are ambitious of them; if you have, you are proud of them; and *you love greetings in the markets*, to be complimented by the people and to have their cap and knee.” It is not sitting uppermost, or being greeted, that is reprovèd, but *loving it*.

4. He reproves them for their hypocrisy, and their colouring over the wickedness of their hearts and lives with specious pretences (v. 44): “*You are as graves overgrown with grass, which therefore appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them*, and so they contract the ceremonial pollution which by the law arose from the *touch of a grave*.” These Pharisees were *within* full of *abominations*, as a grave of putrefaction; full of covetousness, envy, and malice; and yet they concealed it so artfully with a profession of devotion, that it did not appear, so that they who conversed with them, and followed their doctrine, were defiled with sin, infected with their corruptions and ill morals, and yet, they making a show of piety, suspected no danger by them. The contagion *insinuated* itself, and was *insensibly* caught, and those that caught it thought themselves never the worse.

IV. The testimony which he bore also against the lawyers or scribes, who made it their business to *expound* the law according to the tradition of the elders, as the Pharisees did to *observe* the law according to that tradition.

1. There was one of that profession who resented what he said against the Pharisees (v. 45): “*Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also, for we are scribes; and we are therefore hypocrites?*” Note, It is a common thing for unhumblèd sinners to call and count reproofs reproaches. It is the wisdom of those who desire to have their sin mortified to make a *good use* of reproaches that come from *ill will*, and to turn them into reproofs. If we can in this way hear of our faults, and amend them, it is well: but it is the folly of those who are wedded to their sins, and resolved not to part with them, to make an *ill use* of the faithful and friendly admonitions given them, which come from love, and to have their passions provoked by them as if they were intended for *reproaches*, and therefore fly in the face of their reprovers, and justify themselves in rejecting the reproof. Thus the prophet complained (Jeremiah 6. 10): *The word of the Lord is to them a*

reproach; they have no delight in it. This lawyer espoused the Pharisee's cause, and so made himself partaker of his sins.

2. Our Lord Jesus thereupon took them to task (v. 46): *Woe unto you also, ye lawyers;* and again (v. 52): *Woe unto you lawyers.* They blessed themselves in the reputation they had among the people, who thought them happy men, because they studied the law, and were always conversant with that, and had the honour of instructing the people in the knowledge of that; but Christ denounced *woes* against them, for he sees not as man sees. This was just upon him for taking the Pharisee's part, and quarrelling with Christ because he reprov'd them. Note, Those who quarrel with the reproofs of others, and suspect them to be reproaches to them, do but get *woes of their own* by so doing.

(1.) The lawyers are reprov'd for making the services of religion more *burdensome* to others, but more *easy* to themselves, than God had made them (v. 46): "*You lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, by your traditions, which bind them out from many liberties God has allowed them, and bind them up to many slaveries which God never enjoined them, to show your authority, and to keep people in awe; but you yourselves touch them not with one of your fingers;*" that is,

[1.] "You will not *burden* yourselves with them, nor be yourselves bound by those restraints with which you hamper others." They would seem, by the hedges they pretended to make about the law, to be very strict for the observance of the law; but, if you could see their practices, you would find that they not only make nothing of those hedges themselves, but make nothing of the law itself neither: thus the confessors of the Romish church are said to do with their penitents.

[2.] "You will not *lighten* them to those you have power over; *you will not touch them,* that is, either to repeal them or to dispense with them when you find them to be burdensome and grievous to the people." They would come in with *both hands* to dispense with a command of God, but not with a *finger* to mitigate the rigour of any of the traditions of the elders.

(2.) They are reprov'd for pretending a veneration for the memory of the prophets whom their fathers killed, when yet they hated and persecuted those in their own day who were sent to them on the same errand, to call them to repentance, and direct them to Christ, v. 47-49.

[1.] These hypocrites, among other pretences of piety, *built the sepulchres of the prophets*; that is, they erected monuments over their graves, in honour of them, probably with large inscriptions containing high encomiums of them. They were not so superstitious as to enshrine their relics, or to think their devotions the more acceptable to God for being offered at the *tombs of the martyrs*; they did not burn incense or pray to them, or plead their merits with God; they did not add that iniquity to their hypocrisy; but, as if they owned themselves the *children of the prophets*, their heirs and executors, they *repaired and beautified* the monuments sacred to their *pious memory*.

