

CHAPTER 19

In this chapter, we have,

- I.** Christ changing his quarters, leaving Galilee, and coming into the coasts of Judea (v. 1, 2).
- II.** His dispute with the Pharisees about divorce, and his discourse with his disciples upon occasion of it (v. 3-12).
- III.** The kind entertainment he gave to some little children which were brought to him (v. 13-15).
- IV.** An account of what passed between Christ and a hopeful young gentleman that applied himself to him (v. 16-22).
- V.** His discourse with his disciples upon that occasion, concerning the difficulty of the salvation of those that have much in the world, and the certain recompence of those that leave all for Christ (v. 23-30).

◀MATTHEW 19:1-2

MULTITUDES HEALED BY CHRIST

We have here an account of Christ's removal. Observe,

- 1.** He left Galilee. There he had been brought up, and had spent the greatest part of his life in that remote despicable part of the country; it was only upon occasion of the feasts, that he *came up to Jerusalem, and manifested himself there*; and, we may suppose, that, having no constant residence there when he did come, his preaching and miracles were the more observable and acceptable. But it was an instance of his humiliation, and in this, as in other things, he appeared in a mean state, that he would go under the character of a Galilean, a north-countryman, the least polite and refined part of the nation. Most of Christ's sermons hitherto had been preached, and most of his miracles wrought, in Galilee; but now, having *finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee*, and it was his final farewell; for (unless his *passing through the midst of Samaria and Galilee*, ◀LUKE Luke 17:11, was after this, which yet was but a visit *in transitu* — as he

passed through the country) he never came to Galilee again till after his resurrection, which makes this transition very remarkable. Christ did not take his leave of Galilee till he had done his work there, and then he departed thence. Note, As Christ's faithful ministers are not taken out of the world, so they are not removed from any place, till they have finished their testimony in that place, ^{<611>}Revelation 11:7. This is very comfortable to those that follow not their own humours, but God's providence, in their removals, that their sayings shall be finished before they depart. And who would desire to continue any where longer than he has work to do for God there?

2. *He came into the coasts of Judea, beyond Jordan, that they might have their day of visitation as well as Galilee, for they also belonged to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* But still Christ kept to those parts of Canaan that lay towards other nations: Galilee is called *Galilee of the Gentiles*; and the Syrians dwelt beyond Jordan. Thus Christ intimated, that, while he kept within the confines of the Jewish nation, he had his eye upon the Gentiles, and his gospel was aiming and coming toward them.

3. *Great multitudes followed him.* Where Shiloh is, there will *the gathering of the people be.* The *redeemed of the Lord* are such as *follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes,* ^{<644>}Revelation 14:4. When Christ departs, it is best for us to follow him. It was a piece of respect to Christ, and yet it was a continual trouble, to be thus crowded after, wherever he went; but he sought not his own ease, nor, considering how mean and contemptible this mob was (as some would call them), his own honour much, in the eye of the world; he *went about doing good*; for so it follows, *he healed them there.* This shows what they followed him for, to have their sick healed; and they found him as able and ready to help here, as he had been in Galilee; for, wherever this *Sun of righteousness arose*, it was *with healing under his wings.* *He healed them there*, because he would not have them follow him to Jerusalem, lest it should give offence. *He shall not strive, nor cry.*

⌘ MATTHEW 19:3-12

THE LAW OF DIVORCE

We have here the law of Christ in the case of divorce, occasioned, as some other declarations of his will, by a dispute with *the Pharisees*. So patiently did he endure the contradiction of sinners, that he turned it into instructions to his own disciples! Observe, here

I. The case proposed by the Pharisees (v. 3); *Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?* This they asked, tempting him, not desiring to be taught by him. Some time ago, he had, in Galilee, declared his mind in this matter, against that which was the common practice (⌘ Matthew 5:31, 32); and if he would, in like manner, declare himself now against divorce, they would make use of it for the prejudicing and incensing of the people of this country against him, who would look with a jealous eye upon one that attempted to cut them short in a liberty they were fond of. They hoped he would lose himself in the affections of the people as much by this as by any of his precepts. Or, the temptation might be designed this: If he should say that divorces were not lawful, they would reflect upon him as an enemy to the law of Moses, which allowed them; if he should say that they were, they would represent his doctrine as not having that perfection in it which was expected in the doctrine of the Messiah; since, though divorces were tolerated, they were looked upon by the stricter sort of people as not of good report. Some think, that, though the law of Moses did permit divorce, yet, in assigning the just causes for it, there was a controversy between the Pharisees among themselves, and they desired to know what Christ said to it. Matrimonial cases have been numerous, and sometimes intricate and perplexed; made so not by the law of God, but by the lusts and follies of men; and often in these cases people resolve, before they ask, what they will do.

Their question is, *Whether a man may put away his wife for every cause.* That it might be done for some cause, even for that of fornication, was granted; but may it be done, as now it commonly was done, by the looser sort of people, for every cause; for any cause that a man shall think fit to assign, though ever so frivolous; upon every dislike or displeasure? The toleration, in this case, permitted it, *in case she found no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her,* ⌘ Deuteronomy

24:1. This they interpreted so largely as to make any disgust, though causeless, the ground of a divorce.

II. Christ's answer to this question; though it was proposed to tempt him, yet, being a case of conscience, and a weighty one, he gave a full answer to it, not a direct one, but an effectual one; laying down such principles as undeniably prove that such arbitrary divorces as were then in use, which made the matrimonial bond so very precarious, were by no means lawful. Christ himself would not give the rule without a reason, nor lay down his judgment without scripture proof to support it. Now his argument is this; "If husband and wife are by the will and appointment of God joined together in the strictest and closest union, then they are not to be lightly, and upon every occasion, separated; if the know be sacred, it cannot be easily untied." Now, to prove that there is such a union between man and wife, he urges three things.

1. The creation of Adam and Eve, concerning which he appeals to their own knowledge of the scriptures; *Have ye not read?* It is some advantage in arguing, to deal with those that own, and have read, the scriptures; *Ye have read* (but have not considered) *that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female,* ⁽¹⁰²⁾Genesis 1:27; 5:2. Note, It will be of great use to us often to think of our creation, how and by whom, what and for what, we were created. *He made them male and female*, one female for one male; so that Adam could not divorce his wife, and take another, for there was no other to take. It likewise intimated an inseparable union between them; Eve was a rib out of Adam's side, so that he could not put her away, but he must put away a piece of himself, and contradict the manifest indications of her creation. Christ hints briefly at this, but, in appealing to what they had read, he refers them to the original record, where it is observable, that, though the rest of the living creatures were made male and female, yet it is not said so concerning any of them, but only concerning mankind; because between man and woman the conjunction is rational, and intended for nobler purposes than merely the pleasing of sense and the preserving of a seed; and it is therefore more close and firm than that between male and female among the brutes, who were not capable of being such help-meets for one another as Adam and Ever were. Hence the manner of expression is somewhat singular (⁽¹⁰²⁾Genesis 1:27), *In the image of God created he him, male and female created he them;* *him* and *them* are used promiscuously; being one by

creation before they were two, when they became one again by marriage-covenant, that oneness could not but be closer and indissoluble.

2. The fundamental law of marriage, which is, that *a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife*, v. 5. The relation between husband and wife is nearer than that between parents and children; now, if the filial relation may not easily be violated, much less may the marriage union be broken. May a child desert his parents, or may a parent abandon his children, for any cause, for every cause? No, by no means. Much less may a husband put away his wife, betwixt whom, though not by nature, yet by divine appointment, the relation is nearer, and the bond of union stronger, than between parents and children; for that is in a great measure superseded by marriage, when a man must leave his parents, to cleave to his wife. See here the power of a divine institution, that the result of it is a union stronger than that which results from the highest obligations of nature.

