

# CHAPTER 14

In this chapter we have,

**I.** The cure which our Lord Jesus wrought upon a man that had the dropsy, on the sabbath day, and his justifying himself therein against those who were offended at his doing it on that day (v. 1-6).

**II.** A lesson of humility gives to those who were ambitious of the highest rooms (v. 7-11).

**III.** A lesson of charity to those who feasted the rich, and did not feed the poor (v. 12-14).

**IV.** The success of the gospel not foretold in the parable of the guests invited to a feast, signifying the rejection of the Jews and all others that set their hearts upon this world, and the entertainment of the Gentiles and all others that come to be filled with Christ (v. 15-24).

**V.** The great law of discipleship laid down, with a caution to all that will be Christ's disciples to undertake it deliberately and with consideration, and particularly to ministers, to retain their savour (v. 25-35).

## LUKE 14:1-6

### A MAN CURED OF THE DROPSY

In this passage of story we find,

**I.** That *the Son of man came eating and drinking*, conversing familiarly with all sorts of people; not declining the society of publicans, though they were of *ill fame*, nor of Pharisees, though they bore him *ill will*, but accepting the friendly invitations both of the one and the other, that, if possible, he might do good to *both*. Here he *went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees*, a ruler, it may be, and a magistrate in his country, *to eat bread on the sabbath day*, v. 1. See how favourable God is to us, that he allows us time, even on his own day, for bodily refreshments; and how careful we should be not to abuse that liberty, or turn it into licentiousness.

Christ went only to *eat bread*, to take such refreshment as was necessary on the sabbath day. Our sabbath meals must, with a particular care, be guarded against all manner of excess. On sabbath days we must do as Moses and Jethro did, *eat bread before God* (<sup>DNB</sup>Exodus 18:12), and, as is said of the primitive Christians, on the Lord's day, must *eat and drink* as those that must *pray again before we go to rest*, that we may not be unfit for that.

**II.** That he *went about doing good*. Wherever he came he *sought* opportunities to *do good*, and not only improved those that *fell in his way*. Here was *a certain man before him who had the dropsy*, v. 2. We do not find that he offered himself, or that his friends offered him to be Christ's patient, but Christ *prevented him* with the blessings of his goodness, and *before he called* he answered him. Note, It is a happy thing to be where Christ is, to be present *before him*, though we be not presented *to him*. This man had the *dropsy*, it is probable, in a high degree, and appeared much swoln with it; probably he was some relation of the Pharisee's, that now *lodged* in his house, which is more likely than that he should be an *invited guest* at the table.

**III.** That he *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself: They watched him*, v. 1. The Pharisee that invited him, it should seem, did it with a design to pick some quarrel with him; if it were so, Christ *knew* it, and yet *went*, for he knew himself a match for the most *subtle* of them, and knew how to order his steps with an eye to *his observers*. Those that are *watched* had need to be *wary*. It is, as Dr. Hammond observes, contrary to all laws of hospitality to seek advantage against one that you invited to be your guest, for such a one you have taken under your protection. These lawyers and Pharisees, like the fowler that lies in wait to *ensnare* the birds, *held their peace*, and acted very *silently*. When Christ asked them *whether* they thought it *lawful to heal on the sabbath day* (and herein he is said to *answer* them, for it was an answer to *their thoughts*, and thoughts are *words* to Jesus Christ), they would say neither *yea* nor *nay*, for their design was to *inform against him*, not to be *informed by him*. They would not say *it was lawful to heal*, for then they would preclude themselves from imputing it to him as a crime; and yet the thing was so plain and self-evident that they could not for shame say it was *not lawful*. Note, Good men have often been persecuted for doing that which even their persecutors, if they would but give their consciences leave to speak out,

could not but own to be lawful and good. Many a *good work* Christ did, for which they *cast stones* at him and his name.

**IV.** That Christ would not be hindered from *doing good* by the *opposition* and *contradiction* of sinners. He *took him, and healed him, and let him go*, v. 4. Perhaps he *took him aside* into another room, and healed him *there*, because he would neither *proclaim* himself, such was his humility, nor *provoke* his adversaries, such was his wisdom, his *meekness of wisdom*. Note, Though we must not be driven off from our duty by the malice of our enemies, yet we should order the circumstances of it so as to make it the least offensive. Or, He *took him*, that is, he *laid hands* on him, to cure him; *epilabomenos, complexus* — *he embraced him*, took him in his arms, big and unwieldy as he was (for so dropsical people generally are), and reduced him to shape. The cure of a dropsy, as much as any disease, one would think, should be gradual; yet Christ cured even *that* disease, perfectly cured it, in a moment. He then let him go, lest the Pharisees should fall upon him for *being healed*, though he was purely passive; for what absurdities would not such men as they were be guilty of?

