

CHAPTER 17

In this chapter we have,

- I. Some particular discourses which Christ had with his disciples, in which he teaches them to take heed of giving offence, and to forgive the injuries done them (v. 1-4), encourages them to pray for the increase of their faith (v. 5, 6), and then teaches them humility, whatever service they had done for God (v. 7-10).
- II. His cleansing ten lepers, and the thanks he had from one of them only, and he a Samaritan (v. 11-19).
- III. His discourse with his disciples, upon occasion of an enquiry of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should appear (v. 20-37).

LUKE 17:1-10

THE TREATMENT OF OFFENCES

We are here taught,

- I. That the *giving of offences* is a *great sin*, and that which we should every one of us avoid and carefully watch against, v. 1, 2. We can expect no other than that offences will come, considering the perverseness and frowardness that are in the nature of man, and the wise purpose and counsel of God, who will carry on his work even by those offences, and bring good out of evil. *It is almost impossible but that offences will come*, and therefore we are concerned to provide accordingly; but *woe to him through whom they come*, his doom will be heavy (v. 2), more terrible than that of the worst of the malefactors who are condemned to be thrown into the sea, for they perish under a load of guilt more *ponderous* than that of *millstones*. This includes a woe,
 1. To persecutors, who offer any injury to the least of Christ's *little ones*, in word or deed, by which they are discouraged in serving Christ, and doing their duty, or in danger of being driven off from it.

2. To seducers, who corrupt the truths of Christ and his ordinances, and so *trouble the minds of the disciples*; for they are those by whom *offences come*.

3. To those who, under the profession of the Christian name, live scandalously, and thereby weaken the bands and sadden the hearts of God's people; for by them the offence comes, and it is no abatement of their guilt, nor will be any of their punishment, that it is impossible but offences will come.

II. That the *forgiving of offences* is a *great duty*, and that which we should every one of us make conscience of (v. 3): *Take heed to yourselves*. This may refer either to what goes before, or to what follows: *Take heed that you offend not one of these little ones*. Ministers must be very careful not to say or do any thing that may be a discouragement to weak Christians; there is need of great caution, and they ought to speak and act very considerately, for fear of this: or, “When *your brother trespasses against you*, does you any injury, puts any slight or affront upon you, if he be accessory to any damage done you in your property or reputation, *take heed to yourselves at such a time*, lest you be put into a passion; lest, when your spirits are provoked, you *speak unadvisedly*, and rashly vow to revenge (¹¹⁹Proverbs 24:29): *I will do so to him as he hath done to me*. Take heed what you say at such a time, lest you say amiss.”

1. If you are permitted to *rebuke him*, you are advised to do so. Smother not the resentment, but give it vent. *Tell him his faults*; show him wherein he has not done well nor fairly by you, and, it may be, you will perceive (and you must be very willing to perceive it) that you mistook him, that it was not a *trespass against you*, or not designed, but an *oversight*, and then you will beg his pardon for misunderstanding him; as (¹²⁰Joshua 22:30, 31).

2. You are commanded, upon his repentance, to forgive him, and to be perfectly reconciled to him: *If he repent, forgive him*; forget the injury, never think of it again, much less upbraid him with it. Though he do not repent, you must not therefore bear malice to him, nor meditate revenge; but, if he do not at least *say that he repents*, you are not bound to be so free and familiar with him as you have been. If he be guilty of gross sin, to the offence of the Christian community he is a member of, let him be gravely and mildly reprov'd for his sin, and, upon his repentance, received

into friendship and communion again. This the apostle calls *forgiveness*, ~~400~~ 2 Corinthians 2:7.

3. You are to repeat this every time he repeats his trespass, v. 4. “If he could be supposed to be either so negligent, or so impudent, as to *trespass against thee seven times in a day*, and as often profess himself sorry for his fault, and promise not again to offend in like manner, continue to *forgive him.*” *Humanum est errare — To ere is human.* Note, Christians should be of a forgiving spirit, willing to make the best of every body, and to make all about them easy; forward to extenuate faults, and not to aggravate them; and they should contrive as much to show that they have forgiven an injury as others to show that they resent it.