3. The nature of the marriage contract; it is a union of persons; *They twain shall be one flesh*, so that (v. 6) *they are no more twain, but one flesh*. A man's children are pieces of himself, but his wife is himself. As the conjugal union is closer than that between parents and children, so it is in a manner equivalent to that between one member and another in the natural body. As this is a reason why husbands should love their wives, so it is a reason why they should not put away their wives, for *no man ever yet hated his own flesh*, or cut it off, *but nourishes and cherishes it*, and does all he can to preserve it. They two shall be one, therefore there must be but one wife, for God made but one Eve for one Adam, ³⁰²⁵Malachi 2:15.

From hence he infers, *What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*. Note,

(1.) Husband and wife are of God's joining together; *synezeuxen* — *he hath yoked them together*, so the word is, and it is very significant. God himself instituted the relation between husband and wife in the state of innocence. Marriage and the sabbath are the most ancient of divine ordinances. Though marriage be not peculiar to the church, but common to the world, yet, being stamped with a divine institution, and here ratified by our Lord Jesus, it ought to be managed *after a godly sort, and sanctified by the word of God, and prayer*. A conscientious regard to God in this

ordinance would have a good influence upon the duty, and consequently upon the comfort, of the relation.

(2.) Husband and wife, being joined together by the ordinance of God, are not to be put asunder by any ordinance of man. Let not man put them asunder; not the husband himself, nor any one for him; not the magistrate, God never gave him authority to do it. The God of Israel hath said, that *he hateth putting away*, ³⁰²⁶Malachi 2:16. It is a general rule that man must not go about to *put asunder what God hath joined together*.

III. An objection started by the Pharisees against this; an objection not destitute of colour and plausibility (v. 7); “*Why did Moses command to give a writing of divorcement, in case a man did put away his wife?*” He urged scripture reason against divorce; they allege scripture authority for it. Note, The seeming contradictions that are in the word of God are great stumbling-blocks to men of corrupt minds. It is true, *Moses was faithful to him that appointed him*, and commanded nothing but *what he received from the Lord*; but as to the thing itself, what they call a *command* was only as *allowance* (⁶²⁴¹Deuteronomy 24:1), and designed rather to restrain the exorbitances of it than to give countenance to the thing itself. The Jewish doctors themselves observe such limitations in that law, that it could not be done without great deliberation. A particular reason must be assigned, the bill of divorce must be written, and, as a judicial act, must have all the solemnities of a deed, executed and enrolled. It must be given into the hands of the wife herself, and (which would oblige men, if they had any consideration in them, to consider) they were expressly forbidden ever to come together again.

IV. Christ's answer to this objection, in which,

1. He rectifies their mistake concerning the law of Moses; they called it a *command*, Christ calls it but a *permission*, a *toleration*. Carnal hearts will take an ell if but an inch be given them. The law of Moses, in this case, was a political law, which God gave, as the Governor of that people; and it was for reasons of state, that divorces were tolerated. The strictness of the marriage union being the result, not of a natural, but of a positive law, the wisdom of God dispensed with divorces in some cases, without any impeachment of his holiness.

But Christ tells them there was a reason for this toleration, not at all for their credit; *It was because of the hardness of your hearts*, that you were

permitted to *put away your wives*. Moses complained of the people of Israel in his time, that *their hearts were hardened* (^{489b}Deuteronomy 9:6; 31:27), hardened against God; this is here meant of their being hardened against their relations; they were generally violent and outrageous, which way soever they took, both in their appetites and in their passions; and therefore if they had not been allowed to put away their wives, when they had conceived a dislike of them, they would have used them cruelly, would have beaten and abused them, and perhaps have murdered them. Note, There is not a greater piece of hard-heartedness in the world, than for a man to be harsh and severe with his own wife. The Jews, it seems, were infamous for this, and therefore were allowed to put them away; better divorce them than do worse, than that *the altar of the Lord should be covered with tears*, (^{493b}Malachi 2:13). A little compliance, to humour a madman, or a man in a frenzy, may prevent a greater mischief. Positive laws may be dispensed with for the preservation of the law of nature, for God *will have mercy and not sacrifice*; but then those are hard-hearted wretches, who have made it necessary; and none can wish to have the liberty of divorce, without virtually owning the hardness of their hearts. Observe, He saith, It is for the hardness of *your* hearts, not only theirs who lived then, but all their seed. Note, God not only sees, but foresees, the hardness of men's hearts; he suited both the ordinances and providences of the Old Testament to the temper of that people, both in terror. Further observe, The law of Moses considered the hardness of men's hearts, but the gospel of Christ cures it; and his grace *takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh*. By the law was the knowledge of sin, but by the gospel was the conquest of it.

2. He reduces them to the original institution; *But from the beginning it was not so*. Note, Corruptions that are crept into any ordinance of God must be purged out by having recourse to the primitive institution. If the copy be vicious, it must be examined and corrected by the original. Thus, when St. Paul would redress the grievances in the church of Corinth about the Lord's supper, he appealed to the appointment (^{412b}1 Corinthians 11:23), So and so *I received from the Lord*. Truth was from the beginning; we must therefore enquire for *the good old way* (^{216b}Jeremiah 6:16), and must reform, not by later patterns, but by ancient rules.

3. He settles the point by an express law; *I say unto you* (v. 9); and it agrees with what he said before (^{412b}Matthew 5:32); there it was said in

preaching, here in dispute, but it is the same, for Christ is constant to himself. Now, in both these places,

(1.) He allows divorce, in case of adultery; the reason of the law against divorce being this, *They two shall be one flesh*. If the wife play the harlot, and make herself one flesh with an adulterer, the reason of the law ceases, and so does the law. By the law of Moses adultery was punished with death, ^{<1522>}Deuteronomy 22:22. Now our Saviour mitigates the rigour of that, and appoints divorce to be the penalty. Dr. Whitby understands this, not of adultery, but (because our Saviour uses the word *porneia* — *fornication*) of uncleanness committed before marriage, but discovered afterward; because, if it were committed after, it was a capital crime, and there needed no divorce.

(2.) He disallows it in all other cases: *Whosoever puts away his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery*. This is a direct answer to their query, that it is not lawful. In this, as in other things, gospel times are *times of reformation*, ^{<390>}Hebrews 9:10. The law of Christ tends to reinstate man in his primitive integrity; the law of love, conjugal love, is no new commandment, but was from the beginning. If we consider what mischiefs to families and states, what confusions and disorders, would follow upon arbitrary divorces, we shall see how much this law of Christ is for our own benefit, and what a friend Christianity is to our secular interests.

The law of Moses allowing divorce for the hardness of men's hearts, and the law of Christ forbidding it, intimate, that Christians being under a dispensation of love and liberty, tenderness of heart may justly be expected among them, that they will not be hard-hearted, like Jews, *for God has called us to peace*. There will be no occasion for divorces, if we *forbear one another, and forgive one another, in love*, as those that are, and hope to be, forgiven, and have found God not forward to *put us away*, ^{<250>}Isaiah 50:1. No need of divorces, if *husbands love their wives, and wives be obedient to their husbands*, and they live together as heirs of the grace of life: and these are the laws of Christ, such as we find not in all the law of Moses.

V. Here is a suggestion of the disciples against this law of Christ (v. 10); *If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is better not to marry*. It seems, the disciples themselves were loth to give up the liberty of divorce,

thinking it a good expedient for preserving comfort in the married state; and therefore, like sullen children, if they have not what they would have, they will throw away what they have. If they may not be allowed to put away their wives when they please, they will have no wives at all; though, from the beginning, when no divorce was allowed, God said, *It is not good for man to be alone, and blessed them*, pronounced them blessed who were thus strictly joined together; yet, unless they may have a liberty of divorce, they think it is good for a man not to marry. Note,

1. Corrupt nature is impatient of restraint, and would fain break Christ's bonds in sunder, and have a liberty for its own lusts.

