

CHAPTER 16

None of Christ's miracles are recorded in this chapter, but four of his discourses. Here is,

- I.** A conference with the Pharisees, who challenged him to show them a sign from heaven (v. 1-4).
- II.** Another with his disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees (v. 5-12).
- III.** Another with them concerning himself, as the Christ, and concerning his church built upon him (v. 13-20).
- IV.** Another concerning his sufferings for them, and theirs for him (v. 21-28). And all these are written for our learning.

Ⓜ MATTHEW 16:1-4

THE SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAS

We have here Christ's discourse with the Pharisees and Sadducees, men at variance among themselves, as appears ~~Ⓜ~~ Acts 23:7, 8, and yet unanimous in their opposition to Christ; because his doctrine did equally overthrow the errors and heresies of the Sadducees, who denied the existence of spirits and a future state; and the pride, tyranny, and hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who were the great imposters of the traditions of the elders. Christ and Christianity meet with opposition on all hands. Observe,

- I.** Their demand, and the design of it.
 - 1.** The demand was of a sign from heaven; this they desired him to show them; pretending they were very willing to be satisfied and convinced, when really they were far from being so, but sought excuses from an obstinate infidelity. That which they pretended to desire was,
 - (1.)** Some other sign than what they had yet had. They had great plenty of signs; every miracle Christ wrought was a sign, for *no man could do what he did unless God were with him*. But this will not serve, they must have a sign of their own choosing; they despised those signs which relieved the

necessity of the sick and sorrowful, and insisted upon some sign which gratify the curiosity of the proud. It is fit that the proofs of divine revelation should be chosen by the wisdom of God, not by the follies and fancies of men. The evidence that is given is sufficient to satisfy an unprejudiced understanding, but was not intended to please a vain humour. And it is an instance of the deceitfulness of the heart, to think that we should be wrought upon by the means and advantages which we have not, while we slight those which we have. *If we hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would we be wrought upon though one rose from the dead.*

(2.) It must be a sign from heaven. They would have such miracles to prove his commission, as were wrought at the giving of the law upon mount Sinai: thunder, and lightening, and the voice of words, were the sign from heaven they required. Whereas the sensible signs and terrible ones were not agreeable to the spiritual and comfortable dispensation of the gospel. Now the word comes more nigh us (~~508~~Romans 10:8), and therefore the miracles do so, and do not oblige us to keep such a distance as these did, ~~4828~~Hebrews 12:18.

2. The design was to tempt him; not to be taught by him, but to ensnare him. If he should show them a sign from heaven, they would attribute it to a confederacy with the *prince of the power of the air*; if he should not, as they supposed he would not, they would have that to say for themselves, *why they did not believe on him*. They now tempted Christ as Israel did, ~~4100~~1 Corinthians 10:9. And observe their perverseness; *then*, when they had signs from heaven, they tempted Christ, saying, *Can he furnish a table in the wilderness?* Now that he had furnished a table in the wilderness, they tempted him, saying, *Can he give us a sign from heaven?*

II. Christ's reply to this demand; lest they should be *wise in their own conceit*, he answered these fools according to their folly, ~~4185~~Proverbs 26:5. In his answer,

1. He condemns their overlooking of the signs they had, v. 2, 3. They were seeking for the signs of the kingdom of God, when it was already among them. *The Lord was in this place*, and they *knew it not*. Thus their unbelieving ancestors, when miracles were their daily bread, asked, *Is the Lord among us, or is he not?*

To expose this, he observes to them,

(1.) Their skilfulness and sagacity in other things, particularly in natural prognostications of the weather; “You know that a red sky over-night is a presage of fair weather, and a red sky in the morning of foul weather.” There are common rules drawn from observation and experience, by which it is easy to foretel very probably what weather it will be. When second causes have begun to work, we may easily guess at their issue, so uniform is nature in its motions, and so consistent with itself. We *know not the balancing of the clouds* (^{<3576>}Job 37:16), but we may spell something from the faces of them. This gives no countenance at all to the wild and ridiculous predictions of *the astrologers, the star-gazers, and the monthly prognosticators* (^{<2473>}Isaiah 47:13) concerning the weather long before, with which weak and foolish people are imposed upon; we are sure, in general, that *seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, shall not cease*. But as to the particulars, till, by the weather-glasses, or otherwise, we perceive the immediate signs and harbingers of the change of weather, it is not for us to know, no, not *that* concerning the times and seasons. Let it suffice, that it shall be what weather pleases God; and that which pleases God, should not displease us.

(2.) Their sottishness and stupidity in the concerns of their souls; *Can ye not discern the signs of the times?*

[1.] “Do you not see that the Messiah is come?” The sceptre was departed from Judah, Daniel’s weeks were just expiring, and yet they regarded not. The miracles Christ wrought, and the gathering of the people to him, were plain indications that the *kingdom of heaven was at hand*, that this was *the day of their visitation*. Note, *First*, There are signs of the times, by which wise and upright men are enabled to make moral prognostications, and so far to understand the motions and methods of Providence, as from thence to take their measures, and to know what Israel ought to do, as the men of Issachar, as the physician from some certain symptoms finds a crisis formed. *Secondly*, There are many who are skilful enough in other things, and yet cannot or will not discern the day of their opportunities, are not aware of the wind when it is fair for them, and so let slip the gale. See ^{<2187>}Jeremiah 8:7; ^{<2108>}Isaiah 1:3. *Thirdly*, It is great hypocrisy, when we slight the signs of God’s ordaining, to seek for signs of our own prescribing.

[2.] “Do not you foresee your own ruin coming for rejecting him? You will not entertain the gospel of peace, and can you not evidently discern

that hereby you pull an inevitable destruction upon your own heads?" Note, It is the undoing of multitudes, that they are not aware what will be the end of their refusing Christ.

2. He refuses to give them any other sign (v. 4), as he had done before in the same words, ^{<129>}Matthew 12:39. Those that persist in the same iniquities, must expect to meet with the same reproofs. Here, as there,

(1.) He calls them *an adulterous generation*; because, while they professed themselves of the true church and spouse of God, they treacherously departed from him, and brake their covenants with him. The Pharisees were *a generation pure in their own eyes*, having the way of the adulterous woman, that thinks she has done no wickedness, ^{<130>}Proverbs 30:20.

(2.) He refuses to gratify their desire. Christ will not be prescribed to; *we ask, and have not, because we ask amiss*.

(3.) He refers them to the sign of the prophet Jonas, which should yet be given them; his resurrection from the dead, and his preaching by his apostles to the Gentiles; these were reserved for the last and highest evidences of his divine mission. Note, Though the fancies of proud men shall not be humoured, yet the faith of the humble shall be supported, and the unbelief of them that perish left for ever inexcusable, and *every mouth shall be stopped*.

This discourse broke off abruptly; *he left them and departed*. Christ will not tarry long with those that tempt him, but justly withdraws from those that are disposed to quarrel with him. He left them as irreclaimable; *Let them alone*. He left them to themselves, left them in the hand of their own counsels; *so he gave them up to their own hearts' lust*.

^{<135>}MATTHEW 16:5-12

OF THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples concerning bread, in which, as in many other discourses, he speaks to them of spiritual things under a similitude, and they misunderstand him of carnal things. The occasion of it was, their forgetting to victual their ship, and to take along

with them provisions for their family on the other side of the water; usually they carried bread along with them, because they were sometimes in desert places; and when they were not, yet they would not be burthensome. But now they forgot; we will hope it was because their minds and memories were filled with better things. Note, Christ's disciples are often such as have no great forecast for the world.

I. Here is the caution Christ gave them, to *beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*. He had now been discoursing with the Pharisees and Sadducees, and saw them to be men of such a spirit, that it was necessary to caution his disciples to have nothing to do with them. Disciples are in most danger from hypocrites; against those that are openly vicious they stand upon their guard, but against Pharisees, who are great pretenders to devotion, and Sadducees, who pretend to a free and impartial search after truth, they commonly lie unguarded: and therefore the caution is doubted, *Take heed, and beware*.

The corrupt principles and practices of the Pharisees and Sadducees are compared to leaven; they were souring, and swelling, and spreading, like leaven; they fermented wherever they came.

II. Their mistake concerning this caution, v. 7. They thought Christ hereby upbraided them with their improvidence and forgetfulness, that they were so busy attending to his discourse with the Pharisees, that *therefore* they forgot their private concerns. Or, because having no bread of their own with them, they must be beholden to their friends for supply, he would not have them to ask it of the Pharisees and Sadducees, nor to receive of *their* alms, because he would not so far countenance them; or, for fear, lest, under pretence of feeding them, they should do them a mischief. Or, they took it for a caution, not to be familiar with the Pharisees and Sadducees, not to eat with them (^{<2216>}Proverbs 23:6), whereas the danger was not in their bread (Christ himself did eat with them, ^{<2175>}Luke 7:36; 11:37; 14:1), but in their principles.