III. That we have all need to get our *faith* strengthened, because, as that grace grows, all other graces grow. The more firmly we believe the doctrine of Christ, and the more confidently we rely upon the grace of Christ, the better it will be with us every way. Now observe here,

1. The address which the disciples made to Christ, for the strengthening of their faith, v. 5. *The apostles* themselves, so they are here called, though they were prime ministers of state in Christ's kingdom, yet acknowledged the weakness and deficiency of their faith, and saw their need of Christ's grace for the improvement of it; they *said unto the Lord*, “*Increase our faith*, and perfect what is lacking in it.” Let the discoveries of faith be more clear, the desires of faith more strong, the dependences of faith more firm and fixed, the dedications of faith more entire and resolute, and the delights of faith more pleasing. Note, the increase of our faith is what we should earnestly desire, and we should offer up that desire to God in prayer. Some think that they put up this prayer to Christ upon occasion of his pressing upon them the duty of forgiving injuries: “*Lord, increase our faith*, or we shall never be able to practise such a difficult duty as this.” Faith in God's pardoning mercy will enable us to get over the greatest difficulties that lie in the way of our forgiving our brother. Others think that it was upon some other occasion, when the apostles were run aground in working some miracle, and were reproved by Christ for the weakness of their faith, as ~~4176~~ Matthew 17:16, etc. To him that *blamed* them they must apply themselves for grace to *mend* them; to him they cry, *Lord, increase our faith.*

2. The assurance Christ gave them of the wonderful efficacy of true faith (v. 6): “*If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, so small as mustard-seed, but yours is yet less than the least; or so sharp as mustard-seed, so pungent, so exciting to all other graces, as mustard to the animal spirits,*” and therefore used in palsies, “you might do wonders much beyond what you now do; nothing would be too hard for you, that was fit to be done for the glory of God, and the confirmation of the doctrine you preach, yea, though it were the *transplanting of a tree from the earth to the sea.*” See ~~4072~~ Matthew 17:20. As with God *nothing is impossible*, so are all *things possible to him that can believe.*

IV. That, whatever we do in the service of Christ, we must be very humble, and not imagine that we can merit any favour at his hand, or claim it as a debt; even the apostles themselves, who did so much more for Christ than others, must not think that they had thereby made him their debtor.

1. We are all *God's servants* (his *apostles* and *ministers* are in a special manner *so*), and, as servants, are bound to do all we can for his honour. Our whole strength and our whole time are to be employed for him; for *we are not our own*, nor at our own disposal, but at our Master's.

2. As God's servants, it becomes us to fill up our time with duty, and we have a variety of work appointed us to do; we ought to make the end of one service the beginning of another. The servant that has been *ploughing, or feeding cattle, in the field*, when he *comes home* at night has work to do still; he must *wait at table*, v. 7, 8. When we have been employed in the duties of a religious conversation, that will not excuse us from the exercises of devotion; when we have been *working for God*, still we must be *waiting on God*, waiting on him continually.

3. Our principal care here must be to do the duty of our relation, and leave it to our Master to give us the comfort of it, when and how he thinks fit. No servant expects that his master should say to him, *Go and sit down to meat*; it is time enough to do that when we have *done our day's work*. Let us be in care to finish our work, and to do that well, and then the reward will come in due time.

4. It is fit that Christ should be served before us: *Make ready wherewith I may sup, and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink.* Doubting Christians say that they cannot give to Christ the glory of his love as they should, because

they have not yet obtained the comfort of it; but this is wrong. First let Christ have the glory of it, let us attend him with our praises, and then we shall *eat and drink* in the comfort of that love, and in this there is a feast.

5. Christ's servants, when they are to wait upon him, must *gird themselves*, must free themselves from every thing that is entangling and encumbering, and fit themselves with a close application of mind to go on, and go through, with their work; they must *gird up the loins of their mind*. When we have prepared for Christ's entertainment, have *made ready wherewith he may sup*, we must then *gird ourselves*, to attend him. This is expected from servants, and Christ might require it from us, but he does not insist upon it. He was *among his disciples as one that served*, and came not, as other masters, to take state, and *to be ministered unto, but to minister*; witness his washing his disciples' feet.