2. It is a foolish, peevish thing for men to abandon the comforts of this life, because of the crosses that are commonly woven in with them, as if we must needs go out of the world, because we have not every thing to our mind in the world; or must enter into no useful calling or condition, because it is made our duty to abide in it. No, whatever our condition is, we must bring our minds to it, be thankful for its comforts, submissive to its crosses, and, as God has done, *set the one over against the other*, and make the best of that which is, ^{2074}Ecclesiastes 7:14. If the yoke of marriage may not be thrown off at pleasure, it does not follow that *therefore* we must not come under it; but *therefore*, when we do come under it, we must resolve to comport with it, by love, and meekness, and patience, which will make divorce the most unnecessary undesirable thing that can be.

VI. Christ's answer to this suggestion (v. 11, 12), in which,

1. He allows it good for some not to marry; *He that is able to receive it, let him receive it*. Christ allowed what the disciples said, *It is good not to marry*; not as an objection against the prohibition of divorce, as they intended it, but as giving them a rule (perhaps no less displeasing to them), that they who have the gift of continence, and are not under any necessity of marrying, do best if they continue single (^{411}1 Corinthians 7:1); for they that are unmarried have opportunity, if they have but a heart, to care more *for the things of the Lord, how they may please the Lord* (^{412}1 Corinthians 7:32-34). being less encumbered with the cares of this life, and having a greater vacancy of thought and time to mind better things. The increase of grace is better than the increase of the family, and fellowship with the

Father and with his Son Jesus Christ is to be preferred before any other fellowship.

2. He disallows it, as utterly mischievous, to forbid marriage, because *all men cannot receive this saying*; indeed few can, and therefore the crosses of the married state must be borne, rather than that men should run themselves into temptation, to avoid them; *better marry than burn*.

Christ speaks here of a twofold unaptness to marriage.

(1.) That which is a calamity by the providence of God; such as those labour under who are born eunuchs, or made so by men, who, being incapable of answering one great end of marriage, ought not to marry. But to that calamity let them oppose the opportunity that there is in the single state of serving God better, to balance it.

(2.) That which is a virtue by the grace of God; such is theirs who *have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake*. This is meant of an unaptness for marriage, not in body (which some, through mistake of this scripture, have foolishly and wickedly brought upon themselves), but in mind. Those have thus made themselves eunuchs who have attained a holy indifference to all the delights of the married state, have a fixed resolution, in the strength of God's grace, wholly to abstain from them; and by fasting, and other instances of mortification, have subdued all desires toward them. These are they that *can receive* this saying; and yet these are not to bind themselves by a vow that they will never marry, only that, in the mind they are now in, they purpose not to marry.

Now,

[1.] This affection to the single state must be given of God; for none can receive it, *save they to whom it is given*. Note, Continence is a special gift of God to some, and not to others; and when a man, in the single state, finds by experience that he has this gift, he may determine with himself, and (as the apostle speaks, ⁴⁰⁷⁵1 Corinthians 7:37), stand steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but having power over his own will, that he will keep himself so. But men, in this case, must take heed lest they boast of a false gift, ⁴⁰⁵⁴Proverbs 25:14.

[2.] The single state must be chosen for the kingdom of heaven's sake; in those who resolve never to marry, only that they may save charges, or may gratify a morose selfish humour, or have a greater liberty to serve other

lusts and pleasures, it is so far from being a virtue, that it is an ill-natured vice; but when it is for religion's sake, not as in itself a meritorious act (which papists make it), but only as a means to keep our minds more entire for, and more intent upon, the services of religion, and that, having no families to provide for, we may do the more works of charity, then it is approved and accepted of God. Note, That condition is best for us, and to be chosen and stuck to accordingly, which is best for our souls, and tends most to the preparing of us for, and the preserving of us to, the kingdom of heaven.

403 MATTHEW 19:13-15

CHRIST'S TENDERNESS TO CHILDREN

We have here the welcome which Christ gave to some little children that were brought to him. Observe,

I. The faith of those that brought them. How many they were, that were brought, we are not told; but they were so little as to be taken up in arms, a year old, it may be, or two at most. The account here given of it, is, that *there were brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray*, v. 13. Probably they were their parents, guardians, or nurses, that brought them; and herein,

1. They testified their respect to Christ, and the value they had for his favour and blessing. Note, Those who glorify Christ by coming to him themselves, should further glorify him by bringing all they have, or have influence upon, to him likewise. Thus give him the honour of his unsearchable riches of grace, his overflowing, never-failing, fulness. We cannot better honour Christ than by making use of him.

2. They did a kindness to their children, not doubting but they would fare the better, in this world and the other, for the blessing and prayers of the Lord Jesus, whom they looked upon at least as an extraordinary person, as a prophet, if not as a priest and king; and the blessings of such were valued and desired. Others brought their children to Christ, to be healed when they were sick; but these children were under no present malady, only they desired a blessing for them. Note, It is a good thing when we come to Christ ourselves, and bring our children to him, before we are driven to

him (as we say) by woe-need; not only to visit him when we are in trouble, but to address ourselves to him in a sense of our general dependence on him, and of the benefit we expect by him, this is pleasing to him.

They desired that he would put his hands on them, and pray. Imposition of hands was a ceremony used especially in paternal blessings; Jacob used it when he blessed and adopted the sons of Joseph, ¹⁴⁸⁴Genesis 48:14. It intimates something of love and familiarity mixed with power and authority, and bespeaks an efficacy in the blessing. Whom Christ prays for in heaven, he *puts his hand upon* by his Spirit. Note,

(1.) Little children may be brought to Christ as needing, and being capable of receiving, blessings from him, and having an interest in his intercession.

(2.) Therefore they should be brought to him. We cannot do better for our children than to commit them to the Lord Jesus, to be wrought upon, and prayed for, by him. We can but beg a blessing for them, it is Christ only that can command the blessing.

II. The fault of the disciples in rebuking them. They discountenanced the address as vain and frivolous, and reproved them that made it as impertinent and troublesome. Either they thought it below their Master to take notice of little children, except any thing in particular ailed them; or, they thought he had toil enough with his other work, and would not have him diverted from it; or, they thought if such an address as this were encouraged, all the country would bring their children to him, and they should never see an end of it. Note, It is well for us, that Christ has more love and tenderness in him than the best of his disciples have. And let us learn of him not to discountenance any willing well-meaning souls in their enquiries after Christ, though they are but weak. If *he* do not break the bruised reed, *we* should not. Those that seek unto Christ, must not think it strange if they meet with opposition and rebuke, even from good men, who think they know the mind of Christ better than they do.

III. The favour of our Lord Jesus. See how he carried it here.

1. He rebuked the disciples (v. 14); *Suffer little children, and forbid them not*; and he rectifies the mistake they went upon, *Of such is the kingdom of heaven*. Note,

(1.) The children of believing parents belong to the kingdom of heaven, and are members of the visible church. Of such, not only of such in

disposition and affection (that might have served for a reason why doves or lambs should be brought to him), but of such, *in age*, is the kingdom of heaven; to them pertain the privileges of visible church-membership, as among the Jews of old. *The promise is to you, and to your children. I will be a God to thee and thy seed.*

(2.) That for this reason they are welcome to Christ, who is ready to entertain those who, when they cannot come themselves, are brought to him. And this,

[1.] In respect to the little children themselves, whom he has upon all occasions expressed a concern for; and who, having participated in the malignant influences of the first Adam's sin, must needs share in the riches of the second Adam's grace, else what would become of the apostle's parallel? ^{<4452>}1 Corinthians 15:22; ^{<4514>}Romans 5:14, 15, etc. Those who are given to Christ, as part of his purchase, he will in no wise cast out.