III. The reproof Christ gave them for this.

1. He reproves their distrust of his ability and readiness to supply them in this strait (v. 8); "*O ye of little faith, why are ye in such perplexity because ye have taken no bread, that ye can mind nothing else, that ye think your Master is as full of it as you, and apply every thing he saith to that?*" He does not chide them for their little forecast, as they expected he would.

Note, Parents and masters must not be angry at the forgetfulness of their children and servants, more than is necessary to make them take more heed another time; we are all apt to be forgetful of our duty. This should serve to excuse a fault, *Peradventure it was an oversight*. See how easily Christ forgave his disciples' carelessness, though it was in such a material point as taking bread; and do likewise. But that which he chides them for is their little faith.

(1.) He would have them to depend upon him for supply, though it were in a wilderness, and not to disquiet themselves with anxious thoughts about it. Note, Though Christ's disciples be brought into wants and straits, through their own carelessness and incogitancy, yet he encourages them to trust in him for relief. We must not therefore use this as an excuse for our want of charity to those who are really poor, that they should have minded their own affairs better, and then they would not have been in need. It may be so, but they must not therefore be left to starve when they are in need.

(2.) He is displeased at their solicitude in this matter. The weakness and shiftlessness of good people in their worldly affairs is that for which men are apt to condemn them; but it is not such an offence to Christ as their inordinate care and anxiety about those things. We must endeavour to keep the mean between the extremes of carelessness and carefulness; but of the two, the excess of thoughtfulness about the world worst becomes Christ's disciples. "*O ye of little faith, why are ye disquieted for want of bread?*" Note, To distrust Christ, and to disturb ourselves when we are in straits and difficulties, is an evidence of the weakness of our faith, which, if it were in exercise as it should be, would ease us of the burthen of care, by casting it on the Lord, who *careth for us*.

(3.) The aggravation of their distrust was the experience they had so lately had of the power and goodness of Christ in providing for them, v. 9, 10. Though they had no bread with them, they had him with them who could provide bread for them. If they had not the cistern, they had the Fountain. *Do ye not yet understand, neither remember?* Note, Christ's disciples are often to be blamed for the shallowness of their understandings, and the slipperiness of their memories. "Have ye forgot those repeated instances of merciful and miraculous supplies; five thousand fed with five loaves, and four thousand with seven loaves, and yet they had enough and to spare? Remember *how many baskets ye took up*." These baskets were intended for memorials, by which to keep the mercy in remembrance, as the pot of

manna which was preserved in the ark, ^{<16>}Exodus 16:32. The fragments of those meals would be a feast now; and he that could furnish them with such an overplus then, surely could furnish them with what was necessary now. That meat for their bodies was intended to be meat or their faith (^{<1744>}Psalm 74:14), which therefore they should have lived upon, now that they had forgotten to take bread. Note, We are *therefore* perplexed with present cares and distrusts, because we do not duly remember our former experiences of divine power and goodness.

2. He reproves their misunderstanding of the caution he gave them (v. 11); *How is it that you do not understand?* Note, Christ's disciples may well be ashamed of the slowness and dulness of their apprehensions in divine things; especially when they have long enjoyed the means of grace; *I spake it not unto you concerning bread.* He took it ill,

(1.) That they should think him as thoughtful about bread as they were; whereas his *meat and drink were to do his Father's will.*

(2.) That they should be so little acquainted with his way of preaching, as to take that literally which he spoke by way of parable; and should thus make themselves like the multitude, who, when Christ spoke to them in parables, seeing, saw not, and hearing, heard not, ^{<413>}Matthew 13:13.

IV. The rectifying of the mistake by this reproof (v. 12); *Then understood they* what he meant. Note, Christ *therefore* shows us our folly and weakness, that we may stir up ourselves to take things right. He did not tell them expressly what he meant, but repeated what he had said, that they should beware of the leaven; and so obliged them, by comparing this with his other discourses, to arrive at the sense of it in their own thoughts. Thus Christ teaches by the Spirit of wisdom in the heart, opening the understanding to the Spirit of revelation in the word. And those truths are most precious, which we have thus digged for, and have found out after some mistakes. Though Christ did not tell them plainly, yet now they were aware that by the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, he meant their doctrine and way, which were corrupt and vicious, but, as they managed them, very apt to insinuate themselves into the minds of men like leaven, and to *eat like a canker.* They were leading men, and were had in reputation, which made the danger of infection by their errors the greater. In our age, we may reckon atheism and deism to be the leaven of the

Sadducees, and popery to be the leaven of the Pharisees, against both which it concerns all Christians to stand upon their guard.

~~463~~ MATTHEW 16:13-20

CHRIST'S CONFERENCE WITH HIS DISCIPLES

We have here a private conference which Christ had with his disciples concerning himself. It was in the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, the utmost borders of the land of Canaan northward; there in that remote corner, perhaps, there was less flocking after him than in other places, which gave him leisure for this private conversation with his disciples. Note, When ministers are abridged in their public work, they should endeavour to do the more in their own families.

Christ is here catechising his disciples.

I. He enquires what the opinions of others were concerning him; *Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?*

1. He calls himself the *Son of man*; which may be taken either,

(1.) As a title common to him with others. He was called, and justly, *the Son of God*, for so he was (~~415~~ Luke 1:35); but he called himself the Son of man; for he is really and truly “Man, made of a woman.” In courts of honour, it is a rule to distinguish men by their highest titles; but Christ, having now emptied himself, though he was the Son of God, will be known by the style and title of the Son of man. Ezekiel was often so called to *keep* him humble; Christ called himself so, to show that he *was* humble. Or,

(2.) As a title peculiar to him as Mediator. He is made known, in Daniel's vision, as the *Son of man*, ~~273~~ Daniel 7:13. I am the Messiah, that Son of man that was promised. But,

2. He enquires what people's sentiments were concerning him: “*Who do men say that I am? The Son of man?*” (So I think it might better be read). “Do they own me for the Messiah?” He asks not, “Who do the *scribes* and *Pharisees* say that I am?” They were prejudiced against him, and said that he was a deceiver and in league with Satan; but, “Who do *men* say that I

am?" He referred to the common people, whom the Pharisees despised. Christ asked this question, not as one that knew not; for if he knows what men think, much more what they say; nor as one desirous to hear his own praises, but to make the disciples solicitous concerning the success of their preaching, by showing that he himself was so. The common people conversed more familiarly with the disciples than they did with their Master, and therefore from them he might better know what they said. Christ had not plainly said who he was, but left people to infer it from his works, ^{<A12>}John 10:24, 25. Now he would know what inferences the people drew from *them*, and from the miracles which his apostles wrought in his name.

3. To this question the disciples have him an answer (v. 14), *Some say, thou art John the Baptist, etc.* There were some that said, he was the *Son of David* (^{<A12>}Matthew 12:23), and the great Prophet, ^{<A14>}John 6:14. The disciples, however, do not mention that opinion, but only such opinions as were wide of the truth, which they gathered up from their countrymen. Observe,

(1.) They are different opinions; some say one thing, and others another. Truth is one; but those who vary from that commonly vary one from another. Thus Christ came eventually to send division, ^{<A15>}Luke 12:51. Being so noted a Person, every one would be ready to pass his verdict upon him, and, "Many men, many minds;" those that were not willing to own him to be the Christ, wandered in endless mazes, and followed the chase of every uncertain guess and wild hypothesis.

(2.) They are honourable opinions, and bespeak the respect they had for him, according to the best of their judgment. These were not the sentiments of his enemies, but the sober thoughts of those that followed him with love and wonder. Note, It is possible for men to have good thoughts of Christ, and yet not right ones, a high opinion of him, and yet not high enough.

(3.) They all suppose him to be *one risen from the dead*; which perhaps arose from a confused notion they had of the resurrection of the Messiah, before his public preaching, as of Jonas. Or their notions arose from an excessive value for antiquity; as if it were not possible for an excellent man to be produced in their own age, but it must be one of the ancients returned to life again.

(4.) They are all false opinions, built upon mistakes, and wilful mistakes. Christ's doctrines and miracles bespoke him to be an extraordinary Person; but because of the meanness of his appearance, so different from what they expected, they would not own him to be the Messiah, but will grant him to be any thing rather than that.