6. Christ's servants do not so much as merit his thanks for any service they do him: "*Does he thank that servant? Does he reckon himself indebted to him for it? No, by no means.*" No good works of ours can merit any thing at the hand of God. We expect God's favour, not because we have by our services made him a debtor to us, but because he has by his promises made himself a debtor to his own honour, and this we may plead with him, but cannot sue for a *quantum meruit* — *according to merit*.

7. Whatever we do for Christ, though it should be more perhaps than some others do, yet it is no more than is our duty to do. Though we should *do all things that are commanded us*, and alas! in many things we come short of this, yet there is no work of *supererogation*; it is but what we are bound to by that first and great commandment of *loving God with all our heart and soul*, which includes the utmost.

8. The best servants of Christ, even when they do the best services, must humbly acknowledge that they are *unprofitable servants*; though they are not those unprofitable servants that bury their talents, and shall be cast into *utter darkness*, yet as to Christ, and any advantage that can accrue to him by their services, they are *unprofitable*; our *goodness extendeth not unto God*, nor *if we are righteous is he the better*, ^{<161>}Psalm 16:2; ^{<821>}Job 22:2; 35:7. God cannot be a *gainer* by our services, and therefore cannot be made a *debtor* by them. He has no need of us, nor can our services make any addition to his perfections. It becomes us therefore to call ourselves *unprofitable servants*, but to call his service a profitable service, for God is happy without us, but we are undone without him.

LUKE 17:11-19

THE TEN LEPERS

We have here an account of the cure of ten lepers, which we had not in any other of the evangelists. The leprosy was a disease which the Jews supposed to be inflicted for the punishment of some particular sin, and to be, more than other diseases, a mark of God's displeasure; and therefore Christ, who came to take away sin, and turn away wrath, took particular care to cleanse the lepers that fell in his way. Christ was now in his way to Jerusalem, about the mid-way, where he had little acquaintance in comparison with what he had either at Jerusalem or in Galilee. He was now in the frontier-country, the marches that lay between Samaria and Galilee. He went that road to find out these lepers, and to cure them; for he is *found of them that sought him not*. Observe,

I. The address of these lepers to Christ. They were ten in a company; for, though they were shut out from society with others, yet those that were infected were at liberty to converse with one another, which would be some comfort to them, as giving them an opportunity to compare notes, and to condole with one another. Now observe,

1. They *met* Christ *as he entered into a certain village*. They did not stay till he had refreshed himself for some time after the fatigue of his journey, but met him as he *entered* the town, weary as he was; and yet he did not put them off, nor adjourn their cause.

2. They *stood afar off*, knowing that by the law their disease obliged them to *keep their distance*. A sense of our spiritual leprosy should make us very humble in all our approaches to Christ. Who are we, that we should draw near to him that is infinitely pure? We are impure.

3. Their request was unanimous, and very importunate (v. 13): *They lifted up their voices*, being at a distance, and cried, *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us*. those that expect help from Christ must take him for their Master, and be at his command. If he be *Master*, he will be *Jesus, a Saviour*, and not otherwise. They ask not in particular to be cured of their leprosy, but, *Have mercy on us*; and it is enough to refer ourselves to the compassions of Christ, for they *fail not*. They heard the fame of this Jesus (though he had not been much conversant in that country), and that was such as

encouraged them to make application to him; and, if but one of them began in so cheap and easy an address, they would all join.

II. Christ sent them to *the priest*, to be *inspected* by him, who was the judge of the leprosy. He did not tell them positively that they should be *cured*, but bade them *go show themselves to the priests*, v. 14. This was a trial of their obedience, and it was fit that it should be so tried, as Naaman's in a like case: *Go wash in Jordan*. Note, Those that expect Christ's favours must take them in his way and method. Some of these lepers perhaps would be ready to quarrel with the prescription: "Let him either cure or say that he will not, and not send us to the priests on a fool's errand;" but, over-ruled by the rest, they all *went to the priest*. As the ceremonial law was yet in force, Christ took care that it should be observed, and the reputation of it kept up, and due honour paid to the priests in things pertaining to their function; but, probably, he had here a further design, which was to have the priest's *judgment of*, and *testimony to*, the perfectness of the cure; and that the priest might be awakened, and others by him, to enquire after one that had such a commanding power over bodily diseases.