[2.] With an eye to the faith of the parents who brought them, and presented them as living sacrifices. Parents are trustees of their children's wills, are empowered by nature to transact for their benefit; and therefore Christ accepts their dedication of them as their act and deed, and will own these dedicated things in the day he makes up his jewels.

[3.] Therefore he takes it ill of those who forbid them, and exclude those whom he has received: who cast them out from the inheritance of the Lord, and say, *Ye have no part in the Lord* (see ^{<4627>}Joshua 22:27); and who forbid water, that they should be baptized, who, if that promise be fulfilled (^{<2448>}Isaiah 44:3), *have received the Holy Ghost as well as we*, for aught we know.

2. *He received the little children*, and did as he was desired; *he laid his hands on them*, that is, *he blessed them*. The strongest believer lives not so much by apprehending Christ as by being apprehended of him (^{<3182>}Philippians 3:12), not so much by knowing God as by being known of him (^{<4809>}Galatians 4:9); and this the least child is capable of. If they cannot stretch out their hands to Christ, yet he can lay his hands on them, and so make them his own, and own them for his own.

Methinks it has something observable in it, that, when he had done this, he departed thence, v. 15. As if he reckoned he had done enough there, when

he had thus asserted the rights of the lambs of his flock, and made this provision for a succession of subjects in his kingdom.

⌘ MATTHEW 19:16-22

THE RICH RULER'S ENQUIRY

Here is an account of what passed between Christ and a hopeful young gentleman that addressed himself to him upon a serious errand; he said to be a *young man* (v. 20); and I called him a *gentleman*, not only because he had great possessions, but because he was a ruler (⌘ Luke 18:18), a magistrate, a justice of peace in his country; it is probable that he had abilities beyond his years, else his youth would have debarred him from the magistracy.

Now concerning this young gentleman, we are told how fair he bid for heaven and came short.

I. How fair he bid for heaven, and how kindly and tenderly Christ treated him, in favour to good beginnings. Here is,

1. The gentleman's serious address to Jesus Christ (v. 16); *Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?* Not a better question could be asked, not more gravely.

(1.) He gives Christ an honourable title, *Good Master* — *didaskale agathe*. It signifies not a ruling, but a teaching Master. His calling him *Master*, bespeaks his submissiveness, and willingness to be taught; and *good Master*, his affection and peculiar respect to the Teacher, like that of Nicodemus, *Thou art a Teacher come from God*. We read not of any that addressed themselves to Christ more respectfully than that Master in Israel and this ruler. It is a good thing when men's quality and dignity increase their civility and courtesies. It was gentleman-like to give this title of respect to Christ, notwithstanding the present meanness of his appearance. It was not usual among the Jews to accost their teachers with the title of *good*; and therefore this bespeaks the uncommon respect he had for Christ. Note, Jesus Christ is a good Master, the best of teachers; none teaches like him; he is distinguished for his goodness, for *he can have compassion on the ignorant; he is meek and lowly in heart*.

(2.) He comes to him upon an errand of importance (none could be more so), and he came not to tempt him, but sincerely desiring to be taught by him. His question is, *What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?* By this it appears,

[1.] That he had a firm belief of eternal life; he was no Sadducee. He was convinced that there is a happiness prepared for those in the other world, who are prepared for it in this world.

[2.] That he was concerned to make it sure to himself that he should live eternally, and was desirous of that life more than any of the delights of this life. It was a rare thing for one of his age and quality to appear so much in care about another world. The rich are apt to think it below them to make such an enquiry as this; and young people think it time enough yet; but here was a young man, and a rich man, solicitous about his soul and eternity.

[3.] That he was sensible something must be done, some good thing, for the attainment of this happiness. It is *by patient continuance in well-doing that we seek for immortality*, ^{<817>}Romans 2:7. We must be doing, and doing that which is good. The blood of Christ is the only purchase of eternal life (he merited it for us), but obedience to Christ is the appointed way to it, ^{<889>}Hebrews 5:9.

[4.] That he was, or at least thought himself, willing to do what was to be done for the obtaining of this eternal life. Those that know what it is to have eternal life, and what it is to come short of it, will be glad to accept of it upon any terms. Such a holy violence does the kingdom of heaven suffer. Note, While there are many that say, *Who will show us any good?* our great enquiry should be, *What shall we do, that we may have eternal life?* What shall we do, to be for ever happy, happy in another world? For this world has not that in it that will make us happy.

2. The encouragement that Jesus Christ gave to this address.. address. It is not his manner to send any away without an answer, that come to him on such an errand, for nothing pleases him more, v. 17. In his answer,

(1.) He tenderly assists his faith; for, doubtless, he did not mean it for a reproof, when he said, *Why callest thou me good?* But he would seem to find that faith in what he said, when he called him *good Master*, which the gentleman perhaps was not conscious to himself of; he intended no more

than to own and honour him as a good man, but Christ would lead him to own and honour him as a good God; for *there is none good but one, that is God*. Note, As Christ is graciously ready to make the best that he can of what is said or done amiss; so he is ready to make the most that can be of what is well said and well done. His constructions are often better than our intentions; as in that, "*I was hungry, and you gave me meat, though you little thought it was to me.*" Christ will have this young man either know him to be God, or not call him *good*; to teach us to transfer to God all the praise that is at any time given to us. Do any call us *good*? Let us tell them all goodness is from God, and therefore not to us, but to him give glory. All crowns must lie before his throne. Note, God only is good, and there is none essentially, originally, and unchangeably, good, but God only. His goodness is of and from himself, and all the goodness in the creature is from him; he is the Fountain of goodness, and whatever the streams are, *all the springs are in him*, ³⁰¹⁷James 1:17. He is the great Pattern and Sample of goodness; by him all goodness is to be measured; that is good which is like him, and agreeable to his mind. We in our language call him *God*, because he is good. In this, as in other things, our Lord Jesus was *the Brightness of his glory* (and his goodness is his glory), and *the express image of his person*, and therefore fitly called *good Master*.

(2.) He plainly directs his practice, in answer to his question. He started that thought of his being good, and therefore God, but did not stay upon it, lest he should seem to divert from, and so to drop, the main question, as many do in needless disputes and strifes of words. Now Christ's answer is, in short, this, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*.

[1.] The end proposed is, entering into life. The young man, in his question, spoke of eternal life. Christ, in his answer, speaks of *life*; to teach us, that eternal life is the only true life. The words concerning that are the words of *this life*, ⁴⁴¹¹Acts 5:20. The present life scarcely deserves the name of life, for *in the midst of life we are in death*. Or into *life*, that spiritual life which is the beginning and earnest of eternal life. He desired to know how he might *have* eternal life; Christ tells him how he might *enter into it*; we *have* it by the merit of Christ, a mystery which was not as yet fully revealed, and therefore Christ waives that; but the way of *entering into it*, is, by obedience, and Christ directs us in that. By the former we *make* our title, by this, as by our evidence, we *prove* it; it is *by adding to faith virtue*, that an *entrance* (the word here used) is *ministered to us into the everlasting kingdom*, ⁶⁰⁵2 Peter 1:5, 11. Christ, who is our

Life, is the Way to the Father, and to the vision and fruition of him; he is the only Way, but duty, and the obedience of faith, are the way to Christ. There is an entrance into life hereafter, at death, at the great day, a complete entrance, and those only shall then enter into life, that do their duty; it is the diligent faithful servant that shall then *enter into the joy of his Lord*, and that joy will be his eternal life. There is an entrance into life now; *we who have believed, do enter into rest*, ^{<304>}Hebrews 4:3. We have peace, and comfort, and joy, in the believing prospect of the glory to be revealed, and to this also sincere obedience is indispensably necessary.