**V.** That our Lord Jesus *did nothing but what he could justify*, to the conviction and confusion of those that quarrelled with him, v. 5, 6. He still answered their thoughts, and made them *hold their peace for shame* who before held their peace for *subtlety*, by an appeal to their own practice, as he had been used to do upon such occasions, that he might show them how in condemning him they condemned themselves: *which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, by accident, and will not pull him out on the sabbath day*, and that straightway, not deferring it till the sabbath be over, lest it perish? Observe, It is not so much out of *compassion to the poor creature* that they do it as a concern for their own interest. It is *their own ox*, and *their own ass*, that is worth money, and they will dispense with the law of the sabbath for the *saving of*. Now this was an evidence of their hypocrisy, and that it was not out of any real regard to the sabbath that they found fault with Christ for healing on the *sabbath day* (that was only the pretence), but really because they were angry at the *miraculous good works* which Christ wrought, and the *proof* he thereby gave of his divine mission, and the interest he thereby *gained* among the people. Many can easily dispense with that, for their own interest, which they cannot dispense with for God's glory and the good of their brethren. This question *silenced* them: *They could not answer him again to these things*,

v. 6. Christ will be justified when he speaks, and every mouth must be stopped before him.

## ~~247~~ LUKE 14:7-14

### HUMILITY RECOMMENDED

Our Lord Jesus here sets us an example of profitable edifying discourse at our tables, when we are in company with our friends. We find that when he had none but his disciples, who were his own family, with him at his table, his discourse with them was *good, and to the use of edifying*; and not only so, but when he was in company with strangers, nay, with enemies that *watched him*, he took occasion to reprove what he saw amiss in them, and to instruct them. Though the *wicked were before him*, he did not *keep silence from good* (as David did, ~~381~~ Psalm 39:1, 2), for, notwithstanding the provocation given him, he had not his *heart hot within him*, nor was *his spirit stirred*. We must not only not allow any corrupt communication at our tables, such as that of the *hypocritical mockers at feasts*, but we must go beyond common harmless talk, and should take occasion from God's goodness to us at our tables to speak well of him, and learn to *spiritualize* common things. The lips of the righteous should then *feed many*. Our Lord Jesus was among persons of quality, yet, as one that had not respect of persons,

- I.** He takes occasion to reprove *the guests* for striving to *sit uppermost*, and thence gives us a lesson of *humility*.
- 1.** He observed how these lawyers and Pharisees affected the *highest seats*, towards the head-end of the table, v. 7. He had charged that sort of men with this in general, ~~214~~ Luke 11:43. Here he brings home the charge to particular persons; for Christ will give *every man his own*. He *marked* how they *chose out the chief rooms*; every man, as he came in, got as near the best seat as he could. Note, Even in the common actions of life, Christ's eye is upon us, and he *marks* what we do, not only in our religious assemblies, but at our tables, and *makes remarks* upon it.
- 2.** He observed how those who were thus aspiring often exposed themselves, and came off *with a slur*; whereas, those who were modest, and seated themselves in the lowest seats, often *gained respect* by it.

**(1.)** Those who, when they come in, assume the highest seats, may perhaps be *degraded*, and forced to *come down* to give place to one *more honourable*, v. 8, 9. Note, It ought to check our high thoughts of ourselves to think how many there are that are *more honourable* than we, not only in respect of worldly dignities, but of personal merits and accomplishments. Instead of being proud that so many give place to us, it should be humbling to us that there are so many that we must give place to. The master of the feast will marshal his guests, and will not see the *more honourable* kept out of the seat that is his due, and therefore will make bold to take him lower than he usurped it; *Give this man place*; and this will be a disgrace before all the company to him that would be thought more deserving than he really was. Note, Pride will have *shame*, and will at last have a *fall*.

**(2.)** Those who, when they come in, content themselves with the lowest seats, are likely to be preferred (v. 10): “Go, and *seat thyself in the lowest room*, as taking it for granted that thy friend, who invited thee, has guests to come that are of better rank and quality than thou art; but perhaps it may not prove so, and then it will be said to thee, *Friend, go up higher*. The master of the feast will be so just to thee as not to keep thee at the lower end of the table because thou wert so *modest* as to seat thyself there.” Note, The way to *rise high* is to *begin low*, and this recommends a man to those about him: “*Thou shalt have honour and respect before those that sit with thee*. They will see thee to be an *honourable man*, beyond what at first they thought; and honour appears the brighter for shining *out of obscurity*. They will likewise see thee to be a *humble man*, which is the greatest honour of all. Our Saviour here refers to that advice of Solomon (<sup>286</sup>Proverbs 25:6, 7), *Stand not in the place of great men, for better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither, than that thou shouldst be put lower*.” And Dr. Lightfoot quotes a parable out of one of the rabbins somewhat like this. “Three men,” said he, “were bidden to a feast; one sat highest, For, said he, I am a prince; the other next, For, said he, I am a wise man; the other lowest, For, said he, I am a humble man. The king seated the humble man highest, and put the prince lowest.”