III. *As they went, they were cleansed*, and so became fit to be looked upon by the priest, and to have a certificate from him that they were clean. Observe, *Then* we may expect God to meet us with mercy when we are found in the way of duty. If we do what we can, God will not be wanting to do that for us which we cannot. Go, attend upon instituted ordinances; go and pray, and read the scriptures: *Go show thyself to the priests*; go and open thy case to a faithful minister, and, though the means will not heal thee of themselves, God will heal thee in the diligent use of those means.

IV. One of them, and but one, *returned, to give thanks*, v. 15. When he *saw that he was healed*, instead of going forward to the priest, to be by him declared clean, and so discharged from his confinement, which was all that the rest aimed at, he *turned back* towards him who was the Author of his cure, whom he wished to have the glory of it, before he received the benefit of it. He appears to have been very hearty and affectionate in his thanksgivings: *With a loud voice he glorified God*, acknowledging it to come originally from *him*; and he *lifted up his voice* in his praises, as he had done in his prayers, v. 13. Those that have received mercy from God should publish it to others, that they may praise God too, and may be encouraged by their experiences to trust in him. But he also made a

particular address of thanks to Christ (v. 16): *He fell down at his feet*, put himself into the most humble reverent posture he could, and *gave him thanks*. Note, We ought to give thanks for the favours Christ bestows upon us, and particularly for recoveries from sickness; and we ought to be *speedy* in our returns of praise, and not defer them, lest time wear out the sense of the mercy. It becomes us also to be very humble in our thanksgivings, as well as in our prayers. It becomes the seed of Jacob, like him, to own themselves *less than the least of God's mercies*, when they have received them, as well as when they are in pursuit of them.

V. Christ took notice of this one that had thus distinguished himself; for, it seems, he was a Samaritan, whereas the rest were Jews, v. 16. The Samaritans were separatists from the Jewish church, and had not the pure knowledge and worship of God among them that the Jews had, and yet it was one of them that *glorified God*, when the Jews forgot, or, when it was moved to them, *refused*, to do it. Now observe here,

1. The particular notice Christ took of him, of the grateful return he made, and the ingratitude of those that were sharers with him in the mercy — that he who was a *stranger* to the commonwealth of Israel was the only one that *returned to give glory to God*, v. 17, 18. See here,

(1.) How *rich* Christ is in *doing good*: *Were there not ten cleansed?* Here was a cure by *wholesale*, a whole *hospital* healed with *one word's* speaking. Note, There is an abundance of healing cleansing virtue in the blood of Christ, sufficient for all his patients, though ever so many. Here are *ten at a time* cleansed; we shall have never the less grace for others sharing it.

(2.) How *poor* we are in our returns: “*Where are the nine? Why did not they return to give thanks?*” This intimates that ingratitude is a very common sin. Of the many that receive mercy from God, there are but few, very few, that *return to give thanks* in a right manner (scarcely *one in ten*), that render according to the benefit done to them.

(3.) How those often prove most grateful from whom it was least expected. A Samaritan gives thanks, and a Jew does not. Thus many who profess revealed religion are out-done, and quite shamed, by some that are governed only by natural religion, not only in moral value, but in piety and devotion. This serves here to aggravate the ingratitude of those Jews of whom Christ speaks, as *taking it very ill* that his kindness was so slighted.

And it intimates how justly he resents the ingratitude of the world of mankind, for whom he had *done so much*, and from whom he has *received so little*.

2. The great encouragement Christ gave him, v. 19. The rest had their *cure*, and had it not *revoked*, as justly it might have been, for their ingratitude, though they had such a good example of gratitude set before them; but he had his cure confirmed particularly with an encomium: *Thy faith hath made thee whole*. The rest were *made whole* by the power of Christ, in compassion to their distress, and in answer to their prayer; but he was made whole *by his faith*, by which Christ saw him distinguished from the rest. Note, Temporal mercies are *then* doubled and sweetened to us when they are *fetcht* in by the prayers of faith, and *returned* by the praises of faith.

LUKE 17:20-37

THE PROGRESS OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

We have here a discourse of Christ's concerning the *kingdom of God*, that is, the kingdom of the Messiah, which was now shortly to be *set up*, and of which there was great expectation.