[2.] The way prescribed is, keeping the commandments. Note, Keeping the commandments of God, according as they are revealed and made known to us, is the only way to life and salvation; and sincerity herein is accepted through Christ as our gospel perfection, provision being made of pardon, upon repentance, wherein we come short. Through Christ we are delivered from the condemning power of the law, but the commanding power of it is lodged in the hand of the Mediator, and under that, in that hand, we still are *under the law to Christ* (^{<402>}1 Corinthians 9:21), under it as a rule, though not as a covenant. *Keeping the commandments* includes *faith in Jesus Christ*, for that is the great commandment (^{<612>}1 John 3:23), and it was one of the laws of Moses, that, when the great Prophet should be raised up, they should hear him. Observe, In order to our happiness here and for ever, it is not enough for us to *know* the commandments of God, but we must *keep* them, keep in them as our way, keep to them as our rule, keep them as our treasure, and with care, as the apple of our eye.

[3.] At his further instance and request, he mentions some particular commandments which he must keep (v. 18, 19); *The young man saith unto him, Which?* Note, Those that would do the commandments of God, must seek them diligently, and enquire after them, what they are. Ezra set himself to seek the law, and to *do it*, ^{<470>}Ezra 7:10. "There were many commandments in the law of Moses; good Master, let me know which those are, the keeping o which is necessary to salvation."

In answer to this, Christ specifies several, especially the commandments of the second table. *First*, That which concerns our own and our neighbour's life; *Thou shalt do no murder*. *Secondly*, Our own and our neighbour's chastity, which should be as dear to us as life itself; *Thou shalt not commit adultery*. *Thirdly*, Our own and our neighbour's wealth and outward estate, as hedged about by the law of property; *Thou shalt not*

steal. Fourthly, That which concerns truth, and our own and our neighbour's good name; *Thou shalt not bear false witness*, neither for *thyself*, nor *against thy neighbour*; for so it is here left at large. *Fifthly*, That which concerns the duties of particular relations; *Honour thy father and mother*. *Sixthly*, That comprehensive law of love, which is the spring and summary of all these duties, whence they all flow, on which they are all founded, and in which they are all fulfilled; *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself* (⁴⁸¹⁴Galatians 5:14; ⁵¹¹⁹Romans 13:9), that *royal law*, ⁵¹¹⁸James 2:8. Some think this comes in here, not as the sum of the second table, but as the particular import of the tenth commandment; *Thou shalt not covet*, which Mark is, *Defraud not*; intimating that it is not lawful for me to design advantage or gain to myself by the diminution or loss of another; for that is to covet, and to love myself better than my neighbour, whom I ought to love a myself, and to treat as I would myself be treated.

Our Saviour here specifies second-table duties only; not as if the first were of less account, but,

1. Because they that now sat in Moses's seat, either wholly neglected, or greatly corrupted, these precepts in their preaching. While they pressed the tithing of *mint, anise, and cummin*, — *judgment, and mercy, and faith*, the summary of second-table duties, were overlooked, ⁴²³³Matthew 23:23. Their preaching ran out all in rituals and nothing in morals; and therefore Christ pressed that most, which they least insisted on. As one truth, so one duty, must not jostle out another, but each must know its place, and be kept in it; but equity requires that that be helped up, which is most in danger of being thrust out. That is the present truth which we are called to bear our testimony to, not only which is opposed, but which is neglected.

2. Because he would teach him, and us all, that moral honesty is a necessary branch of true Christianity, and to be minded accordingly. Though a mere moral man comes short of being a complete Christian, yet an immoral man is certainly no true Christian; for the grace of God teaches us to live soberly and righteously, as well as godly. Nay, though first-table duties have in them more of the essence of religion, yet second-table duties have in them more of the evidence of it. Our light *burns* in love to God, but it *shines* in love to our neighbour.

II. See here how he came short, though he bid thus fair, and wherein he failed; he failed by two things.

1. By pride, and a vain conceit of his own merit and strength; this is the ruin of thousands, who keep themselves miserable by fancying themselves happy. When Christ told him what commandments he must keep, he answered very scornfully, *All these things have I kept from my youth up*, v. 20.

Now,

(1.) According as he understood the law, as prohibiting only the outward acts of sin, I am apt to think that he said true, and Christ knew it, for he did not contradict him; nay, it is said in Mark, *He loved him*; so far was very good and pleasing to Christ. St. Paul reckons it a privilege, not contemptible in itself, though it was dross in comparison with Christ, that he was, *as toughting righteousness that is in the law, blameless*, <sup>Philippians 3:6. His observance of these commands was universal; *All these have I kept*: it was early and constant; *from my youth up*. Note, A man may be free from gross sin, and yet come short of grace and glory. His hands may be clean from external pollutions, and yet he may perish eternally in his heart-wickedness. What shall we think then of those who do not attain to this; whose fraud and injustice, drunkenness and uncleanness, witness against them, that all these they have broken from their youth up, though they have named the name of Christ? Well, it is sad to come short of those that come short of heaven.

It was commendable also, that he desired to know further what his duty was; *What lack I yet?* He was convinced that he wanted something to fill up his works before God, and was therefore desirous to know it, because, if he was not mistaken in himself, he was willing to do it. Having not yet attained, he thus seemed to press forward. And he applied himself to Christ, whose doctrine was supposed to improve and perfect the Mosaic institution. He desired to know what were the peculiar precepts of his religion, that he might have all that was in them to polish and accomplish him. Who could bid fairer?

But,

(2.) Even in this that he said, he discovered his ignorance and folly.

[1.] Taking the law in its spiritual sense, as Christ expounded it, no doubt, in many things he had offended against all these commands. Had he been acquainted with the extent and spiritual meaning of the law, instead of

saying, *All these have I kept; what lack I yet?* he would have said, with shame and sorrow, “All these have I broken, what shall I do to get my sins pardoned?”

[2.] Take it how you will, what he said savoured of pride and vain-glory, and had in it too much of that boasting which is excluded by the law of faith (~~ROM~~ Romans 3:27), and which excludes from justification, ~~LUK~~ Luke 18:11, 14. He valued himself too much, as the Pharisees did, upon the plausibleness of his profession before men, and was proud of that, which spoiled the acceptableness of it. That word, *What lack I yet?* perhaps was not so much a desire of further instruction as a demand of the praise of his present fancied perfection, and a challenge to Christ himself to show him any one instance wherein he was deficient.

2. He came short by an inordinate love of the world, and his enjoyments in it. This was the fatal rock on which he split. Observe,

(1.) How he was tried in this matter (v. 21); *Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast.* Christ waived the matter of his boasted obedience to the law, and let that drop, because this would be a more effectual way of discovering him than a dispute of the extent of the law. “Come,” saith Christ, “if thou wilt be perfect, if thou wilt approve thyself sincere in thine obedience” (for sincerity is our gospel perfection), “if thou wilt come up to that which Christ has added to the law of Moses, if thou wilt be perfect, if thou wilt *enter into life*, and so be perfectly happy;” for that which Christ here prescribes, is not a thing of supererogation, or a perfection we may be saved without; but, in the main scope and intendment of it, it is our necessary and indispensable duty. What Christ said to him, he thus far said to us all, that, if we would approve ourselves Christians indeed, and would be found at last the heirs of eternal life, we must do these two things:

[1.] We must practically prefer the heavenly treasures before all the wealth and riches in this world. That glory must have the pre-eminence in our judgment and esteem before this glory. No thanks to us to prefer heaven before hell, the worst man in the world would be glad of that Jerusalem for a refuge when he can stay no longer here, and to have it in reserve; but to make it our choice, and to prefer it before this earth — that is to be a Christian indeed. Now, as an evidence of this, *First*, We must dispose of what we have in this world, for the honour of God, and in his service: “*Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor.* If the occasions of charity be

very pressing, sell thy possessions that thou mayest have to give to them that need; as the first Christians did, with an eye to this precept, ~~408~~ Acts 4:34. Sell what thou canst spare for pious uses, all thy superfluities; if thou canst not otherwise do good with it, sell it. Sit loose to it, be willing to part with it for the honour of God, and the relief of the poor.” A gracious contempt of the world, and compassion of the poor and afflicted ones in it, are in all a necessary condition of salvation; and in those that have wherewithal, giving of alms is as necessary an evidence of that contempt of the world, and compassion to our brethren; by this the trial will be at the great day, ~~405~~ Matthew 25:35. Though many that call themselves Christians, do not act as if they believed it; it is certain, that, when we embrace Christ, we must let go the world, for we cannot serve God and mammon. Christ knew that covetousness was the sin that did most easily beset this young man, that, though what he had he had got honestly, yet he could not cheerfully part with it, and by this he discovered his insincerity. This command was like the call to Abraham, *Get thee out of thy country, to a land that I will show thee*. As God tries believers by their strongest graces, so hypocrites by their strongest corruptions. *Secondly*, We must depend upon what we hope for in the other world as an abundant recompence for all we have left, or lost, or laid out, for God in this world; *Thou shalt have treasure in heaven*. We must, in the way of chargeable duty, trust God for a happiness out of sight, which will make us rich amends for all our expenses in God's service. The precept sounded hard and harsh; “Sell that thou hast, and give it away;” and the objection against it would soon arise, that “Charity begins at home;” therefore Christ immediately annexes this assurance of a treasure in heaven. Note, Christ's promises make his precepts easy, and his yoke not only tolerable, but pleasant, and sweet, and very comfortable; yet this promise was as much a trial of this young man's faith as the precept was of his charity, and contempt of the world.

[2.] We must devote ourselves entirely to the conduct and government of our Lord Jesus; *Come, and follow me*. It seems here to be meant of a close and constant attendance upon his person, such as the selling of what he had in the world was as necessary to as it was to the other disciples to quit their callings; but of us it is required that we follow Christ, that we duly attend upon his ordinances, strictly conform to his pattern, and cheerfully submit to his disposals, and by upright and universal obedience observe his statutes, and keep his laws, and all this from a principle of love to him,

and dependence on him, and with a holy contempt of every thing else in comparison of him, and much more in competition with him. This is to *follow Christ fully*. To sell all, and give to the poor, will not serve, unless we come, and follow Christ. If I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it profits me nothing. Well, on these terms, and on no lower, is salvation to be had; and they are very easy and reasonable terms, and will appear so to those who are brought to be glad of it upon any terms.

(2.) See how he was discovered. This touched him in a tender part (v. 22); *When he heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

[1.] He was a rich man, and loved his riches, and therefore went away. He did not like eternal life upon these terms. Note, *First*, Those who have much in the world are in the greatest temptation to love it, and to set their hearts upon it. Such is the bewitching nature of worldly wealth, that those who want it least desire most; when riches increase, then is the danger of setting the heart upon them, ^{<4620>}Psalm 62:10. If he had had but two mites in all the world, and had been commanded to give them to the poor, or but one handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse, and had been bidden to make a cake of that for a poor prophet, the trial, one would think, had been much greater, yet those trials have been overcome (^{<4214>}Luke 21:4, and ^{<1174>}1 Kings 17:14); which shows that the love of the world draws stronger than the most pressing necessities. *Secondly*, The reigning love of this world keeps many from Christ, who seem to have some good desires toward him. A great estate, as to those who are got above it, is a great furtherance, so to those who are entangled in the love of it, it is a great hindrance, in the way to heaven.

Yet something of honesty there was in it, that, when he did not like the terms, he went away, and would not pretend to that, which he could not find in his heart to come up to the strictness of; better so than do as Demas did, who, *having known the way of righteousness*, afterward turned aside, out of love to this present world, to the greater scandal of his profession; since he could not be a complete Christian, he would not be a hypocrite.

[2.] Yet he was a thinking man, and well-inclined, and therefore *went away sorrowful*. He had a leaning toward Christ, and was loth to part with him. Note, Many a one is ruined by the sin he commits with reluctance; leaves Christ sorrowfully, and yet is never truly sorry for leaving him, for,

if he were, he would return to him. Thus this man's wealth was *vexation of spirit* to him, then when it was his temptation. What then would the sorrow be afterward, when his possessions would be gone, and all hopes of eternal life gone too?

~~4123~~ MATTHEW 19:23-30

THE RECOMPENCE OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples upon occasion of the rich man's breaking with Christ.

I. Christ took occasion from thence to show the difficulty of the salvation of the rich people, v. 23-26.

1. That it is a very hard thing for a rich man to get to heaven, such a rich man as this here. Note, From the harms and falls of others it is good for us to infer that which will be of caution to us.

Now,

(1.) This is vehemently asserted by our Saviour, v. 23, 24. He said this to his disciples, who were poor, and had but little in the world, to reconcile them to their condition with this, that the less they had of worldly wealth, the less hindrance they had in the way to heaven. Note, It should be a satisfaction to them who are in a low condition, that they are not exposed to the temptations of a high and prosperous condition: If they live more hardy in this world than the rich, yet, if withal they get more easily to a better world, they have no reason to complain. This saying is ratified, v. 23. *Verily I say unto you.* He that has reason to know what the way to heaven is, for he has laid it open, he tells us that this is one of the greatest difficulties in that way. It is repeated, v. 24. *Again I say unto you.* Thus he speaks once, yea, twice that which man is loth to perceive and more loth to believe.

[1.] He saith that it is a hard thing for a rich man to be a good Christian, and to be saved; to enter into the kingdom of heaven, either here or hereafter. The way to heaven is to all a narrow way, and the gate that leads into it, a strait gate; but it is particularly so to rich people. More duties are expected from them than from others, which they can hardly do; and more

sins do easily beset them, which they can hardly avoid. Rich people have great temptations to resist, and such as are very insinuating; it is hard not to be charmed with a smiling world; very hard, when we are filled with these hid treasures, not to take up with them for a portion. Rich people have a great account to make up for their estates, their interest, their time, and their opportunities of doing and getting good, above others. It must be a great measure of divine grace that will enable a man to break through these difficulties.

[2.] He saith that the conversion and salvation of a rich man is so extremely difficult, that *it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle*, v. 24. This is a proverbial expression, denoting a difficulty altogether unconquerable by the art and power of man; nothing less than the almighty grace of God will enable a rich man to get over this difficulty. The difficulty of the salvation of apostates (^{<306>}Hebrews 6:4), and of old sinners (^{<243>}Jeremiah 13:23), is thus represented as an impossibility. The salvation of any is so very difficult (even *the righteous scarcely are saved*), that, where there is a peculiar difficulty, it is fitly set forth thus. It is very rare for a man to be rich, and not to set his heart upon his riches; and it is utterly impossible for a man that sets his heart upon his riches, to get to heaven; for *if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*, ^{<305>}1 John 2:15; ^{<304>}James 4:4. *First*, The way to heaven is very fitly compared to a *needle's eye*, which is hard to hit and hard to get through. *Secondly*, A rich man is fitly compared to a *camel*, a beast of burthen, for he has riches, as a camel has his load, he carries it, but it is another's, he has it from others, spends it for others, and must shortly leave it to others; it is a burthen, for *men load themselves with thick clay*, ^{<306>}Habakkuk 2:6. A camel is a large creature, but unwieldy.