[1.] *Some say, thou art John the Baptist.* Herod said so (⁴¹⁴Matthew 14:2), and those about him would be apt to say as he said. This notion might be strengthened by an opinion they had, that those who died as martyrs, should rise again before others; which some think the second of the seven sons refers to, in his answer to Antiochus, 2 Macc. 7:9, *The King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life.*

[2.] *Some Elias;* taking occasion, no doubt, from the prophecy of Malachi (³⁰⁵Malachi 4:5), *Behold, I will send you Elijah.* And the rather, because Elijah (as Christ) did many miracles, and was himself, in his translation, the greatest miracle of all.

[3.] *Others Jeremias:* they fasten upon him, either because he was the weeping prophet, and Christ was often in tears; or because God had *set him over the kingdoms and nations* (³¹⁰Jeremiah 1:10), which they thought agreed with their notion of the Messiah.

[4.] *Or, one of the prophets.* This shows what an honourable idea they entertained of the prophets; and yet they were *the children of them that persecuted and slew them*, (⁴²⁹Matthew 23:29). Rather than they would allow Jesus of Nazareth, one of their own country, to be such an extraordinary Person as his works bespoke him to be, they would say, "It was not he, but *one of the old prophets.*"

II. He enquires what *their* thoughts were concerning him; "*But who say ye that I am?*" v. 15. Ye tell me what other people say of me; can ye say better?"

1. The disciples had themselves been better taught than others; had, by their intimacy with Christ, greater advantages of getting knowledge than others had. Note, It is justly expected that those who enjoy greater plenty of the means of knowledge and grace than others, should have a more clear and distinct knowledge of the things of God than others. Those who have more acquaintance with Christ than others, should have truer

sentiments concerning him, and be able to give a better account of him than others.

2. The disciples were trained up to teach others, and therefore it was highly requisite that they should understand the truth themselves: “Ye that are to preach the gospel of the kingdom, what are your notions of him that sent you?” Note, Ministers must be examined before they be sent forth, especially what their sentiments are of Christ, and who they say that he is; for how can they be owned as ministers of Christ, that are either ignorant or erroneous concerning Christ? This is a question we should every one of us be frequently putting to ourselves, “*Who* do we say, *what* kind of one do we say, that *the Lord Jesus is*? Is he precious to us? Is he in our eyes the chief of ten thousand? Is he the Beloved of our souls?” It is well or ill with us, according as our thoughts are right or wrong concerning Jesus Christ.

Well, this is the question; now let us observe,

(1.) Peter's answer to this question, v. 16. To the former question concerning the opinion others had of Christ, several of the disciples answered, according as they had heard people talk; but to this Peter answers in the name of all the rest, they all consenting to it, and concurring in it. Peter's temper led him to be forward in speaking upon all such occasions, and sometimes he spoke well, sometimes amiss; in all companies there are found some warm, bold men, to whom a precedency of speech falls of course; Peter was such a one: yet we find other of the apostles sometimes speaking as the mouth of the rest; as *John* (⁴⁰⁸Mark 9:38), *Thomas*, *Philip*, and *Jude*, (⁴¹⁵John 14:5, 8, 22. So that this is far from being a proof of such primacy and superiority of Peter above the rest of the apostles, as the church of Rome ascribes to him. They will needs advance him to be a judge, when the utmost they can make of him, is, that he was but foreman of the jury, to speak for the rest, and that only *pro hfc vice* — *for this once*; not the perpetual dictator or speaker of the house, only chairman upon this occasion.

Peter's answer is short, but it is full, and true, and to the purpose; *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God*. Here is a confession of the Christian faith, addressed to Christ, and so made an act of devotion. Here is a confession of the true God as the living God, in opposition to dumb and dead idols, and of *Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent*, whom to know is *life eternal*. This is the conclusion of the whole matter.

[1.] The people called him *a Prophet, that Prophet* (~~404~~ John 6:14); but the disciples own him to be the Christ, the anointed One; the great Prophet, Priest, and King of the church; the true Messiah promised to the fathers, and depended on by them as *He that shall come*. It was a great thing to believe this concerning one whose outward appearance was so contrary to the general idea the Jews had of the Messiah.

[2.] He called himself the *Son of Man*; but they owned him to be *the Son of the living God*. The *people's* notion of him was, that he was the ghost of a dead man, Elias, or Jeremias; but *they* know and believe him to be *the Son of the living God*, who has life in himself, and has given to his Son to have life in himself, and to be the *Life of the world*. If he be *the Son of the living God*, he is of the same nature with him: and though his divine nature was now veiled with the cloud of flesh, yet there were those who looked through it, and *saw his glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*. Now can we with an assurance of faith subscribe to this confession? Let us then, with a fervency of affection and adoration, go to Christ, and tell him so; Lord Jesus, *thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*.

(2.) Christ's approbation of his answer (v. 17-19); in which Peter is replied to, both as a believer and as an apostle.

[1.] As a believer, v. 17. Christ shows himself well pleased with Peter's confession, that it was so clear and express, without *ifs* or *ands*, as we say. Note, The proficiency of Christ's disciples in knowledge and grace is very acceptable to him; and Christ shows him whence he received the knowledge of this truth. At the first discovery of this truth in the dawning of the gospel day, it was a mighty thing to believe it; *all men had not this knowledge*, had not this faith. But,

First, Peter had the happiness of it; *Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona*. He reminds him of his rise and original, the meanness of his parentage, the obscurity of his extraction; he was *Bar-jonas — The son of a dove*; so some. Let him remember *the rock out of which he was hewn*, that he may see he was not born to this dignity, but preferred to it by the divine favour; it was free grace that made him to differ. Those that have received the Spirit must remember who is their Father, ~~405~~ 1 Samuel 10:12. Having reminded him of this, he makes him sensible of his great happiness as a believer; *Blessed art thou*. Note, True believers are truly blessed, and those are blessed indeed whom Christ pronounces blessed; his saying they

are so, makes them so. "Peter, thou art a happy man, who thus *knowest the joyful sound,*" ~~1805~~ Psalm 89:15 *Blessed are your eyes,* ch. 13:16. All happiness attends the right knowledge of Christ.

Secondly, God must have the glory of it; "*For flesh and blood have not revealed it to thee.* Thou hadst this neither by the invention of thy own wit and reason, nor by the instruction and information of others; this light sprang neither from nature nor from education, but from my Father who is in heaven." Note,

- 1.** The Christian religion is a revealed religion, has its rise in heaven; it is a religion from above, given by inspiration of God, not the learning of philosophers, nor the politics of statesmen.
- 2.** Saving faith is the gift of God, and, wherever it is, is wrought by him, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for his sake, and upon the score of his mediation, ~~1002~~ Philippians 1:29. *Therefore* thou art blessed, because *my Father has revealed it to thee.* Note, The revealing of Christ to us and in us is a distinguishing token of God's good will, and a firm foundation of true happiness; and blessed are they that are thus highly favoured.

Perhaps Christ discerned something of pride and vain-glory in Peter's confession; a subtle sin, and which is apt to mingle itself even with our good duties. It is hard for good men to compare themselves with others, and not to have too great a conceit of themselves; to prevent which, we should consider that our preference to others is no achievement of our own, but the free gift of God's grace too us, and not to others; so that we have nothing to boast of, ~~1831~~ Psalm 115:1; ~~1800~~ 1 Corinthians 4:7.

[2.] Christ replies to him as an apostle or minister, v. 18, 19. Peter, in the name of the church, had confessed Christ, and to him therefore the promise intended for the church is directed. Note, There is nothing lost by being forward to confess Christ; for those who honour him, he will honour.

Upon occasion of this great confession made of Christ, which is the church's homage and allegiance, he signed and published this royal, this divine charter, by which that body politic is incorporated. Such is the communion between Christ and the church, the Bridegroom and the spouse. God had a church in the world from the beginning, and it was built upon the rock of the promised Seed, ~~1005~~ Genesis 3:15. But now, that

promised Seed being come, it was requisite that the church should have a new charter, as Christian, and standing in relation to a Christ already come. Now here we have that charter; and a thousand pities it is, that this word, which is the great support of the kingdom of Christ, should be wrested and pressed into the service of antichrist. But the devil has employed his subtlety to pervert it, as he did that promise, ^{<3911>}Psalm 91:11, which he perverted to his own purpose, ^{<4046>}Matthew 4:6, and perhaps both that scripture and this he thus perverted because they stood in his way, and therefore he owed them a spite.