I. Here is the demand of the Pharisees concerning it, which occasioned this discourse. They asked *when the kingdom of God should come*, forming a notion of it as a *temporal kingdom*, which should advance the Jewish nation above the nations of the earth. They were impatient to hear some tidings of its approach; they understood, perhaps, that Christ had taught his disciples to pray for the coming of it, and they had long preached that it was *at hand*. “Now,” say the Pharisees, “when will that glorious view open? When shall we see this *long-looked-for* kingdom?”

II. Christ's reply to this demand, directed to the Pharisees first, and afterwards to his own disciples, who knew better how to understand it (v. 22); what he said to both, he saith to us.

1. That the kingdom of the Messiah was to be a *spiritual kingdom*, and not temporal and external. They asked *when* it would come. “You know not what you ask,” saith Christ; “it may come, and you not be aware of it.” For

it has not an *external show*, as other kingdoms have, the advancements and revolutions of which are taken notice of by the nations of the earth, and fill the newspapers; so they expected this kingdom of God would do. “No,” saith Christ,

(1.) “It will have a silent entrance, without pomp, without noise; it *cometh not with observation*,” *meta paratereseos* — *with outward show*. They desired to have their curiosity satisfied concerning the *time* of it, to which Christ does not give them any answer, but will have their mistakes rectified concerning the nature of it: “*It is not for you to know the times* of this kingdom, these are *secret things*, which belong not to you; but the great intentions of this kingdom, these are *things revealed*.” When Messiah the Prince comes to set up his kingdom, they shall not say, *Lo here*, or *Lo there*, as when a prince goes in progress to visit his territories it is in every body's mouth, he is here, or he is there; for *where the king is there is the court*. Christ will not come with all this talk; it will not be set up in this or that particular place; nor will the court of that kingdom be *here* or *there*; nor will it be *here* or *there* as it respects the country men are of, or the place they dwell in, as if that would place them nearer to, or further from, that kingdom. Those who confine Christianity and the church to this place or that party, cry, *Lo here*, or *Lo there*, than which nothing is more contrary to the designs of catholic Christianity; so do they who make prosperity and external pomp a mark of the true church.

(2.) “It has a *spiritual* influence: *The kingdom of God is within you*.” It is not of this world, ~~John~~ John 18:36. Its glory does not strike men's fancies, but affects their spirits, and its power is over their souls and consciences; from them it receives homage, and not from their bodies only. The *kingdom of God* will not change men's outward condition, but their hearts and lives. Then it *comes* when it makes those humble, and serious, and heavenly, that were proud, and vain, and carnal, — when it *weans* those from the world that were *wedded* to the world; and therefore look for the kingdom of God in the revolutions of the heart, not of the civil government. The kingdom of God is *among you*; so some read it. “You enquire when it will come, and are not aware that it is already begun to be set up *in the midst of you*. The gospel is preached, it is *confirmed* by miracles, it is *embraced* by multitudes, so that it is *in your* nation, though not in your hearts.” Note, It is the folly of many curious enquirers concerning the times to come that they look for that *before them* which is already *among them*.

2. That the setting up of this kingdom was a work that would meet with a great deal of *opposition* and *interruption*, v. 22. The *disciples* thought they should carry all before them, and expected a constant series of success in their work; but Christ tells them it would be otherwise: “*The days will come*, before you have finished your testimony and done your work, *when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man*” (one such a day as we *now* have), “of the prosperity and progress of the gospel, and *shall not see it*. At first, indeed, you will have wonderful success” (so they had, when *thousands* were added to the church *in a day*); “but do not think it will be always so; no, you will be persecuted and scattered, silenced and imprisoned, so that you will not have opportunities of preaching the gospel without fear, as you now have; people will grow cool to it, when they have enjoyed it awhile, so that you will not see such harvests of souls gathered in to Christ afterwards as at first, nor such multitudes flocking to him *as doves to their windows*.” This looks forward to his disciples in after-ages; they must expect much disappointment; the gospel will not be always preached with equal liberty and success. Ministers and churches will sometimes be under *outward restraints*. Teachers will be removed into corners, and solemn assemblies scattered. Then they will wish to see such days of opportunity as they have formerly enjoyed, sabbath days, sacrament days, preaching days, praying days; these are *days of the Son of man*, in which we hear from him, and converse with him. The time may come when we may in vain wish for such days. God teaches us to know the worth of such mercies by the want of them. It concerns us, while they are continued, to *improve* them, and in the years of plenty to lay up in store for the years of famine. Sometimes they will be under *inward restraints*, will not have such tokens of the *presence of the Son of man* with them as they have had. The Spirit is withdrawn from them; they *see not their signs*; the angel comes not down to stir the waters; there is a great stupidity among the children of men, and a great lukewarmness among the children of God; then they shall wish to see such *victorious triumphant* days of the *Son of man* as they have sometimes seen, when he has ridden forth with his bow and his crown, conquering and to conquer, but they will not see them. Note, We must not think that Christ's church and cause are lost because not always alike visible and prevailing.