(2.) This truth is very much wondered at, and scarcely credited by the disciples (v. 25); *They were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?* Many surprising truths Christ told them, which they ere astonished at, and knew not what to make of; this was one, but their weakness was the cause of their wonder. It was not in contradiction to Christ, but for awakening to themselves, that they said, *Who then can be saved?* Note, Considering the many difficulties that are in the way of salvation, it is really strange that any are saved. When we think how good God is, it may seem a wonder that so *few* are his; but when we think how bad man is, it is more a wonder that so *many* are, and Christ will be eternally admired in them. *Who then can be saved?* Since so many are rich, and have great

possessions, and so many more would be rich, and are well affected to great possessions; who can be saved? If riches are a hindrance to rich people, are not price and luxury incident to those that are not rich, and as dangerous to them? and who then can get to heaven? This is a good reason why rich people should strive against the stream.

2. That, though it be hard, yet it is not impossible, for the rich to be saved (v. 26); *Jesus beheld them*, turned and looked wistfully upon his disciples, to shame them out of their fond conceit of the advantages rich people had in spiritual things. He beheld them as men that had got over this difficulty, and were in a fair way for heaven, and the more so because poor in this world; *and he said unto them, with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible*. This is a great truth in general, that God is able to do that which quite exceeds all created power; that nothing is too hard for God, ^{<0184>}Genesis 18:14; ^{<0123>}Numbers 11:23. When men are at a loss, God is not, for his power is infinite and irresistible; but this truth is here applied,

(1.) To the salvation of any. *Who can be saved?* say the disciples. None, saith Christ, by any created power. *With men this is impossible*: the wisdom of man would soon be nonplussed in contriving, and the power of man baffled in effecting, the salvation of a soul. No creature can work the change that is necessary to the salvation of a soul, either in itself or in any one else. With men it is impossible that so strong a stream should be turned, so hard a heart softened, so stubborn a will bowed. It is a creation, it is a resurrection, and with men this is impossible; it can never be done by philosophy, medicine, or politics; but *with God all things are possible*. Note, The beginning, progress, and perfection, of the work of salvation, depend entirely upon the almighty power of God, to which all things are possible. Faith is wrought by that power (^{<0119>}Ephesians 1:19), and is kept by it, ^{<0115>}1 Peter 1:5. Job's experience of God's convincing, humbling grace, made him acknowledge more than any thing else, *I know that thou canst do every thing*, ^{<0822>}Job 42:2.

(2.) To the salvation of rich people especially; it is impossible with men that such should be saved, but with God even this is possible; not that rich people should be saved *in* their worldliness, but that they should be saved *from* it. Note, The sanctification and salvation of such as are surrounded with the temptations of this world are not to be despaired of; it is possible; it may be brought about by the all-sufficiency of the divine grace; and when such are brought to heaven, they will be there everlasting

monuments of the power of God. I am willing to think that in this word of Christ there is an intimation of mercy Christ had yet in store for this young gentleman, who was now gone away sorrowful; it was not impossible to God yet to recover him, and bring him to a better mind.

II. Peter took occasion from hence to enquire what *they* should get by it, who had come up to these terms, upon which this young man broke with Christ, and had left all to follow him, v. 27, etc. We have here the disciples' expectations from Christ, and his promises to them.

1. We have their expectations from Christ; Peter, in the name of the rest, signifies that they depended upon him for something considerable in lieu of what they had left for him; *Behold, we have forsaken all, and have followed thee; what shall we have therefore?* Christ had promised the young man, that, if he would sell all, and come and follow him, he should *have treasure in heaven*; now Peter desires to know,

(1.) Whether they had sufficiently come up to those terms: they had not sold all (for they had many of them wives and families to provide for), but they had *forsaken all*; they had not given it to the poor, but they had renounced it as far as it might be any way a hindrance to them in serving Christ. Note, When we hear what are the characters of those that shall be saved, it concerns us to enquire whether we, through grace, answer those characters. Now Peter hopes that, as to the main scope and intendment of the condition, they had come up to it, for God had wrought in them a holy contempt of the world and the things that are seen, in comparison with Christ and the things that are not seen; and how this must be evidenced, no certain rule can be given, but according as we are called.

Lord, saith Peter, *we have forsaken all*. Alas! it was but a poor *all* that they had forsaken; one of them had indeed quitted a place in the custom-house, but Peter and the most of them had only left a few boats and nets, and the appurtenances of a poor fishing-trade; and yet observe how Peter there speaks of it, as it had been some mighty thing; *Behold, we have forsaken all*. Note, We are too apt to make the most of our services and sufferings, our expenses and losses, for Christ, and to think we have made him much our debtor. However, Christ does not upbraid them with this; though it was but little that they had forsaken, yet it was their *all*, like the widow's two mites, and was as dear to them as if it had been more, and therefore

Christ took it kindly that they left it to follow him; for he accepts *according to what a man hath*.

(2.) Whether therefore they might expect *that treasure* which the young man shall have if he will sell all. “Lord,” saith Peter, “shall we have it, who have left all?” All people are for what they can get; and Christ's followers are allowed to consult their own true interest, and to ask, *What shall we have?* Christ *looked at the joy set before him*, and Moses *at the recompence of reward*. For this end it is set before us, that *by a patient continuance in well-doing* we may seek for it. Christ encourages us to ask what we shall gain by leaving all to follow him; that we may see he doth not call us to our prejudice, but unspeakably to our advantage. As it is the language of an obediential faith to ask, “What shall we *do?*” with an eye to the precepts; so it is of a hoping, trusting faith, to ask, “What shall we *have?*” with an eye to the promises. But observe, The disciples had long since left all to engage themselves in the service of Christ, and yet never till now asked, *What shall we have?* Though there was no visible prospect of advantage by it, they were so well assured of his goodness, that they knew they should not lose by him at last, and therefore referred themselves to him, in what way he would make up their losses to them; minded their work, and asked not what should be their wages. Note, It honours Christ, to trust him and serve him, and not to bargain with him. Now that this young man was gone from Christ to his possessions, it was time for them to think which they should take to, what they should trust to. When we see what others keep by their hypocrisy and apostasy, it is proper for us to consider what we hope, through grace, to gain, not *for*, but *by*, our sincerity and constancy, and then we shall see more reason to pity them than to envy them.

2. We have here Christ's promises to them, and to all others that tread in the steps of their faith and obedience. What there was either of vain-glory or of vain hopes in that which Peter said, Christ overlooks, and is not extreme to mark it, but takes this occasion to give the bond of a *promise*,

(1.) To his immediate followers, v. 28. They had signalized their respect to him, as the first that followed him, and to them he promises not only *treasure*, but *honour*, in heaven; and here they have a grant or patent for it from him who is the fountain of honour in that kingdom; *Ye which have followed me in the regeneration shall sit upon twelve thrones*. Observe,

[1.] The *preamble* to the patent, or the *consideration* of the grant, which, as usual, is a recital of their services; “You have followed me in the regeneration, and therefore this will I do for you.” The time of Christ's appearing in this world was a time of regeneration, of reformation (^{<300>}Hebrews 9:10), when old things began to pass away, and all things to look new. The disciples had followed Christ when the church was yet in the embryo state, when the gospel temple was but in the framing, when they had more of the work and service of the apostles than of the dignity and power that belonged to their office. Now they followed Christ with constant fatigue, when few did; and therefore on them he will put particular marks of honour. Note, Christ hath special favour for those who begin early with him, who trust him further than they can see him, as they did who *followed him in the regeneration*. Observe, Peter spoke of their forsaking *all*, to follow him, Christ only speaks of their *following him*, which was the main matter.


[2.] The *date* of their honour, which fixes the time when it should commence; not immediately from the day of the date of *these presents*, no, they must continue a while in obscurity, as they were. But *when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory*; and to this some refer that, *in the regeneration*; “You who now have followed me, shall, in the regeneration, be thus dignified.” Christ's second coming will be a regeneration, when there shall be *new heavens, and a new earth, and the restitution of all things*. All that partake of the regeneration in grace (^{<400>}John 3:3) shall partake of the regeneration in glory; for as grace is the first resurrection (^{<500>}Revelation 20:6), so glory is the second regeneration.