Now the purport of this charter is,

First, To establish the being of the church; *I say also unto thee*. It is Christ that makes the grant, he who is the church's Head, and Ruler, to whom all judgment is committed, and from whom all power is derived; he who makes it pursuant to the authority received from the Father, and his undertaking for the salvation of the elect. The grant is put into Peter's hand; "I say it to *thee*." The Old Testament promises relating to the church were given immediately to particular persons, eminent for faith and holiness, as to Abraham and David; which yet gave no supremacy to them, much less to any of their successors; so the New-Testament charter is here delivered to Peter as an agent, but to the use and behoof of the church in all ages, according to the purposes therein specified and contained. Now it is here promised,

1. That Christ would build his church upon a rock. This body politic is incorporated by the style and title of *Christ's church*. It is a number of the children of men called out of the world, and set apart from it, and dedicated to Christ. It is not *thy* church, but *mine*. Peter remembered this, when he cautioned ministers *not to lord it over God's heritage*. The church is Christ's peculiar, appropriated to him. The world is God's, and they that dwell therein; but the church is a chosen remnant, that stands in relation to God through Christ as Mediator. It bears his image and superscription.

(1.) The Builder and Maker of the church is Christ himself; *I will build it*. The church is a temple which Christ is the Builder of, ^{<3861>}Zechariah 6:11-13. Herein Solomon was a type of Christ, and Cyrus, ^{<2448>}Isaiah 44:28. The materials and workmanship are his. By the working of his Spirit with the preaching of his word he adds souls to his church, and so builds it up with living stones, ^{<4015>}1 Peter 2:5. *Ye are God's building*; and building is a progressive work; the church in this world is but *in fieri* — *in the forming*,

like a house in the building. It is a comfort to all those who wish well to the church, that Christ, who has divine wisdom and power, undertakes to build it.

(2.) The foundation on which it is built is, *this Rock*. Let the architect do his part ever so well, if the foundation be rotten, the building will not stand; let us therefore see what the foundation is, and it must be meant of Christ, for *other foundation can no man lay*. See ^{<336>}Isaiah 28:16.

[1.] The church is built upon a *rock*; a firm, strong, and lasting foundation, which time will not waste, nor will it sink under the weight of the building. Christ would not build his house upon the sand, for he knew that storms would arise. A rock is high, ^{<332>}Psalms 61:2. Christ's church does not stand upon a level with this world; a rock is large, and extends far, so does the church's foundation; and the more large, the more firm; those are not the church's friends that narrow its foundation.

[2.] It is built upon *this rock*; thou art *Peter*, which signifies *a stone or rock*; Christ gave him that name when he first called him (^{<412>}John 1:42), and here he confirms it; "Peter, thou dost answer thy name, thou art a solid, substantial disciple, fixed and stayed, and one that there is some hold of. Peter is thy name, and strength and stability are with thee. Thou art not shaken with the waves of men's fluctuating opinions concerning me, but established in the present truth," ^{<412>}2 Peter 1:12. From the mention of this significant name, occasion is taken for this metaphor of *building upon a rock*.

First, Some by this rock understand Peter himself as an apostle, the chief, though not the prince, of the twelve, senior among them, but not superior over them. The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles, ^{<410>}Ephesians 2:20. The first stones of that building were laid in and by their ministry; hence their names are said to be *written in the foundations* of the new Jerusalem, ^{<4214>}Revelation 21:14. Now Peter being that apostle by whose hand the first stones of the church were laid, both in Jewish converts (Acts 2), and in the Gentile converts (Acts 10), he might in some sense be said to be the rock on which it was built. *Cephas* was one that seemed to be a pillar, ^{<419>}Galatians 2:9. But it sounds very harsh, to call a man that only lays the first stone of a building, which is a transient act, the foundation on which it is built, which is an abiding thing. Yet if it were so, this would not serve to support the pretensions of the Bishop of Rome; for Peter had no such headship as he claims, much less could he derive it to

his successors, least of all to the Bishops of Rome, who, whether they are so in place or no, is a question, but that they are not so in the truth of Christianity, is past all question.

Secondly, Others, by this *rock*, understand *Christ*; “*Thou art Peter, thou hast the name of a stone, but upon this rock, pointing to himself, I will build my church.*” Perhaps he laid his hand on his breast, as when he said, *Destroy this temple* (~~409~~ John 2:19), when he *spoke of the temple of his body*. Then he took occasion from the temple, where he was, so to speak of himself, and gave occasion to some to misunderstand him of that; so here he took occasion from Peter, to speak of himself as the Rock, and gave occasion to some to misunderstand him of Peter. But this must be explained by those many scriptures which speak of Christ as the only Foundation of the church; see ~~411~~ 1 Corinthians 3:11; ~~412~~ 1 Peter 2:6. Christ is both its Founder and its Foundation; he draws souls, and draws them to himself; to him they are united, and on him they rest and have a constant dependence.

Thirdly, Others by this *rock* understand this confession which Peter made of Christ, and this comes all to one with understanding it of Christ himself. It was a good confession which Peter witnessed, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*; the rest concurred with him in it. “Now,” saith Christ, “this is that great truth *upon which I will build my church.*”

1. Take away this truth itself, and the universal church falls to the ground. If Christ be not the Son of God, Christianity is a cheat, and the church is a mere chimera; *our preaching is vain, your faith is vain, and you are yet in your sins*, ~~414~~ 1 Corinthians 15:14-17. If Jesus be not the Christ, those that own him are not of the church, but deceivers and deceived.

2. Take away the faith and confession of this truth from any particular church, and it ceases to be a part of Christ's church, and relapses to the state and character of infidelity. This is *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesia* — *that article, with the admission or the denial of which the church either rises or falls*; “the main hinge on which the door of salvation turns;” those who let go this, do not hold the foundation; and though they may call themselves Christians, they give themselves the lie; for the church is a sacred society, incorporated upon the certainty and assurance of this great truth; and great it is, and has prevailed.

2. Christ here promises to preserve and secure his church, when it is built; *The gates of hell shall not prevail against it*; neither against this truth, nor against the church which is built upon it.

(1.) This implies that the church has enemies that fight against it, and endeavour its ruin overthrow, here represented by *the gates of hell*, that is, the city of hell; (which is directly opposite to this heavenly city, this *city of the living God*), the devil's interest among the children of men. The gates of hell are the powers and policies of the devil's kingdom, the dragon's head and horns, by which he *makes war with the Lamb*; all that comes out of hell-gates, as being hatched and contrived there. These fight against the church by opposing gospel truths, corrupting gospel ordinances, persecuting good ministers and good Christians; drawing or driving, persuading by craft or forcing by cruelty, to that which is inconsistent with the purity of religion; this is the design of the gates of hell, to root out the name of Christianity (^{<3834>}Psalm 83:4), *to devour the man-child* (^{<6129>}Revelation 12:9), to raze this city to the ground.

(2.) This assures us that the enemies of the church shall not gain their point. While the world stands, Christ will have a church in it, in which his truths and ordinances shall be owned and kept up, in spite of all the opposition of the powers of darkness; *They shall not prevail against it*, ^{<6129>}Psalm 129:1, 2. This gives no security to any particular church, or church-governors that they shall never err, never apostatize or be destroyed; but that somewhere or other the Christian religion shall have a being, though not always in the same degree of purity and splendour, yet so as that the entail of it shall never be quite cut off. *The woman lives, though in a wilderness* (^{<6124>}Revelation 12:14), *cast down but not destroyed* (^{<6109>}2 Corinthians 4:9). Corruptions grieving, persecutions grievous, but neither fatal. The church may be foiled in particular encounters, but in the main battle it shall come off *more than a conqueror*. Particular believers are *kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation*, ^{<6115>}1 Peter 1:5.

Secondly, The other part of this charter is, to settle the order and government of the church, v. 19. When a city or society is incorporated, officers are appointed and empowered to act for the common good. A city without government is a chaos. Now this constituting of the government of the church, is here expressed by the delivering of the keys, and, with them, a power to bind and loose. This is not to be understood of any peculiar power that Peter was invested with, as if he were sole door-keeper

of the kingdom of heaven, and had that key of David which belongs only to the Son of David; no, this invests all the apostles and their successors with a ministerial power to guide and govern the church of Christ, as it exists in particular congregations or churches, according to the rules of the gospel. *Claves regni caelorum in B. Petro apostolo cuncti suscepimus sacerdotes* — All we that are priests, received, in the person of the blessed apostle Peter, the keys of the kingdom of heaven; so Ambrose *De Dignit. Sacerd.* Only the keys were first put into Peter's hand, because he was the first that opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, ^{<44B>}Acts 10:28. As the king, in giving a charter to a corporation, empowers the magistrates to hold courts in his name, to try matters of fact, and determine therein according to law, confirming what is so done regularly as if done in any of the superior courts; so Christ, having incorporated his church, hath appointed the office of the ministry for the keeping up of order and government, and to see that his laws be duly served; *I will give thee the keys.* He doth not say, “*I have given them,*” or “*I do now,*” but “*I will do it,*” meaning after his resurrection; *when he ascended on high, he gave those gifts,* ^{<40B>}Ephesians 4:8; then this power was actually given, not to Peter only, but to all the rest, ^{<43B>}Matthew 28:19, 20; ^{<41B>}John 20:21. He doth not say, The keys *shall* be given, but, *I will give* them; for ministers derive their authority from Christ, and all their power is to be used in his name, ^{<46B>}1 Corinthians 5:4.