[2.] Notwithstanding this, they had an inveterate *enmity* to those in their *own day* that came to them in the *spirit and power* of those prophets; and, though they had not yet had an opportunity of carrying it far, yet they would soon do it, for the *Wisdom of God said*, that is, Christ himself would *so order* it, and did *now foretel* it, that they would *slay and persecute* the prophets and apostles that should be sent them. The *Wisdom of God* would thus make trial of them, and discover their odious hypocrisy, by sending them prophets, to reprove them for their sins and warn them of the judgments of God. Those prophets should prove themselves apostles, or messengers sent from heaven, by signs, and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Or, "*I will send them prophets under the style and title of apostles, who yet shall produce as good an authority as any of the old prophets did; and these they shall not only contradict and oppose, but slay and persecute, and put to death.*" Christ foresaw this, and yet did not otherwise than as became the *Wisdom of God* in sending them, for he knew how to bring glory to himself in the issue, by the recompences reserved both for the *persecutors* and the *persecuted* in the future state.

[3.] That therefore God will justly put another construction upon their *building the tombs* of the prophets than what they would be thought to intend, and it shall be interpreted their *allowing the deeds of their fathers* (v. 45); for, since by their present actions it appeared that they had no true value for their prophets, the *building of their sepulchres* shall have this sense put upon it, that they resolved to keep them in their graves whom their fathers had hurried thither. Josiah, who had a real value for prophets, thought it enough not to disturb the grave of the *man of God at Bethel*: *Let no man move his bones,* ^{<1257>}2 Kings 23:17, 18. If these lawyers will carry the matter further, and will build *their sepulchres*, it is such a piece of

over-doing as gives cause to suspect an ill design in it, and that it is meant as a cover for some design against prophecy itself, like the kiss of a traitor, as *he that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him,* ^{<1714>}Proverbs 27:14.

[4.] That they must expect no other than to be reckoned with, as the *fillers up* of the *measure* of persecution, v. 50, 51. They keep up the trade as it were in succession, and therefore are responsible for the *debts of the company*, even those it has been *contracting* all along from *the blood of Abel*, when the world began, to that of Zacharias, and so forward to the end of the Jewish state; it shall all be *required of this generation*, this last generation of the Jews, whose sin in persecuting Christ's apostles would exceed any of the sins of that kind that their fathers were guilty of, and so would bring *wrath* upon them *to the uttermost*, ^{<1715>}1 Thessalonians 2:15, 16. Their destruction by the Romans was so terrible that it might well be reckoned the completing of God's vengeance upon that persecuting nation.

(3.) They are reprov'd for opposing the gospel of Christ, and doing all they could to obstruct the progress and success of it, v. 52.

[1.] They had not, according to the duty of their place, faithfully expounded to the people those scriptures of the Old Testament which pointed at the Messiah, which if they had been led into the right understanding of by the lawyers, they would readily have embraced him and his doctrine: but, instead of that, they had perverted those texts, and had cast a mist before the eyes of the people, by their corrupt glosses upon them, and this is called *taking away the key of knowledge*; instead of *using* that key for the people, and helping them to use it aright, they *hid it* from them; this is called, in Matthew, *shutting up the kingdom of heaven against men*, ^{<1713>}Matthew 23:13. Note, those who take away the key of knowledge shut up the *kingdom of heaven*.

[2.] They themselves did not embrace the gospel of Christ, though by their acquaintance with the Old Testament they could not but know that the *time was fulfilled*, and the *kingdom of God was at hand*; they saw the prophecies accomplished in that kingdom which our Lord Jesus was about to set up, and yet would not themselves *enter into it*. Nay,

[3.] Them that without any guidance or assistance of theirs were *entering in* they did all they could to *hinder* and discourage, by threatening to *cast*

them out of the synagogue, and otherwise terrifying them. It is bad for people to be averse to revelation, but much worse to be adverse to it.

Lastly, In the close of the chapter we are told how spitefully and maliciously the scribes and *Pharisees* contrived to draw him into a snare, v. 53, 54. They could not bear those cutting reproofs which they must own to be just; but what he had said against them in particular would not *bear an action*, nor could they ground upon it any *criminal* accusation, and therefore, as if, because his reproofs were warm, they hoped to stir him up to some intemperate heat and passion, so as to put him off his guard, they *began to urge him vehemently*, to be very fierce upon him, and to *provoke him to speak of many things*, to propose dangerous questions to him, *laying wait* for something which might serve the design they had of making him either *odious* to the people, or *obnoxious* to the government, or both. Thus did they seek occasion against him, like David's enemies that did *every day wrest his words*, ^{<1865>} Psalm 56:5. *Evil men dig up mischief*. Note, Faithful reprovers of sin must expect to have many enemies, and have need to set a watch before the door of their lips, because of *their observers* that watch for their halting. The prophet complains of those in his time who *make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate*, ^{<2321>} Isaiah 29:21. That we may bear trials of this kind with patience, and get through them with prudence, let us *consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself*.