3. That Christ and his kingdom are not to be looked for in this or that particular place, but his appearance will be general in all places at once (v. 23, 24): “*They will say to you, See here, or, See there; here is one that will*

deliver the Jews out of the hands of the oppressing Romans, or there is one that will deliver the Christians out of the hands of the oppressing Jews; here is the Messiah, and there is his prophet; *here in this mountain, or there at Jerusalem, you will find the true church. Go not after them, nor follow them*; do not heed such suggestions. The kingdom of God was not designed to be the glory of one people only, but to *give light to the Gentiles*; for *as the lightning that lightens out of one part under heaven, and shines all on a sudden irresistibly to the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day.*”

(1.) “The *judgments* that are to destroy the Jewish nation, to lay them waste, and to deliver the Christians from them, shall *fly like lightning* through the land, shall lay all waste from one end of it to another; and those that are marked for this destruction can no more avoid it, nor oppose it, than they can a *flash of lightning.*”

(2.) “The gospel that is to set up Christ's kingdom in the world shall *fly like lightning* through the nations. The kingdom of the Messiah is not to be a *local* thing, but is to be dispersed far and wide over the face of the whole earth; it shall *shine* from Jerusalem to all parts about, and that *in a moment*. The kingdoms of the earth shall be leavened by the gospel ere they are aware of it.” The trophies of Christ's victories shall be erected on the ruins of the devil's kingdom, even in those countries that could never be subdued to the Roman yoke. The design of the setting up of Christ's kingdom was not to make one *nation great*, but to make *all nations good* — some, at least, of all nations; and this point shall be gained, though the *nations rage*, and the *kings of the earth set themselves* with all their might against it.

4. That the Messiah must *suffer* before he must reign (v. 25): “*First must he suffer many things, many hard things, and be rejected of this generation*; and, if he be thus treated, his disciples must expect no other than to *suffer* and be *rejected* too for his sake.” They thought of having the kingdom of the Messiah set up in external splendour: “No,” saith Christ, “we must go by the cross to the crown. The *Son of man must suffer many things*. Pain, and shame, and death, are those *many things*. He must be *rejected by this generation* of unbelieving Jews, before he be embraced by another generation of believing Gentiles, that his gospel may have the honour of triumphing over the greatest opposition from those who ought to have given it the greatest assistance; and thus the excellency of the

power will appear to be *of God, and not of man*; for, though Israel be not gathered, yet he will be *glorious* to the ends of the earth.”

5. That the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah would introduce the destruction of the Jewish nation, whom it would find in a deep sleep of *security*, and drowned in *sensuality*, as the old world was in the days of Noah, and Sodom in the days of Lot, v. 26, etc. Observe,

(1.) How it had been with sinners formerly, and in what posture the judgments of God, of which they had been fairly warned, did at length find them. Look as far back as the *old world*, when all flesh had *corrupted their way*, and the *earth was filled with violence*. Come a little lower, and think how it was with the men of Sodom, who were *wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly*. Now observe concerning both these,

[1.] That they had *fair warning given them* of the ruin that was coming upon them for their sins. Noah was a *preacher of righteousness* to the old world; so was Lot to the Sodomites. They gave them timely notice of what would be in the end of their wicked ways, and that it was not far off.