Now,

1. The power here delegated is a spiritual power; it is a power *pertaining to the kingdom of heaven*, that is, to the church, that part of it which is militant here on earth, to the gospel dispensation; that is it about which the apostolical and ministerial power is wholly conversant. It is not any civil, secular power that is hereby conveyed, Christ's *kingdom is not of this world*; their instructions afterward were *in things pertaining to the kingdom of God*, ^{<40B>}Acts 1:3.

2. It is the *power* of the keys that is given, alluding to the custom of investing men with authority in such a place, by delivering to them the keys of the place. Or as the master of the house gives the keys to the steward, the keys of the stores where the provisions are kept, that he may give to every one in the house *his portion of meat in due season* (^{<42B>}Luke 12:42), and deny it as there is occasion, according to the rules of the family. Ministers are *stewards*, ^{<44B>}1 Corinthians 4:1; ^{<41B>}Titus 1:7.

Eliakim, who had *the key of the house of David, was over the household,*
~~3222~~ Isaiah 22:22.

3. It is a power to *bind and loose*, that is (following the metaphor of the keys), to shut and open. Joseph, who was lord of Pharaoh's house, and steward of the stores, had power *to bind his princes, and to teach his senators wisdom,* ~~1945E~~ Psalm 105:21, 22. When the stores and treasures of the house are shut up from any, they are bound, *interdico tibi aqua et igne* — *I forbid thee the use of fire and water;* when they are opened to them again, they are loosed from that bond, are discharged from the censure, and restored to their liberty.

4. It is a power which Christ has promised to own the due administration of; he will ratify the sentences of his stewards with his own approbation; *It shall be bound in heaven, and loosed in heaven:* not that Christ hath hereby obliged himself to confirm all church-censures, right or wrong; but such as are duly passed according to the word, *clave non errante* — *the key turning the right way*, such are sealed in heaven; that is, the word of the gospel, in the mouth of faithful ministers, is to be looked upon, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, and to be received accordingly, ~~5103~~ 1 Thessalonians 2:13; ~~8121~~ John 12:20.

Now *the keys of the kingdom of heaven are,*

(1.) The key of *doctrine*, called the key of *knowledge*. “Your business shall be to explain to the world the will of God, both as to truth and duty; and for this you shall have your commissions, credentials, and full instructions to bind and loose:” these, in the common speech of the Jews, at that time, signified to prohibit and permit; to teach or declare a thing to be unlawful was to *bind*; to be lawful, was to *loose*. Now the apostles had an extraordinary power of this kind; some things forbidden by the law of Moses were now to be allowed, as the eating of such and such meats; some things allowed there were now to be forbidden, as divorce; and the apostles were empowered to declare this to the world, and men might take it upon their words. When Peter was first taught himself, and then taught others, *to call nothing common or unclean*, this power was exercised. There is also an ordinary power hereby conveyed to all ministers, to preach the gospel as appointed officers; to tell people, in God's name, and according to the scriptures, *what is good, and what the Lord requires of them:* and they who *declare the whole counsel of God*, use these keys well, ~~4407~~ Acts 20:27.

Some make the giving of the keys to allude to the custom of the Jews in creating a doctor of the law, which was to put into his hand the keys of the chest where the book of the law was kept, denoting his being authorized to take and read it; and *the binding and loosing*, to allude to the fashion about their books, which were in rolls; they shut them by binding them up with a string, which they untied when they opened them. Christ gives his apostles power to shut or open the book of the gospel to people, as the case required. See the exercise of this power, ~~4436~~ Acts 13:46; 18:6. When ministers preach pardon and peace to the penitent, wrath and the curse to the impenitent, in Christ's name, they act then pursuant to this authority of binding and loosing.

(2.) The key of *discipline*, which is but the application of the former to particular persons, upon a right estimate of their characters and actions. It is not legislative power that is hereby conferred, but judicial; the judge doth not make the law, but only declares what is law, and upon an impartial enquiry into the merits of the cause, gives sentence accordingly. Such is *the power of the keys*, wherever it is lodged, with reference to church-membership and the privileges thereof.

[1.] Christ's ministers have a power to admit into the church; “*Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them*; those who profess faith in Christ, and obedience to him, admit them and their seed members of the church by baptism.” Ministers are to let in to *the wedding-feast those that are bidden*; and to keep out such as are apparently unfit for so holy a communion.

[2.] They have a power to expel and cast out such as have forfeited their church-membership, that is binding; refusing to unbelievers the application of gospel promises and the seals of them; and declaring to such as appear to be *in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity*, that *they have no part or lot in the matter*, as Peter did to Simon Magus, though he had been baptized; and this is a binding over to the judgment of God.

[3.] They have a power to restore and to receive in again, upon their repentance, such as had been thrown out; to loose those whom they had bound; declaring to them, that, if their repentance be sincere, the promise of pardon belongs to them. The apostles had a miraculous gift of *discerning spirits*; yet even *they* went by the rule of outward appearances (as ~~4481~~ Acts 8:21; ~~4481~~ 1 Corinthians 5:1; ~~4481~~ 2 Corinthians 2:7; ~~3001~~ 1 Timothy

1:20), which ministers may still make a judgment upon, if they be skilful and faithful.

Lastly, Here is the charge which Christ gave his disciples, to keep this private for the present (v. 20); *They must tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ*. What they had professed to him, they must not yet publish to the world, for several reasons;

- 1.** Because this was the time of preparation for his kingdom: the great thing now preached, was, that *the kingdom of heaven was at hand*; and therefore those things were now to be insisted on, which were proper to make way for Christ; as the doctrine of repentance; not this great truth, in and with which *the kingdom of heaven* was to be actually set up. Every thing is beautiful in its season, and it is good advice, *Prepare thy work, and afterwards build*, ^{<107>}Proverbs 24:27.
- 2.** Christ would have his Messiahship proved by his works, and would rather *they* should testify of him than that his *disciples* should, because their testimony was but as his own, which he insisted not on. See ^{<48>}John 5:31, 34. He was so secure of the demonstration of his miracles, that he waived other witnesses, ^{<45>}John 10:25, 38.
- 3.** If they had known *that he was Jesus the Christ, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*, ^{<48>}1 Corinthians 2:8.
- 4.** Christ would not have the apostles preach this, till they had the most convincing evidence ready to allege in confirmation of it. Great truths may suffer damage by being asserted before they can be sufficiently proved. Now the great proof of Jesus being the Christ was his resurrection: by that *he was declared to be the Son of God, with power*; and therefore the divine wisdom would not have this truth preached, till that could be alleged for proof of it.
- 5.** It was requisite that the preachers of so great a truth should be furnished with greater measures of the Spirit than the apostles as yet had; therefore the open asserting of it was adjourned till the Spirit should be poured out upon them. But when Christ was glorified and the Spirit poured out, we find Peter proclaiming upon the house-tops what was here spoken in a corner (^{<48>}Acts 2:36), *That God hath made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ*; for, as there is a time to keep silence, so there is a time to speak.

~~<16>~~ MATTHEW 16:21-23

CHRIST REPROVES PETER

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples concerning his own sufferings; in which observe,

I. Christ's foretelling of his sufferings. Now he *began* to do it, and from this time he frequently spake of them. Some hints he had already given of his sufferings, as when he said, *Destroy this temple*: when he spake of *the Son of man being lifted up*, and of *eating his flesh, and drinking his blood*: but now he *began* to show it, to speak plainly and expressly of it. Hitherto he had not touched upon this, because the disciples were weak, and could not well bear the notice of a thing so very strange, and so very melancholy; but now that they were more ripe in knowledge, and strong in faith, he began to tell them this. Note, Christ reveals his mind to his people gradually, and lets in light as they can bear it, and are fit to receive it.

From that time, when they had made that full confession of Christ, that he was the Son of God, then he began to show them this. When he found them knowing in one truth, he taught them another; *for to him that has, shall be given*. Let them first be established in the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and then go on to perfection, ~~<381>~~ Hebrews 6:1. If they had not been well grounded in the belief of Christ's being the Son of God, it would have been a great shaking to their faith. All truths are not to be spoken to all persons at all times, but such as are proper and suitable to their present state. Now observe,


1. What he foretold concerning his sufferings, the particulars and circumstances of them, and all surprising.

(1.) The place where he should suffer. He must go to Jerusalem, the head city, the holy city, and suffer there. Though he lived most of his time in Galilee, he must die at Jerusalem; there all the sacrifices were offered, there therefore *he* must die, *who is the great sacrifice*.