**3.** He applied this generally, and would have us all learn not to *mind high things*, but to content ourselves with mean things, as for other reasons, so for this, because pride and ambition are disgraceful before men: for *whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased*; but humility and self-denial are really honourable: *he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*, v. 11. We

see in other instances that *a man's pride will bring him low, but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit, and before honour is humility.*

**II.** He takes occasion to reprove the master of the feast for inviting so many *rich people*, who had wherewithal to dine very well at home, when he should rather have *invited the poor*, or, which was all one, have *sent portions to them for whom nothing was prepared*, and who could not afford themselves a good meal's meat. See <sup><488></sup>Nehemiah 8:10. Our Saviour here teaches us that the using of what we have in works of charity is better, and will turn to a better account, than using it in works of generosity and in magnificent house-keeping.

**1.** “Covet not to *treat the rich*; invite not *thy friends, and brethren, and neighbours, that are rich*,” v. 12. This does not *prohibit* the entertaining of such; there may be occasion for it, for the cultivating of friendship among relations and neighbours. But,

**(1.)** “Do not make a common custom of it; spend as little as thou canst that way, that thou mayest not disable thyself to lay out in a much better way, in almsgiving. Thou wilt find it very expensive and troublesome; one feast for the rich will make a great many meals for the poor.” Solomon saith, *He that giveth to the rich shall surely come to want*, <sup><126></sup>Proverbs 22:16. “Give” (saith Pliny, Epist.) “to thy friends, but let it be to thy *poor* friends, not to those that need thee not.”

**(2.)** “Be not *proud of it*.” Many *make feasts* only to *make a show*, as Ahasuerus did (<sup><108></sup>Esther 1:3, 4), and it is no reputation to them, they think, if they have not persons of quality to dine with them, and thus rob their families, to please their fancies.

**(3.)** “Aim not at being paid again in your own coin.” This is that which our Saviour blames in making such entertainments: “You commonly do it in hopes that you will be invited by them, and *so a recompence will be made you*; you will be gratified with such dainties and varieties as you treat your friends with, and this will feed your sensuality and luxury, and you will be no real gainer at last.”

**2.** “Be forward to *relieve the poor* (v. 13, 14): *When thou makest a feast*, instead of furnishing thyself with what is rare and nice, get thy table spread with a competency of plain and wholesome meat, which will not be so costly, and invite *the poor and maimed*, such as have nothing to live

upon, nor are able to work for their living. These are objects of charity; they want necessaries; furnish them, and they will recompense thee with their prayers; they will commend thy provisions, which the rich, it may be, will despise. They will go away, and thank God for thee, when the rich will go away and reproach thee. Say not that thou art a *loser*, because *they cannot recompense thee*, thou art so much out of pocket; no, it is so much set out to the best interest, on the best security, for *thou shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*” There will be a *resurrection of the just*, a *future state* of the just. There is a state of happiness reserved for them in the other world; and we may be sure that the *charitable* will be remembered in the *resurrection of the just*, for alms are *righteousness*. Works of charity perhaps may not be rewarded *in this world*, for the things of this world are not the *best things*, and therefore God does not pay the best men in *those things*; but they shall *in no wise lose their reward*; they shall be recompensed in the *resurrection*. It will be found that the longest voyages make the richest returns, and that the charitable will be no losers, but unspeakable gainers, by having their recompense adjourned *till the resurrection*.

## ◀445▶ LUKE 14:15-24

### THE NEGLECTED FEAST

Here is another discourse of our Saviour's, in which he *spiritualizes* the feast he was invited to, which is another way of keeping up good discourse in the midst of common actions.

**I.** The occasion of the discourse was given by one of the guests, who, when Christ was giving rules about feasting, said to him, *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God* (v. 15), which, some tell us, was a saying commonly used among the rabbin.

**1.** But with what design does this man bring it in here?

**(1.)** Perhaps this man, observing that Christ reprov'd first the guests and then the master of the house, fearing he should put the company out of humour, started this, to *divert* the discourse to something else. Or,

(2.) Admiring the good rules of humility and charity which Christ had now given, but despairing to see them lived up to in the present degenerate state of things, he longs for *the kingdom of God*, when these and other good laws shall prevail, and pronounces them *blessed* who shall have a place in that kingdom. Or,

(3.) Christ having mentioned *the resurrection of the just*, as a recompence for acts of charity to the poor, he here confirms what he said, “Yea, Lord, they that shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, shall *eat bread in the kingdom*, and that is a greater recompence than being reinvited to the table of the greatest man on earth.” Or,

(4.) Observing Christ to be silent, after he had given the foregoing lessons, he was willing to draw him in again to further discourse, so wonderfully well-pleased was he with what he said; and he knew nothing more likely to engage him than to mention the *kingdom of God*. Note, Even those that are not of ability to carry on good discourse themselves ought to put in a word now and then, to countenance it, and help it forward.