Now their honour being adjourned till the Son of man's sitting in the throne of his glory, intimates, *First*, That they must stay for their advancement till then. Note, As long as our Master's glory is delayed, it is fit that ours should be so too, and that we should wait for it with an earnest expectation, as of a *hope not seen*. (^{<600>}Romans 8:19. We must live, and work, and suffer, in faith, and hope, and patience, which therefore must be tried by these delays. *Secondly*, That they must share with Christ in his advancement; their honour must be a communion with him in his honour. They, having suffered with a suffering Jesus, must reign with a reigning Jesus, for both here and hereafter Christ will be *all in all*; we must *be where he is* (^{<700>}John 12:26), must *appear with him* (^{<800>}Colossians 3:4); and this will be an abundant recompence not only for our loss, but for the

delay; and when our Lord comes, we shall receive not only *our own*, but our own *with usury*. The longest voyages make the richest returns.

[3.] The honour itself hereby granted; *Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*. It is hard to determine the particular sense of this promise, and whether it was not to have many accomplishments, which I see no harm in admitting. *First*, When Christ is ascended to the right hand of the Father, and sits on the throne of his glory, then the apostles shall receive power by the Holy Ghost (^{401B}Acts 1:8); shall be so much advanced above themselves as they are now, that they shall think themselves upon thrones, in promoting the gospel; they shall deliver it with authority, as a judge from the bench; they shall then have their commission enlarged, and shall publish the laws of Christ, by which the church, God's spiritual Israel (^{401B}Galatians 6:16), shall be governed, and *Israel according to the flesh*, that continues in infidelity, with all others that do likewise, shall be condemned. The honour and power given them, may be explained by (^{201B}Jeremiah 1:19, *See, I have set thee over the nations*; and Ezek; 20:4, *Wilt thou judge them?* and (^{207B}Daniel 7:18, *The saints shall take the kingdom*; and (^{401I}Revelation 12:1, where the doctrine of Christ is called *a crown of twelve stars*. *Secondly*, When Christ appears for the destruction of Jerusalem (^{401B}Matthew 24:31), then shall he send the apostles to judge the Jewish nation, because in that destruction their predictions, according to the word of Christ, would be accomplished. *Thirdly*, Some think it has reference to the conversion of the Jews, which is yet to come, at the latter end of the world, after the fall of antichrist; so Dr. Whitby; and that “it respects the apostles' government or *the twelve tribes of Israel*, not by a resurrection of their persons, but by a reviviscence of that Spirit which resided in them, and of that purity and knowledge which they delivered to the world, and, chiefly, by admission of their gospel to be the standard of their faith and the direction of their lives.” *Fourthly*, It is certainly to have its full accomplishment at the second coming of Jesus Christ, when *the saints* in general *shall judge the world*, and the twelve apostles especially, as assessors with Christ, *in the judgment of the great day*, when all the world shall receive their final doom, and they shall ratify and applaud the sentence. But the *tribe* of Israel are named, partly because the number of the apostles was designedly the same with the number of the tribes; partly because the apostles were Jews, befriended them most, but were most spitefully persecuted by them; and it intimates that the saints will judge their acquaintance and kindred

according to the flesh, and will, in the great day, judge those they had a kindness for; will judge their persecutors, who in this world judged them.

But the general intendment of this promise is, to show the glory and dignity reserved for the saints in heaven, which will be an abundant recompence for the disgrace they suffered here in Christ's cause. There are higher degrees of glory for those that have done and suffered most. The apostles in this world were hurried and tossed, there they shall sit down at rest and ease; here *bonds, and afflictions, and deaths, did abide them*, but there they *shall sit on thrones of glory*; here they were dragged to the bar, there they shall be advanced to the bench; here the twelve tribes of Israel trampled upon them, there they shall tremble before them. And will not this be recompence enough to make up all their losses and expenses for Christ?  Luke 22:29.

[4.] The ratification of this grant; it is firm, it is inviolably immutably sure; for Christ hath said, "*Verily I say unto you, I the Amen, the faithful Witness, who am empowered to make this grant, I have said it, and it cannot be disannulled.*"

(2.) Here is a promise to all others that should in like manner leave all to follow Christ. It was not peculiar to the apostles, to be thus preferred, but *this honour have all his saints*. Christ will take care they shall none of them lose by him (v. 29); *Every one that has forsaken any thing for Christ, shall receive.*

[1.] Losses for Christ are here supposed. Christ had told them that his disciples must deny themselves in all that is done to them in this world; now here he specifies particulars; for it is good to count upon the worst. If they have not forsaken all, as the apostles did, yet they have forsaken a great deal, houses suppose, and have turned themselves out, to wander in deserts; or dear relations, that would not go with them, to follow Christ; these are particularly mentioned, as hardest for a tender gracious spirit to part with; *brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children*; and *lands* are added in the close; the profits of which were the support of the family.

Now, *First*, the loss of these things is supposed to be *for Christ's name's sake*; else he doth not oblige himself to make it up. Many forsake brethren, and wife, and children, in humour and passion, as *the bird that wanders from her nest*; that is a sinful desertion. But if we forsake them *for Christ's*

sake, because we cannot keep them and keep a good conscience, we must either quit them, or quit our interest in Christ; if we do not quit our concern for them, or our duty to them, but our comfort in them, and will do it rather than deny Christ, and this with an eye to him, and to his will and glory, this is that which shall be thus recompensed. It is not the suffering, but the cause, that makes both the martyr and the confessor.

Secondly, It is supposed to be a great loss; and yet Christ undertakes to make up, for he is able to do it, be it ever so great. See the barbarity of the persecutors, that they stripped innocent people of all they had, for no other crime than their adherence to Christ! See the patience of the persecuted; and the strength of their love to Christ, which was such as all these waters could not quench!

[2.] A recompence of these losses is here secured. Thousands have dealt with Christ, and have trusted him far; but never any one lost by him, never any one but was an unspeakable gainer by him, when the account came to be balanced. Christ here gives his word for it, that he will not only indemnify his suffering servants, and save them harmless, but will abundantly reward them. Let them make a schedule of their losses for Christ, and they shall be sure to receive,

First, A hundred-fold in this life; sometimes in kind, in the things themselves which they have parted with. God will raise up for his suffering servants more friends, that will be so to them for Christ's sake, than they have left that were so for their own sakes. The apostles, wherever they came, met with those that were kind to them, and entertained them, and opened their hearts and doors to them. However, they *shall receive a hundred-fold, in kindness*, in those things that are abundantly better and more valuable. Their graces shall increase, their comforts abound, they shall have tokens of God's love, more free communion with him, more full communications from him, clearer foresights, and sweeter foretastes, *of the glory to be revealed*; and then they may truly say, they have received a hundred times more comfort in God and Christ than they could have had in *wife, or children*.

Secondly, Eternal life at last. The former is reward enough, if there were no more; cent. per cent. is great profit; what then is a hundred to one? But this comes in over and above, as it were, into the bargain. The *life* here promised includes in it all the comforts of life in the highest degree, and all *eternal*. Now if we could but mix faith with the promise, and trust

Christ for the performance of it, surely we should think nothing too much to do, nothing too hard to suffer, nothing too dear to part with, for him.

Our Saviour, in the last verse, obviates a mistake of some, as if pre-eminence in glory went by precedence in time, rather than the measure and degree of grace. No; *Many that are first, shall be last, and the last, first*, v. 30. God will cross his hands; will *reveal that to babes*, which he *hid from the wise and prudent*; will reject unbelieving Jews and receive believing Gentiles. The heavenly inheritance is not given as earthly inheritances commonly are, by seniority of age, and priority of birth, but according to God's pleasure. This is the text of another sermon, which we shall meet with in the next chapter.