(2.) The persons by whom he should suffer; *the elders, and chief priests, and scribes*; these made up the great sanhedrim, which sat at Jerusalem, and was had in veneration by the people. Those that should have been most forward in owning and admiring Christ, were the most bitter in

persecuting him. It was strange that men of knowledge in the scripture, who professed to expect the Messiah's coming, and pretended to have something sacred in their character, should use him thus barbarously when he did come. It was the Roman power that condemned and crucified Christ, but he lays it at the door of *the chief priests and scribes*, who were the first movers.

(3.) What he should suffer; *he must suffer many things, and be killed*. His enemies' insatiable malice, and his own invincible patience, appear in the variety and multiplicity of his sufferings (he suffered many things) and in the extremity of them; nothing less than his death would satisfy them, he must be killed. The suffering of many things, if not unto death, is more tolerable; for while there is life, there is hope; and death, without such prefaces, would be less terrible; but *he must first suffer many things, and then be killed*.

(4.) What should be the happy issue of all his sufferings; he shall *be raised again the third day*. As the prophets, so Christ himself, when he testified beforehand his sufferings, testified withal the glory that should follow,  1 Peter 1:11. His rising again the third day proved him to be the Son of God, notwithstanding his sufferings; and therefore he mentions that, to keep up their faith. When he spoke of the cross and the shame, he spoke in the same breath of *the joy set before him*, in the prospect of which *he endured the cross, and despised the shame*. Thus we must look upon Christ's suffering for us, trace in it the way to his glory; and thus we must look upon our suffering for Christ, look through it to the recompense of reward. *If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him*.

2. Why he foretold his sufferings.

(1.) To show that they were the product of an eternal counsel and consent; were agreed upon between the Father and the Son from eternity; *Thus is behoved Christ to suffer*. The matter was settled in *the determinate counsel and foreknowledge*, in pursuance of his own voluntary susception and undertaking for our salvation; his sufferings were no surprise to him, did not come upon him as a snare, but he had a distinct and certain foresight of them, which greatly magnifies his love,  John 18:4.

(2.) To rectify the mistakes which his disciples had imbibed concerning the external pomp and power of his kingdom. Believing him to be the Messiah, they counted upon nothing but dignity and authority in the world;

but here Christ reads them another lesson, tells them of the cross and sufferings; nay, that the chief priests and the elders, whom, it is likely, they expected to be the supports of the Messiah's kingdom, should be its great enemies and persecutors; this would give them quite another idea of that kingdom which they themselves had preached the approach of; and it was requisite that this mistake should be rectified. Those that follow Christ must be dealt plainly with, and warned not to expect great things in this world.

(3.) It was to prepare them for the share, at least, of sorrow and fear, which they must have in his sufferings. When he suffered many things, the disciples could not but suffer some; if their Master be killed, they will be seized with terror; let them know it before, that they may provide accordingly, and, being fore-*warned*, may be fore-*armed*.

II. The offence which Peter took at this he said, *Be it far from thee, Lord*: probably he spake the sense of the rest of the disciples, as before, for he was chief speaker. *He took him, and began to rebuke him*. Perhaps Peter was a little elevated with the great things Christ had now said unto him, which made him more bold with Christ than did become him; so hard is it to keep the spirit low and humble in the midst of great advancements!

1. It did not become Peter to contradict his Master, or take upon him to advise him; he might have wished, *that, if it were possible, this cup might pass away*, without saying so peremptorily, *This shall not be*, when Christ had said, *It must be. Shall any teach God knowledge? He that reproveth God, let him answer it*. Note, When God's dispensations are either intricate or cross to us, it becomes us silently to acquiesce in, and not to prescribe to, the divine will; God knows what he has to do, without our teaching. Unless we know the mind of the Lord, it is not for us to be his counsellors, ~~4513~~ Romans 11:34.

2. It savoured much of fleshly wisdom, for him to appear so warmly against suffering, and to startle thus at the offence of the cross. It is the corrupt part of us, that is thus solicitous to sleep in a whole skin. We are apt to look upon sufferings as they relate to this present life, to which they are uneasy; but there are other rules to measure them by, which, if duly observed, will enable us cheerfully to bear them, ~~4588~~ Romans 8:18. See how passionately Peter speaks: "*Be it far from thee, Lord. God forbid, that thou shouldst suffer and be killed; we cannot bear the thoughts of it.*"

Master, spare thyself: so it might be read; *hileos soi, kyrie* — “*Be merciful to thyself*, and then no one else can be cruel to thee; pity thyself, and then *this shall not be to thee.*” He would have Christ to dread suffering as much as he did; but we mistake, if we measure Christ's love and patience by our own. He intimates, likewise, the improbability of the thing, humanly speaking; “*This shall not be unto thee.* It is impossible that one who hath so great an interest in the people as thou hast, should be crushed by the elders, who fear the people: this can never be; we that have followed thee, will fight for thee, if occasion be; and there are thousands that will stand by us.”

III. Christ's displeasure against Peter for this suggestion of his, v. 23. We do not read of any thing said or done by any of his disciples, at any time, that he resented so much as this, though they often offended.

Observe,

1. How he expressed his displeasure: He turned upon Peter, and (we may suppose) with a frown said, *Get thee behind me, Satan.* He did not so much as take time to deliberate upon it, but gave an immediate reply to the temptation, which was such as made it to appear how ill he took it. Just now, he had said, *Blessed art thou, Simon*, and had even laid him in his bosom; but here, *Get thee behind me, Satan*; and there was cause for both. Note, A good man may by a surprise of temptation soon grow very unlike himself. He answered him as he did Satan himself, ~~400~~ Matthew 4:10.

Note,

(1.) It is the subtlety of Satan, to send temptations to us by the unsuspected hands of our best and dearest friends. Thus he assaulted Adam by Eve, Job by his wife, and here Christ by his beloved Peter. It concerns us therefore not to be ignorant of his devices, but to stand against his wiles and depths, by standing always upon our guard against sin, whoever moves us to it. Even the kindnesses of our friends are often abused by Satan, and made use of as temptations to us.

(2.) Those who have their spiritual senses exercised, will be aware of the voice of Satan, even in a friend, a disciple, a minister, that dissuades them from their duty. We must not regard who speaks, so much as what is spoken; we should learn to know the devil's voice when he speaks in a saint as well as when he speaks in a serpent. Whoever takes us off from

that which is good, and would have us afraid of doing too much for God, speaks Satan's language.

(3.) We must be free and faithful in reproving the dearest friend we have, that saith or doth amiss, though it may be under colour of kindness to us. We must not compliment, but rebuke, mistaken courtesies. *Faithful are the wounds of a friend.* Such smittings must be accounted kindnesses, ~~HEB~~ Psalm 141:5.

(4.) Whatever appears to be a temptation to sin, must be resisted with abhorrence, and not parleyed with.

2. What was the ground of this displeasure; why did Christ thus resent a motion that seemed not only harmless, but kind? Two reasons are given:

(1.) *Thou art an offence to me* — *Skandalon mou ei* — *Thou art my hindrance* (so it may be read); “thou standest in my way.” Christ was hastening on in the work of our salvation, and his heart was so much upon it, that he took it ill to be hindered, or tempted to start back from the hardest and most discouraging part of his undertaking. So strongly was he engaged for our redemption, that they who but indirectly endeavoured to divert him from it, touched him in a very tender and sensible part. Peter was not so sharply reprov'd for disowning and denying his Master in his sufferings as he was for dissuading him from them; though that was the defect, this the excess, of kindness. It argues a very great firmness and resolution of mind in any business, when it is *an offence* to be dissuaded, and a man will not endure to hear any thing to the contrary; like that of Ruth, *Entreat me not to leave thee.* Note, Our Lord Jesus preferred our salvation before his own ease and safety; for *even Christ pleased not himself* (~~HEB~~ Romans 15:3); he came into the world, not to spare himself, as Peter advised, but to spend himself.

See why he called Peter *Satan*, when he suggested this to him; because, whatever stood in the way of our salvation, he looked upon as coming from the devil, who is a sworn enemy to it. The same Satan that afterward entered into Judas, maliciously to destroy him in his undertaking, here prompted Peter plausibly to divert him from it. Thus *he changes himself into an angel of light.*

Thou art an offence to me. Note,

[1.] Those that engage in any great good work must expect to meet with hindrance and opposition from friends and foes, from within and from without.