2. Now what this man said was a plain and acknowledged truth, and it was quoted very *appositely* now that they were *sitting at meat*; for we should take occasion from common things to think and speak of those heavenly and spiritual things which in scripture are *compared* to them, for that is one end of borrowing similitudes from them. And it will be good for us, when we are receiving the gifts of God's providence, to pass through them to the consideration of the gifts of his grace, those *better things*. This thought will be very seasonable when we are partaking of bodily refreshments: *Blessed are they that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*.

(1.) In the kingdom of grace, in the kingdom of the Messiah, which was expected now shortly to be set up. Christ promised his disciples that they should *eat and drink with him in his kingdom*. They that partake of the Lord's supper *eat bread in the kingdom of God*.

(2.) In the kingdom of glory, at the resurrection. The happiness of heaven is an *everlasting feast*; blessed are they that shall sit down at that table, whence they shall rise no more.

II. The parable which our Lord Jesus put forth upon this occasion, v. 16, etc. Christ joins with the good man in what he said: “It is very true, *Blessed are they that shall partake* of the privileges of the Messiah's



kingdom. But who are they that shall enjoy that privilege? You Jews, who think to have the monopoly of it, will generally reject it, and the Gentiles will be the greatest sharers in it.” This he shows by a parable, for, if he had spoken it plainly, the Pharisees would not have borne it. Now in the parable we may observe,

**1.** The free grace and mercy of God, shining in the gospel of Christ; it appears,

**(1.)** In the rich provision he has made for poor souls, for their nourishment, refreshment, and entertainment (v. 16): *A certain man made a great supper.* There is that in Christ and the grace of the gospel which will be *food* and a *feast* for the soul of man that knows its own capacities, for the soul of a sinner that knows its own necessities and miseries. It is called a *supper*, because in those countries supper time was the chief feasting time, when the business of the day was over. The manifestation of gospel grace to the world was the evening of the world's day; and the fruition of the fulness of that grace in heaven is reserved for the evening of our day.

**(2.)** In gracious invitation given us to come and partake of this provision. Here is,

**[1.]** A general invitation given: He *bade many*. Christ invited the whole nation and people of the Jews to partake of the benefits of his gospel. There is provision enough for as many as come; it was prophesied of as a *feast for all people*, <sup>2306</sup>Isaiah 25:6. Christ in the gospel, as he keeps a *good* house, so he keeps an *open* house.

**[2.]** A particular memorandum given, when the supper time was at hand; the servant was sent round to put them in mind of it: *Come, for all things are now ready.* When the Spirit was poured out, and the gospel church planted, those who before were invited were more closely pressed to come in *presently*: Now *all things are ready*, the full discovery of the gospel mystery is now made, all the ordinances of the gospel are now instituted, the society of Christians is now incorporated, and, which crowns all, the Holy Ghost is now given. This is the call now given to us: “*All things are now ready, now is the accepted time; it is now, and has not been long; it is now, and will not be long; it is a season of grace that will be soon over, and therefore come now; do not delay; accept the invitation; believe*

yourselves welcome; *eat, O friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved.*”

**2.** The cold entertainment which the grace of the gospel meets with. The invited guests declined coming. They did not say flatly and plainly that they *would not come*, but *they all with one consent began to make excuse*, v. 18. One would have expected that they should *all with one consent* have come to a good supper, when they were so kindly invited to it: who would have refused such an invitation? Yet, on the contrary, they all found out some pretence or other to shift off their attendance. This bespeaks the general neglect of the Jewish nation to close with Christ, and accept of the offers of his grace, and the contempt they put upon the invitation. It also intimates the backwardness there is in most people to close with the gospel call. They cannot for shame avow their refusal, but they desire to be *excused*: they all *ato mias*, some supply *horas*, *all straightway*, they could give an answer *extempore*, and needed not to study for it, had *not to seek* for an excuse. Others supply *gnomes*, they were *unanimous* in it; *with one voice*.