[2.] That they did not regard the warning given them, and gave no credit, no heed to it. They were very secure, went on in their business as unconcerned as you could imagine; *they did eat, they drank*, indulged themselves in their pleasures, and took no care of any thing else, but to *make provision for the flesh*, counted upon the perpetuity of their present flourishing state, and therefore married wives, and *were given in marriage*, that their families might be built up. They were all very merry; so were the men of Sodom, and yet very busy too: *they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded*. These were lawful things, but the fault was that they minded these inordinately, and their hearts were entirely set upon them, as that they had no heart at all to prepare against the threatened judgments. When they should have been, as the men of Nineveh, *fasting and praying, repenting and reforming*, upon warning given them of an approaching judgment, they were going on securely, *eating flesh, and drinking wine*, when God called *to weeping and to mourning*, ²⁹²⁰Isaiah 22:12, 13.

[3.] That they continued in their security and sensuality, till the threatened judgment came. Until the day *that Noah entered into the ark*, and *Lot went out of Sodom*, nothing said or done to them served to alarm or awaken them. Note, Though the stupidity of sinners in a sinful way is as strange as

it is *without excuse*, yet we are not to think it strange, for it is not without example. It is the *old way that wicked men have trodden*, that have gone slumbering to hell, as if their damnation slumbered while they did.

[4.] That God took care for the preservation of those that were his, who believed and feared, and took the warning themselves which they gave to others. Noah entered *into the ark*, and there he was safe; Lot went out of Sodom, and so went out of harm's way. If some run on *heedless* and *headlong* into destruction, that shall be no prejudice to the salvation of those that believe.

[5.] That they were surprised with the ruin which they would not fear, and were swallowed up in it, to their unspeakable horror and amazement. The *flood came*, and destroyed all the sinners of the old world; *fire and brimstone* came, and *destroyed* all the sinners of Sodom. God has many arrows in his quiver, and uses which he will in making war upon his rebellious subjects, for he can make which he will effectual. But that which is especially intended here is to show what a dreadful surprise destruction will be to those who are secure and sensual.

(2.) How it will be with sinners still (v. 30): *Thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed*. When Christ comes to destroy the Jewish nation, by the Roman armies, the generality of that nation will be found under such a reigning security and stupidity as this. They have warning given by Christ now, and will have it repeated to them by the apostles after him, as they had by Noah and Lot; but it will be all *in vain*. They will continue secure, will go on in their neglect and opposition of Christ and his gospel, till all the Christians are withdrawn from among them and gone to the place of refuge. God will provide for them on the other side Jordan, and then a deluge of judgments shall flow in upon them, which will destroy all the unbelieving Jews. One would have thought that this discourse of our Saviour's, which was public, and not long after *published* to the world, should have awakened them; but it did not, for the hearts of that people were hardened, to their destruction. In like manner, when Jesus Christ shall come to judge the world, at the end of time, sinners will be found in the same secure and careless posture, altogether regardless of the judgment approaching, which will therefore come upon them as a snare; and in like manner the sinners of every age go on securely in their evil ways, and *remember not their latter end*, nor the account that they must give. *Woe to them that are thus at ease in Zion*.

6. That it ought to be the care of his disciples and followers to distinguish themselves from the unbelieving Jews in that day, and, leaving them, their city and country, to themselves, to flee at the signal given, according to the direction that should be given. Let them retire, as Noah to his ark, and Lot to his Zoar. You would have healed Jerusalem, as of old Babylon, but she is not healed, and therefore forsake her, flee out of the midst of her, and deliver every man his soul, ²⁵¹⁶Jeremiah 51:6, 9. This flight of theirs from Jerusalem must be *expeditious*, and must not be retarded by any concern about their worldly affairs (v. 31): “He that shall be on the house-top, when the alarm is given, let him not come down, to take his stuff away, both because he cannot spare so much time, and because the carrying away of his effects will but encumber him and retard his flight.” Let him not regard his stuff at such a time, when it will be next to a miracle of mercy if he have his life given him for a prey. It will be better to leave his stuff behind him than to stay to look after it, and perish with them that believe not. It will be their concern to do as Lot and his family were charged to do: *Escape for thy life. Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*

(2.) When they have made their escape, they must not think of returning (v. 32): “Remember Lot's wife; and take warning by her not only to flee from this Sodom (for so Jerusalem is become, ²³¹¹Isaiah 1:10), but to persevere in your flight, and do not look back, as she did; be not loth to leave a place marked for destruction, whomsoever or whatsoever you leave behind you, that is ever so dear to you.” Those who have left the Sodom of a natural state, let them go forward, and not so much as look a kind look towards it again. Let them not look back, lest they should be tempted to go back; nay, lest that be construed a going back in heart, or an evidence that the heart was left behind. Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt, that she might remain a lasting monument of God's displeasure against apostates, who begin in the spirit and end in the flesh.