[2.] Those that obstruct our progress in any duty must be looked upon as an offence to us. *Then* we do the will of God as Christ did, *whose meat and drink it was to do it*, when it is a trouble to us to be solicited from our duty. Those that hinder us from doing or suffering for God, when we are called to it, whatever they are in other things in that they are *Satans, adversaries* to us.

(2.) *Thou savourest not the things that are of God, but those that are of men.* Note,

[1.] *The things that are of God*, that is, the concerns of his will and glory, often clash and interfere with *the things that are of men*, that is, with our own wealth, pleasure, and reputation. While we mind Christian duty as our way and work, and the divine favour as our end and portion, we *savour the things of God*; but if these be minded, the flesh must be denied, hazards must be run and hardships borne; and here is the trial which of the two we savour.

[2.] Those that inordinately fear, and industriously decline suffering for Christ, when they are called to it, savour more of the things of man than of the things of God; they relish those things more themselves, and make it appear to others that they do so.

412 MATTHEW 16:24-28

THE VALUE OF THE SOUL

Christ, having shown his disciples that *he* must suffer, and that he was ready and willing to suffer, here shows them that *they* must suffer too, and must be ready and willing. It is a weighty discourse that we have in these verses.

I. Here is the law of discipleship laid down, and the terms fixed, upon which we may have the honour and benefit of it, v. 24. He said this to his disciples, not only that they might instruct others concerning it, but that by this rule they might examine their own security. Observe,

1. What it is to be a disciple of Christ; it is to come after him. When Christ called his disciples, this was the word of command, *Follow me*. A true disciple of Christ is one that doth follow him in duty, and shall follow him to glory. He is one that comes after Christ, not one that prescribes to him, as Peter now undertook to do, forgetting his place. A disciple of Christ comes after him, as the sheep after the shepherd, the servant after his master, the soldiers after their captain; he is one that aims at the same end that Christ aimed at, the glory of God, and the glory of heaven: and one that walks in the same way that he walked in, is led by his Spirit, treads in his steps, submits to his conduct, and *follows the Lamb, whithersoever he goes*, ^{<404>}Revelation 14:4.

2. What are the great things required of those that will be Christ's disciples; *If any man will come, ei tis thelei* — *If any man be willing to come*. It denotes a deliberate choice, and cheerfulness and resolution in that choice. Many are disciples more by chance or the will of others than by any act of their own will; but Christ will have his people volunteers, ^{<405>}Psalms 110:3. It is as if Christ had said, “If any of the people that are not my disciples, be steadfastly minded to come to me, and if you that are, be in like manner minded to adhere to me, it is upon these terms, these and no other; you must *follow me* in sufferings as well as in other things, and therefore when you sit down to count the cost, reckon upon it.”

Now what are these terms?

(1.) *Let him deny himself*. Peter had advised Christ to spare himself, and would be ready, in the like case, to take the advice; but Christ tells them all, they must be so far from *sparing* themselves, that they must *deny* themselves. Herein they must come after Christ, for his birth, and life, and death, were all a continued act of self-denial, a self-emptying, ^{<406>}Philippians 2:7, 8. If self-denial be a hard lesson, and against the grain to flesh and blood, it is no more than what our Master learned and practised before us and for us, both for our redemption and for our instruction; and *the servant is not above his lord*. Note, All the disciples and followers of Jesus Christ must deny themselves. It is the fundamental law of admission into Christ's school, and the first and great lesson to be learned in this school, to deny ourselves; it is both the *strait* gate, and the *narrow* way; it is necessary in order to our learning all the other good lessons that are there taught. We must deny ourselves absolutely, we must not admire our own shadow, nor gratify our own humour; we must not

lean to our own understanding, nor seek our own things, nor be our own end. We must deny ourselves comparatively; we must deny ourselves for Christ, and his will and glory, and the service of his interest in the world; we must deny ourselves for our brethren, and for their good; and we must deny ourselves for ourselves, deny the appetites of the body for the benefit of the soul.

(2.) *Let him take up his cross.* The cross is here put for all sufferings, as men or Christians; providential afflictions, persecutions for righteousness' sake, every trouble that befalls us, either for doing well or for not doing ill. The troubles of Christians are fitly called *crosses*, in allusion to the death of the cross, which Christ was obedient to; and it should reconcile us to troubles, and take off the terror of them, that they are what we bear in common with Christ, and such as he hath borne before us. Note,

[1.] Every disciple of Christ hath his cross, and must count upon it; as each hath his special duty to be done, so each hath his special trouble to be borne, and every one feels most from his own burthen. Crosses are the common lot of God's children, but of this common lot of God's children, but of this common lot each hath his particular share. That is our cross which Infinite Wisdom has appointed for us, and a Sovereign Providence has laid on us, as fittest for us. It is good for us to call the cross we are under *our own*, and entertain it accordingly. We are apt to think we could bear such a one's cross better than our own; but that is best which is, and we ought to make the best of it.

[2.] Every disciple of Christ must take up that which the wise God hath made his cross. It is an allusion to the Roman custom of compelling those that were condemned to be crucified, to carry their cross: when Simon carried Christ's cross after him, this phrase was illustrated. *First*, It is supposed that the cross lies in our way, and is prepared for us. We must not make crosses to ourselves, but must accommodate ourselves to those which God has made for us. Our rule is, not to go a step out of the way of duty, either to meet a cross, or to miss one. We must not by our rashness and indiscretion pull crosses down upon our own heads, but must take them up when they are laid in our way. We must so manage an affliction, that it may not be a stumbling-block or hindrance to us in any service we have to do for God. We must take it up out of our way, by getting over *the offence of the cross*; *None of these things move me*; and we must then go on with it in our way, though it lie heavy. *Secondly*, That which we have

to do, is, not only to bear the cross (that a stock, or a stone, or a stick may do), not only to be silent under it, but we must *take up* the cross, must improve it to some good advantage. We should not say, “This is an evil, and I must bear it, because I cannot help it;” but, “This is an evil, and I will bear it, because it shall work for my good.” When we *rejoice in our afflictions, and glory in them*, then we take up the cross. This fitly follows upon denying ourselves; for he that will not deny himself the pleasures of sin, and the advantages of this world for Christ, when it comes to the push, will never have the heart to take up his cross. “He that cannot take up the resolution to live a saint, has a demonstration within himself, that he is never likely to die a martyr;” so Archbishop Tillotson.

(3.) *Let him follow me*, in this particular of taking up the cross. Suffering saints must look unto Jesus, and take from him both direction and encouragement in suffering. Do we bear the cross? We therein follow Christ, who bears it *before* us, bears it *for* us, and so bears it *from* us. He bore the heavy end of the cross, the end that had the curse upon it, that was a heavy end, and so made the other light and easy for us. Or, we may take it in general, we must follow Christ in all instances of holiness and obedience. Note, The disciples of Christ must study to imitate their Master, and conform themselves in every thing to his example, and continue in well-doing, whatever crosses lie in their way. To do well and to suffer ill, is to follow Christ. *If any man will come after me, let him follow me*; that seems to be *idem per idem* — *the same thing over again*. What is the difference? Surely it is this, “*If any man will come after me*, in profession, and so have the name and credit of a disciple, *let him follow me in truth*, and so do the work and duty of a disciple.” Or thus, “*If any man will set out after me*, in good beginnings, *let him continue to follow me with all perseverance*.” That is *following the Lord fully*, as Caleb did. Those that come after Christ, must follow after him.

II. Here are arguments to persuade us to submit to these laws, and come up to these terms. Self-denial, and patient suffering, are hard lessons, which will never be learned if we consult with flesh and blood; let us therefore consult with our Lord Jesus, and see what advice he gives us; and here he gives us,

1. Some considerations proper to engage us to these duties of self-denial and suffering for Christ. Consider,

(1.) The weight of that eternity which depends upon our present choice (v. 25); *Whosoever will save his life, by denying Christ, shall lose it: and whosoever is content to lose his life, for owning Christ, shall find it.* Here are *life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, set before us.* Observe,

[1.] The misery that attends the most plausible apostasy. *Whosoever will save his life* in this world, if it be by sin, he *shall lose it* in another; he that forsakes Christ, to preserve a temporal life and avoid a temporal death, will certainly come short of eternal life, and will be hurt of the second death, and eternally held by it. There cannot be a fairer pretence for apostasy and iniquity than saving the life by it, so cogent is the law of self-preservation; and yet even that is folly, for it will prove in the end self-destruction; the life saved is but for a moment, the death shunned is but as a sleep; but the life lost is everlasting, and the death run upon is the depth and complement of all misery, and an endless separation from all good. Now, let any rational man consider of it, take advice and speak his mind, whether there is any thing got, at long run, by apostasy, though a man save his estate, preferment, or life, by it.