**(1.)** Here were *two* that were *purchasers*, who were in such haste to go and see their purchases that they could not find time to go to this supper. One had *purchased land*; he had *bought a piece of ground*, which was represented to him to be a good bargain, and he must needs *to and see* whether it was so or no; and therefore *I pray thee have me excused*. His heart was so much upon the enlarging of his estate that he could neither be civil to his friend nor kind to himself. Note, Those that have their hearts full of the world, and fond of *laying house to house and field to field*, have their ears deaf to the gospel invitation. But what a frivolous excuse was this! He might have deferred going to see his piece of ground till the next day, and have found it in the same place and plight it was now in, if he had so pleased. Another had purchased *stock* for his land. “*I have bought five yoke of oxen* for the plough, and I must just now go and *prove them*, must go and try whether they be fit for my purpose; and therefore excuse me for this time.” The former intimates that inordinate *complacency* in the world, this the inordinate *care* and *concern* about the world, which keep people from Christ and his grace; both intimate a preference given to the body above the soul, and to the things of time above those of eternity. Note, It is very criminal, when we are called to any duty, to make excuses for our neglect of it: it is a sign that there are convictions that it is duty, but no

inclination to it. These things here, that were the matter of the excuses, were,

[1.] *Little things*, and of small concern. It had better become them to have said, “I am invited *to eat bread in the kingdom of God*, and therefore must be excused from going to see the *ground* or the *oxen*.”

[2.] *Lawful things*. Note, *Things lawful in themselves*, when the heart is too much set upon them, *prove fatal* hindrances in religion — *Licitus perimus omnes*. It is a hard matter so to manage our worldly affairs that they may not divert us from spiritual pursuits; and this ought to be our great care.

(2.) Here was one that was *newly married*, and could not leave his wife to go out to supper, no, not for once (v. 30): *I have married a wife, and therefore*, in short, *I cannot come*. He pretends that he *cannot*, when the truth is he *will not*. Thus many pretend *inability* for the duties of religion when really they have an *aversion* to them. He has *married a wife*. It is true, he that married was excused by the law from going to war for the first year (<sup>6215</sup>Deuteronomy 24:5), but would that excuse him from going up to the feasts of the Lord, which all the males were yearly to attend? Much less will it excuse from the gospel feast, of which the other were but types. Note, Our affection to our relations often proves a hindrance to us in our duty to God. Adam's excuse was, *The woman that thou gavest me persuaded me to eat*; this here was, *The woman persuaded me not to eat*. He might have gone and taken his wife along with him; they would both have been welcome.

3. The account which was brought to the master of the feast of the affront put upon him by his friends whom he had invited, who now showed how little they valued him (v. 21): *That servant came, and showed his lord these things*, told him with surprise that he was likely to sup alone, for the guests that were invited, though they had had timely notice a good while before, that they might order their affairs accordingly, yet were now engaged in some other business. He made the matter neither better nor worse, but related it just as it was. Note, Ministers must give account of the success of their ministry. They must do it now at the throne of grace. If they see of *the travail of their soul*, they must go to God with their *thanks*; if they *labour in vain*, they must go to God with their *complaints*. They will do it hereafter at the judgment-seat of Christ: they shall be produced as witnesses *against* those who persist and perish in their unbelief, to

prove that they were fairly invited; and *for those* who accepted the call, *Behold, I and the children thou hast given me*. The apostle urges this as a reason why people should give ear to the word of God sent them by his ministers; for *they watch for your souls, as those that must give account*, ~~HEB~~ Hebrews 13:17.

4. The master's just resentment of this affront: *He was angry*, v. 21. Note, The ingratitude of those that slight gospel offers, and the contempt they put upon the God of heaven thereby, are a very great provocation to him, and justly so. Abused mercy turns into the greatest wrath. The doom he passed upon them was, *None of the men that were bidden shall taste of my supper*. This was like the doom passed upon the ungrateful Israel, when they despised the pleasant land: *God swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest*. Note, Grace despised is grace forfeited, like Esau's birthright. They that will not have Christ when they *may* shall not have him when they *would*. Even those that *were bidden*, if they slight the invitation, *shall be forbidden*; when the door is shut, the foolish virgins will be denied entrance.

5. The care that was taken to furnish the table with guests, as well as meat. "Go" (saith he to the servants), "*go first into the streets and lanes of the city*, and invite, not the merchants that are going from the custom-house, nor the tradesmen that are shutting up their shops; they will *desire to be excused* (one is going to his counting-house to cast up his books, another to the tavern to drink a bottle with his friend); but, that you may invite those that will be glad to come, bring in *hither the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind*; pick up the common beggars." The servants object not that it will be a disparagement to the master and his house to have such guests at his table; for they know his mind, and they soon gather an abundance of such guests: *Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded*. Many of the Jews are brought in, not of the scribes and Pharisees, such as Christ was *now at dinner with*, who thought themselves most likely to be guests at the Messiah's table, but the publicans and sinners; these are *the poor and the maimed*. But *yet there is room* for more guests, and provision enough for them all. "Go, then, *secondly, into the highways and hedges*. Go out into the country, and pick up the vagrants, or those that are returning now in the evening from their work in the field, from hedging and ditching there, and *compel them to come in*, not by force of arms, but by force of arguments. Be earnest with them; for in this case it will be necessary to convince them that the invitation is *sincere* and not a *banter*;

they will be shy and modest, and will hardly believe that they shall be welcome, and therefore be importunate with them and do not leave them till you have prevailed with them.” This refers to the *calling of the Gentiles*, to whom the apostles were to *turn* when the Jews refused the offer, and with them the church was filled. Now observe here,