(3.) There would be no other way of saving their lives than by quitting the Jews, and, if they thought to save themselves by a coalition with them, they would find themselves mistaken (v. 33): “Whosoever shall seek to save his life, by declining from his Christianity and complying with the Jews, he shall lose it with them and perish in the common calamity; but whosoever is willing to venture his life with the Christians, upon the same bottom on which they venture, to take his lot with them in life and in death, he shall preserve his life, for he shall make sure of eternal life, and is in a likelier way at that time to save his life than those who embark in a

Jewish bottom, or *ensure* upon their securities.” Note, Those do best themselves that trust God in the way of duty.

7. That all good Christians should certainly escape, but many of them very *narrowly*, from that destruction, v. 34-36. When God's judgments are laying all waste, he will take an effectual course to preserve those that are his, by remarkable providences distinguishing between them and others that were nearest to them: *two in a bed, one taken and the other left*; one snatched out of the burning and taken into a place of safety, while the other is left to perish in the common ruin. Note, Though the sword devours one as well as another, and *all things seem to come alike to all*, yet sooner or later it shall be made to appear that the Lord knows them that are his and them that are not, and how to *take out the precious from the vile*. We are sure that *the Judge of all the earth will do right*; and therefore, when he sends a judgment on purpose to avenge the death of his Son upon those that crucified him, he will take care that none of those who glorified him, and gloried in his cross, shall be *taken away* by that judgment.

8. That this distinguishing, dividing, discriminating work shall be done in all places, as far as the kingdom of God shall extend, v. 37. *Where, Lord?* They had enquired concerning the time, and he would not gratify their curiosity with any information concerning that; they therefore tried him with another question: “*Where, Lord? Where shall those be safe that are taken? Where shall those perish that are left?*” The answer is proverbial, and may be explained so as to answer each side of the question: *Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.*

(1.) Wherever the wicked are, who are marked for perdition, they shall *be found out* by the judgments of God; as wherever a dead carcass is, the birds of prey will smell it out, and make a prey of it. The Jews having made themselves a dead and putrefied carcass, *odious* to God's holiness and *obnoxious* to his justice, wherever any of that unbelieving generation is, the judgments of God shall fasten upon them, as the eagles do upon the prey: *Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies* (~~3208~~ Psalm 21:8), though they *set their nests among the stars*, ~~3004~~ Obadiah 1:4. The Roman soldiers will hunt the Jews out of all their recesses and fastnesses, and none shall escape.

(2.) Wherever the godly are, who are marked for preservation, they *shall be found* happy in the enjoyment of Christ. As the dissolution of the

Jewish church shall be extended to all parts, so shall the constitution of the Christian church. Wherever Christ is, believers will flock to him, and meet in him, as eagles about the prey, without being directed or shown the way, by the instinct of the new nature. Now Christ is where his gospel, and his ordinances, and his church are: *For where two or three are gathered in his name there is he in the midst of them*, and thither therefore others will be gathered to him. The kingdom of the Messiah is not to have one particular place for its *metropolis*, such as Jerusalem was to the Jewish church, to which all Jews were to resort; but, *wherever the body is*, wherever the gospel is preached and ordinances are ministered, thither will pious souls resort, there they will find Christ, and by faith feast upon him. Wherever Christ records his name he will meet his people, and bless them, ~~John~~ John 4:21, etc.; ~~1 Timothy~~ 1 Timothy 2:8. Many good interpreters understand it of the gathering of the saints together to Christ in the kingdom of glory: “Ask not where the carcase will be, and how they shall find the way to it, for they shall be under infallible direction; to him who is their living, quickening Head, and the centre of their unity, to him shall the gathering of the people be.”