[2.] The advantage that attends the most perilous and expensive constancy; *Whosoever will lose his life for Christ's sake* in this world, *shall find it* in a better, infinitely to his advantage. Note, *First*, Many a life is lost, for Christ's sake, in doing his work, by labouring fervently for his name; in suffering work, by choosing rather to die than to deny him or his truths and ways. Christ's holy religion is handed down to us, sealed with the blood of thousands, that have *not known their own souls*, but have *despised their lives* (as Job speaks in another case), though very valuable ones, when they have stood in competition with their duty and *the testimony of Jesus*, ^{<610>}Revelation 20:4. *Secondly*, Though many have been losers for Christ, even of life itself, yet never any one was, or will be, a loser by him in the end. The loss of other comforts, for Christ, may possibly be made up in this world (^{<410>}Mark 10:30); the loss of life cannot, but it shall be made up in the other world, in an eternal life; the believing prospect of which hath been the great support of suffering saints in all ages. An assurance of the life they should find, in lieu of the life they hazarded, hath enabled them to triumph over death in all its terrors; to go smiling to a scaffold, and stand singing at a stake, and to call the utmost instances of their enemies' rage but *a light affliction*.

[3.] The worth of the soul which lies at stake, and the worthlessness of the world in comparison of it (v. 26). *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? ten psychen autou;* the same word which is translated *his life* (v. 25), for the *soul* is the *life*, ~~OR~~ Genesis 2:7. This alludes to that common principle, that, whatever a man gets, if he lose his life, it will do him no good, he cannot enjoy his gains. But it looks higher, and speaks of the soul as immortal, and a loss of it beyond death, which cannot be compensated by the gain of the whole world. Note, *First*, Every man has a soul of his own. The soul is the spiritual and immortal part of man, which thinks and reasons, has a power of reflection and prospect, which actuates the body now, and will shortly act in a separation from the body. Our souls are our own not in respect of dominion and property (for we are not our *own*, *All souls are mine*, saith God), but in respect of nearness and concern; our souls are our own, for they are ourselves. *Secondly*, It is possible for the soul to be lost, and there is danger of it. The soul is lost when it is eternally separated from all the good to all the evil that a soul is capable of; when it dies as far as a soul can die; when it is separated from the favour of God, and sunk under his wrath and curse. A man is never undone till he is in hell. *Thirdly*, If the soul be lost, it is of the sinner's own losing. The *man loses his own soul*, for he does that which is certainly destroying to it, and neglects that which alone would be saving, ~~OR~~ Hosea 13:9. The sinner dies because he will die; *hes blood is on his own head*. *Fourthly*, One soul is worth more than all the world; our own souls are of greater value to us than all the wealth, honour, and pleasures of this present time, if we had them. Here is *the whole world* set in the scale against *one soul*, and *Tekel* written upon it; it is weighed in the balance, and found too light to weigh it down. This is Christ's judgment upon the matter, and he is a competent Judge; he had reason to know the price of *souls*, for he redeemed them; nor would he under-rate the world, for he made it. *Fifthly*, The winning of the world is often the losing of the soul. Many a one has ruined his eternal interest by his preposterous and inordinate care to secure and advance his temporal ones. It is *the love of the world*, and the eager pursuit of it, *that drowns men in destruction and perdition*. *Sixthly*, The loss of the soul is so great a loss, that the gain of the whole world will not countervail it, or make it up. He that loses his soul, though it be to gain the world, makes a very bad bargain for himself, and will sit down at last an unspeakable loser. When he comes to balance the account, and to compare profit and loss, he will

find that, instead of the advantage he promised himself, he is ruined to all intents and purposes, is irreparably broken.

What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Note, If once the soul be lost, it is lost for ever. There is no *antallagma* — *counter-price*, that can be paid, or will be accepted. It is a loss that can never be repaired, never be retrieved. If, after that great price which Christ laid down to redeem our souls, and to restore us to the possession of them, they be so neglected for the world, that they come to be lost, that new mortgage will never be taken off; there remains no more sacrifice for sins, nor price for souls, but the equity of redemption is eternally precluded. Therefore it is good to be wise in time, and do well for ourselves.

2. Here are some considerations proper to encourage us in self-denial and suffering for Christ.

(1.) The assurance we have of Christ's glory, at his second coming to judge the world, v. 27. If we look to the end of all these things, the period of the world, and the posture of souls then, we shall thence form a very different idea of the present state of things. If we see things as the *will* appear then, we shall see them as they *should* appear now.

The great encouragement to steadfastness in religion is taken from the second coming of Christ, considering it,

[1.] As his honour; *The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels.* To look upon Christ in his state of humiliation, so abased, so abused, *a reproach of men, and despised of the people,* would discourage his followers from taking any pains, or running any hazards for him; but with an eye of faith to see the Captain of our salvation coming in his glory, in all the pomp and power of the upper world, will animate us, and make us think nothing too much to do, or too hard to suffer, or him. *The Son of man shall come.* He here gives himself the title of his humble state (he is the *Son of man*), to show that he is not ashamed to own it. His first coming was in the meanness of his children, who being partakers of flesh, he took part of the same; but his second coming will be in the glory of his Father. At his first coming, he was attended with poor disciples; at his second coming, he will be attended with glorious angels; and *if we suffer with him, we shall be glorified with him,* ² Timothy 2:12.

[2.] As our concern; *Then he shall reward every man according to his works.* Observe, *First*, Jesus Christ will come as a Judge, to dispense rewards and punishments, infinitely exceeding the greatest that any earthly potentate has the dispensing of. The terror of men's tribunal (⁴⁰⁸Matthew 10:18) will be taken off by a believing prospect of the glory of Christ's tribunal. *Secondly*, Men will then be rewarded, not according to their gains in this world, but according to their works, according to what they were and did. In that day, the treachery of backsliders will be punished with eternal destruction, and the constancy of faithful souls recompensed with a crown of life. *Thirdly*, The best preparative for that day is to *deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and follow Christ*; for so we shall make the Judge our Friend, and these things will then pass well in the account. *Fourthly*, The rewarding of men according to their works is deferred till that day. Here good and evil seem to be dispensed promiscuously; we see not apostasy punished with immediate strokes, nor fidelity encouraged with immediate smiles, from heaven; but in that day all will be set to rights. Therefore *judge nothing before the time*, ⁵¹⁶2 Timothy 4:6-8.

(2.) The near approach of his kingdom in this world, v. 28. It was so near, that there were some attending him who should live to see it. As Simeon was assured that he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ come in the flesh; so some here are assured that they shall not taste death (death is a sensible thing, its terrors are seen, its bitterness is tasted) till they had seen the Lord's Christ coming in his kingdom. At the end of time, he shall come in his Father's glory; but now, in the fulness of time, he was to come in his own kingdom, his mediatorial kingdom. Some little specimen was given of his glory a few days after this, in his transfiguration (⁴¹⁰Matthew 17:1); then he tried his robes. But this points at Christ's coming by the pouring out of his Spirit, the planting of the gospel church, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the taking away of the place and nation of the Jews, who were the most bitter enemies to Christianity. Here was *the Son of man coming in his kingdom*. Many then present lived to see it, particularly John, who lived till after the destruction of Jerusalem, and saw Christianity planted in the world. Let *this* encourage the followers of Christ to suffer for him,

[1.] That their undertaking shall be succeeded; the apostles were employed in setting up Christ's kingdom; let them know, for their comfort, that whatever opposition they meet with, yet they shall carry their point, shall *see of the travail of their soul*. Note, It is a great encouragement to

suffering saints to be assured, not only of the safety, but of the advancement of Christ's kingdom among men; not only *notwithstanding* their sufferings, but *by* their sufferings. A believing prospect of the success of the kingdom of grace, as well as of our share in the kingdom of glory, may carry us cheerfully through our sufferings.

[2.] That their cause shall be pleaded; their deaths shall be revenged, and their persecutors reckoned with.

[3.] That this shall be done shortly, in the present age. Note, The nearer the church's deliverances are, the more cheerful should we be in our sufferings for Christ. *Behold the Judge standeth before the door.* It is spoken as a favour to those that should survive the present cloudy time, that they should see better days. Note, It is desirable to share with the church in her joys, ~~2722~~ Daniel 12:12. Observe, Christ saith, *Some* shall live to see those glorious days, not *all*; some shall enter into the promised land, but others shall fall in the wilderness. He does not tell them *who* shall live to see this kingdom, lest if they had known, they should have put off the thoughts of dying, but *some* of them shall; *Behold, the Lord is at hand. The Judge standeth before the door; be patient, therefore, brethren.*