**(1.)** The provision made for precious souls in the gospel of Christ shall appear not to have been made *in vain*; for, if some *reject it*, yet others will thankfully *accept* the offer of it. Christ comforts himself with this, that, *though Israel be not gathered*, yet he shall be *glorious, as a light to the Gentiles*, <sup>2305</sup>Isaiah 49:5, 6. God will have a church in the world, though there are those that are unchurched; for *the unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of no effect*.

**(2.)** Those that are very poor and low in the world shall be as welcome to Christ as the rich and great; nay, and many times the gospel has greatest success among those that labour under worldly disadvantages, as the *poor*, and bodily infirmities, as *the maimed, and the halt, and the blind*. Christ here plainly refers to what he had said just before, in direction to us, to invite to our tables *the poor and maimed, the lame and blind*, v. 13. For consideration for the countenance which Christ's gospel gives to the poor should engage us to be charitable to them. His condescensions and compassions towards them should engage ours.

**(3.)** Many times the gospel has the *greatest success* among those that are *least likely* to have the benefit of it, and whose submission to it was least expected. The publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God before the scribes and Pharisees; *so the last shall be first, and the first last*. Let us not be *confident* concerning those that are most forward, nor despair of those that are least promising.

**(4.)** Christ's ministers must be both very expeditious and very importunate in inviting to the gospel feast: “*Go out quickly* (v. 21); lose not time, because *all things are now ready*. Call to them to come *to-day, while it is called to-day*; and *compel them to come in*, by accosting them kindly, and *drawing them with the cords of a man and the bands of love*.” Nothing can be more absurd than fetching an argument hence for compelling men's consciences, nay, for compelling men against their consciences, in matters of religion: “You shall receive the Lord's supper, or you shall be fined and imprisoned, and ruined in your estate.” Certainly nothing like this was the

compulsion here meant, but only that of reason and love; for *the weapons of our warfare are not carnal*.

(5.) Though many have been brought in to partake of the benefits of the gospel, yet still *there is room for more*; for the riches of Christ are *unsearchable* and *inexhaustible*; there is in him enough for all, and enough for each; and the gospel excludes none that do not exclude themselves.

(6.) Christ's house, though it be *large*, shall at last be *filled*; it will be so when the number of the elect is completed, and as many as were *given him* are *brought to him*.

## LUKE 14:25-35

### THE NECESSITY OF SELF-DENIAL

See how Christ in his doctrine suited himself to those to whom he spoke, and *gave every one his portion of meat*. To Pharisees he preached humility and charity. He is in these verses directing his discourse to the multitudes that crowded after him, and seemed zealous in following him; and his exhortation to them is to understand the terms of discipleship, before they undertook the profession of it, and to consider what they did. See here,

**I.** How zealous people were in their attendance on Christ (v. 25): *There went great multitudes with him*, many for love and more for company, for where there are *many* there will be *more*. Here was a *mixed multitude*, like that which went with Israel out of Egypt; such we must expect there will always be in the church, and it will therefore be necessary that ministers should carefully separate *between the precious and the vile*.

**II.** How *considerate* he would have them to be in their *zeal*. Those that undertake to follow Christ must count upon the worst, and prepare accordingly.

**1.** He tells them what the worst is that they must count upon, much the same with what he had gone through *before* them and *for* them. He takes it for granted that they had a mind to be *his disciples*, that they might be *qualified* for preferment in his kingdom. They expected that he should say, "If any man come to me, and be my disciple, he shall have wealth and

honour in abundance; let me alone to make him a great man.” But he tells them quite the contrary.

**(1.)** They must be willing to *quit* that which was *very dear*, and therefore must come to him thoroughly *weaned from* all their creature-comforts, and *dead* to them, so as cheerfully to part with them rather than quit their interest in Christ, v. 26. A man cannot be Christ's disciple but he must *hate father, and mother, and his own life*. He is not *sincere*, he will be *constant* and persevering, unless he love Christ better than any thing in this world, and be willing to part with that which he may and must leave, either as a *sacrifice*, when Christ may be glorified by our parting with it (so the martyrs, who *loved not their lives to death*), or as a *temptation*, when by our parting with it we are put into a better capacity of serving Christ. Thus Abraham parted with his own country, and Moses with Pharaoh's court. Mention is not made here of *houses and lands*; philosophy will teach a man to look upon these with contempt; but Christianity carries it higher.

**[1.]** Every good man loves *his relations*; and yet, if he be a disciple of Christ, he must comparatively *hate them*, must love them *less than Christ*, as Leah is said to be *hated* when Rachel was better loved. Not that their persons must be in any degree hated, but our comfort and satisfaction in them must be lost and swallowed up in our love to Christ, as Levi's was, when he *said to his father, I have not seen him*, ~~(Gen 35)~~ Deuteronomy 33:9. When our duty to our parents comes in competition with our evident duty to Christ, we must give Christ the preference. If we must either *deny Christ* or be *banished* from our families and relations (as many of the primitive Christians were), we must rather lose their society than his favour.

**[2.]** Every man loves *his own life*, no man ever yet *hated it*; and we cannot be Christ's disciples if we do not love him better than our own lives, so as rather to have our lives *embittered* by cruel *bondage*, nay, and *taken away* by cruel *deaths*, than to dishonour Christ, or depart from any of his truths and ways. The experience of the pleasures of the *spiritual life*, and the believing hopes and prospects of *eternal life*, will make this *hard saying* easy. When tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, then chiefly the trial is, whether we love better, Christ or our relations and lives; yet even in the *days of peace* this matter is sometimes brought to the trial. Those that decline the service of Christ, and opportunities of

converse with him, and are ashamed to confess him, for fear of disobliging a relation or friend, or losing a customer, give cause to suspect that they love him better than Christ.

**(2.)** That they must be willing to *bear* that which was very *heavy* (v. 27): *Whosoever doth not bear his cross*, as those did that were condemned to be crucified, in *submission* to the sentence and in *expectation* of the execution of it, and so *come after me* whithersoever I shall lead him, he *cannot be my disciple*; that is (says Dr. Hammond), he is not *for my turn*; and my service, being so sure to bring persecution along with it, will not be *for his*. Though the disciples of Christ are not *all crucified*, yet they all *bear their cross*, as if they counted upon being crucified. They must be content to be put into an ill name, and to be loaded with infamy and disgrace; for no name is more ignominious than *Furcifer* — *the bearer of the gibbet*. He must bear his cross, and *come after Christ*; that is, he must bear it in the way of his duty, whenever it lies in that way. He must bear it when Christ calls him to it, and in bearing it he must have an eye to Christ, and fetch encouragements from him, and live in hope of a recompence with him.

**2.** He bids them count upon it, and then consider of it. Since he has been so *just to us* as to tell us plainly what difficulties we shall meet with in following him, let us be so *just to ourselves* as to weigh the matter seriously before we take upon us a profession of religion. Joshua obliged the people to consider what they did when they promised to *serve the Lord*, <sup>(24)</sup> Joshua 24:19. It is better never to begin than not to proceed; and therefore before we begin we must consider what it is to proceed. This is to act rationally, and as becomes men, and as we do in other cases. The cause of Christ will bear a scrutiny. Satan shows the best, but hides the worst, because his best will not counter-vail his worst; but Christ's will abundantly. This considering of the case is necessary to perseverance, especially in suffering times. Our Saviour here illustrates the necessity of it by two similitudes, the former showing that we must consider the *expenses* of our religion, the latter that we must consider the *perils* of it.

**(1.)** When we take upon us a profession of religion we are like a man that undertakes to *build a tower*, and therefore must consider the *expense of it* (v. 28-30): *Which of you, intending to build a tower or stately house for himself, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost?* and he must be sure to count upon a great deal more than his workmen will tell him it will cost.



Let him compare the charge with his purse, lest he make himself to be laughed at, by *beginning to build* what he is *not able to finish*. Note,

[1.] All that take upon them a profession of religion undertake to *build a tower*, not as the tower of Babel, in opposition to Heaven, which therefore was left unfinished, but in obedience to Heaven, which therefore shall have its *top-stone brought forth*. Begin low, and lay the foundation deep, lay it on the rock, and make sure work, and then aim as high as heaven.

[2.] Those that intend to build this tower must *sit down and count the cost*. Let them consider that it *will cost them* the mortifying of their sins, even the most beloved lusts; it will cost them a life of self-denial and watchfulness, and a constant course of holy duties; it *may*, perhaps, *cost them* their reputation among men, their estates and liberties, and all that is dear to them in this world, even life itself. And if it should cost us all this, what is it in comparison with what it cost Christ to purchase the advantages of religion for us, which come to us without money and without price?

[3.] Many that begin to *build this tower* do not *go on with it*, nor persevere in it, and it is their folly; they have not courage and resolution, have not a rooted fixed principle, and so bring nothing to pass. It is true, we have none of us in ourselves *sufficient to finish* this tower, but Christ hath said, *My grace is sufficient for thee*, and that grace shall not be wanting to any of us, if we seek for it and make use of it.

[4.] Nothing is more *shameful* than for those that have begun well in religion to break off; every one will justly *mock him*, as having lost all his labour hitherto for want of perseverance. We *lose the things we have wrought* (~~Gal~~ 2 John 1:8), and all we have done and suffered is *in vain*, ~~Gal~~ Galatians 3:4.

(2.) When we undertake to be Christ's disciples we are like a man that *goes to war*, and therefore must consider the *hazard* of it, and the difficulties that are to be encountered, v. 31, 32. A king that declares war against a neighbouring prince considers whether he has strength wherewith to make his part good, and, if not, he will lay aside his thoughts of war. Note,

[1.] The state of a Christian in this world is a military state. *Is not* the Christian *life a warfare*? We have many passes in our way, that must be

disputed with dint of sword; nay, we must fight every step we go, so restless are our spiritual enemies in their opposition.

[2.] We ought to consider whether we can *endure the hardness* which a good soldier of Jesus Christ must expect and count upon, before we enlist ourselves under Christ's banner; *whether* we are able to encounter the forces of hell and earth, which come against us *twenty thousand* strong.

[3.] Of the two it is better to make the best terms we can with the world than pretend to renounce it and afterwards, when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, to *return to it*. That *young man* that could not find in his heart to part with his possessions for Christ did better to go away from Christ *sorrowing* than to have staid with him *dissembling*.

This parable is another way applicable, and may be taken as designed to teach us to begin *speedily* to be religious, rather than to begin *cautiously*; and may mean the same with <sup>4055</sup>Matthew 5:25, *Agree with thine adversary quickly*. Note, *First*, Those that persist in sin make war against God, the most unnatural, unjustifiable war; they rebel against their lawful sovereign, whose government is perfectly just and good. *Secondly*, The proudest and most daring sinner is no equal match for God; the disproportion of strength is much greater than that here supposed between *ten thousand* and *twenty thousand*. *Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?* No, surely; *who knows the power of his anger?* In consideration of this, it is our interest to make peace with him. We need not send to *desire conditions of peace*; they are offered to us, and are unexceptionable, and highly to our advantage. Let us acquaint ourselves with them, and be at peace; do this in time, *while the other is yet a great way off*; for delays in such a case are highly dangerous, and make after-applications difficult.

But the application of this parable here (v. 33) is to the consideration that ought to be exercised when we take upon us a profession of religion. Solomon saith, *With good advice make war* (<sup>4018</sup>Proverbs 20:18); for he that *draws the sword throws away the scabbard*; so *with good advice* enter upon a profession of religion, as those that know that *except you forsake all you have you cannot be Christ's disciples*; that is, except you count upon forsaking all and consent to it, for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must *suffer persecution*, and yet continue to *live godly*.

**3.** He warns them against apostasy and a degeneracy of mind from the truly Christian spirit and temper, for that would make them utterly useless, v. 34, 35.

**(1.)** Good Christians are *the salt of the earth*, and good ministers especially (<sup><4153></sup>Matthew 5:13); and this *salt is good* and of great use; by their instructions and examples they season all they converse with, to keep them from putrefying, and to quicken them, and make them savoury.

**(2.)** Degenerate Christians, who, rather than part with what they have in the world, will throw up their profession, and then of course become carnal, and worldly, and wholly destitute of a Christian spirit, are like *salt that has lost its savour*, like that which the chemists call the *caput mortuum*, that has all its salts drawn from it, that is the most useless worthless thing in the world; it has no manner of virtue or good property in it.

**[1.]** It can never be recovered: *Wherewith shall it be seasoned?* You cannot salt it. This intimates that it is extremely difficult, and next to impossible, to recover an apostate, <sup><3061></sup>Hebrews 6:4-6. If Christianity will not prevail to cure men of their worldliness and sensuality, if that remedy has been tried in vain, their ease must even be concluded desperate.

**[2.]** It is of no use. It is *not fit*, as dung is, *for the land*, to manure that, nor will it be the better if it be laid in the dunghill to rot; there is nothing to be got out of it. A professor of religion whose mind and manners are depraved is the most *insipid* animal that can be. If he speaks of the things of God, of which he has had some knowledge, it is so *awkwardly* that none are the better for it: it is a *parable in the mouth of a fool*.

**[3.]** It is abandoned: *Men cast it out*, as that which they will have no more to do with. Such scandalous professors ought to be cast out of the church, not only because they have forfeited all the honours and privileges of their church-membership, but because there is danger that others will be infected by them. Our Saviour concludes this with a call to all to take notice of it, and to take warning: *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*. Now can the faculty of hearing be better employed than in attending to the word of Christ, and particularly to the alarms he has given us of the danger we are in *of* apostasy, and the danger we run ourselves into *by* apostasy?