

MAKING LIGHT OF CHRIST AND SALVATION,

TOO OFT THE ISSUE OF GOSPEL INVITATIONS:

A CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED

TO TURN AND LIVE S

THE LAST WORK OF A BELIEVER;

HIS PASSING PRATER, RECOMMENDING HIS DEPARTING SPIRIT TO CHRIST,

TO BE RECEIVED BY HIM

OF THE

SHEDDING ABROAD OF GOD'S LOVE

ON THE HEART BY THE HOLY GHOST:

BY

RICHARD BAXTER.

WITH AN ESSAY

ON HIS LIFE, MINISTRY, AND THEOLOGY,

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“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?”—Heb. ii. 34.



TO THE READER.

READER,

BEING called on in London to preach, when I had no time to study, I was fain to preach some sermons that I had preached in the country a little before. This was one, which I preached at St Laurence, in the church where my reverend and faithful brother in Christ, Mr Richard Vines, is pastor: when I came home I was followed by such importunities by letters to print the sermon, that I have yielded thereunto, though I know not fully the ground of their desires. Seeing it must abroad, will the Lord but bless it to the cure of thy contempt of Christ and grace, how comfortable may the occasion prove to thee and me! It is the slighting of Christ and salvation, that undoes the world. O happy man if thou escape but this sin! Thousands do split their souls on this rock which they should build them on. Look into the world, among rich and poor, high and low, young and old, and see whether it appear not by the whole scope of their conversations that they set more by something else than Christ? And for all the proclamations of his grace in the gospel, and our common professing ourselves to be his disciples, and to believe the glorious things that he hath promised us in another world, whether it yet appear not by the deceitfulness of our service, by our heartless endeavours to obtain his kingdom, and by our busy and delightful following of the world, that the most who are called Christians do yet in their hearts make light of Christ; and if so, what wonder if they perish by their contempt? Wilt thou but soberly peruse this short discourse, and consider well as thou readest of its truth and weight, till thy heart be sensible what a sin it is to make light of Christ and thy own salvation, and till the Lord that bought thee be advanced in the estimation and affections of thy soul, thou shalt hereby rejoice, and fulfil the desires of

Thy servant in the faith,

RICHARD BAXTER.

MAKING LIGHT OF CHRIST AND SALVATION,

TOO OFT

THE ISSUE OF GOSPEL INVITATIONS.

“But they made light of it.”—Matt. xxii. 5.

THE blessed Son of God, that thought it not enough to die for the world, but would himself also be the preacher of grace and salvation, doth comprise in this parable¹ the sum of his gospel. By the king that is here said to make the marriage, is meant God the Father, that sent his Son into the world to cleanse them from their sins, and espouse them to himself. By his Son, for whom the marriage is made, is meant the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who took to his Godhead the nature of man, that he might be capable of being their Redeemer when they had lost themselves in sin. By the marriage is meant the conjunction of Christ to the soul of sinners, when he giveth up himself to them to be their Saviour, and they give up themselves to him as his redeemed ones, to be saved and ruled by him; the perfection of which marriage will be at the day of judgment, when the conjunction between the whole church and Christ shall be solemnized. The word here translated *marriage*, rather signifieth the marriage-feast; and the meaning is, that the world is invited by the gospel to come in and partake of Christ and salvation, which comprehendeth both pardon, justification, and right to salvation, and all other

¹ [Mat. 22:1-14. And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, ²The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, ³And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. ⁴Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and *my* fatlings *are* killed, and all things *are* ready: come unto the marriage. ⁵But they made light of *it*, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: ⁶And the remnant took his servants, and entreated *them* spitefully, and slew *them*. ⁷But when the king heard *thereof*, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. ⁸Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. ⁹Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. ¹⁰So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. ¹¹And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: ¹²And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. ¹³Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ¹⁴For many are called, but few *are* chosen.]

privileges of the members of Christ. The invitation is God's offer of Christ and salvation in the gospel; the servants that invite them are the preachers of the gospel, who are sent forth by God to that end; the preparation for the feast there mentioned, is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the enacting of a law of grace, and opening a way for revolting sinners to return to God. There is a mention of sending second messengers, because God useth not to take the first denial, but to exercise his patience till sinners are obstinate. The first persons invited are the Jews; upon their obstinate refusal they are sentenced to punishment: and the gentiles are invited, and not only invited, but by powerful preaching, and miracles, and effectual grace, compelled; that is, infallibly prevailed with to come in. The number of them is so great that the house is filled with guests: many come sincerely, not only looking at the pleasure of the feast, that is, at the pardon of sin, and deliverance from the wrath of God, but also at the honour of the marriage, that is, of the Redeemer, and their profession by giving up themselves to a holy conversation: but some come in only for the feast, that is, justification by Christ, having not the wedding-garment of sound resolution for obedience in their life, and looking only at themselves in believing, and not to the glory of their Redeemer; and these are sentenced to everlasting misery, and speed as ill as those that came not in at all; seeing a faith that will not work is but like that of the devil; and they that look to be pardoned and saved by it are mistaken, as James sheweth, chap. ii. 24.

The words of my text contain a narration of the ill entertainment that the gospel findeth with many to whom it is sent, even after a first and second invitation. They made light of it, and are taken up with other things. Though it be the Jews that were first guilty, they have too many followers among us gentiles to this day.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE PASSAGE.—For all the wonderful love and mercy that God hath manifested in giving his Son to be the Redeemer of the world, and which the Son hath manifested in redeeming them by his blood; for all his full preparation by being a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of all; for all his personal excellencies, and that full and glorious salvation that he hath procured; and for all his free offers of these, and frequent and earnest invitation of sinners; yet many do make light of all this, and prefer their worldly enjoyments before it. The ordinary treatment of all these offers, invitations, and benefits, is by contempt.

Not that all do so, or that all continue to do so, who were once guilty of it; for God hath his chosen whom he will compel to come in. But till the Spirit of grace overpower the dead and obstinate hearts of men, they hear the gospel as a common story, and the great matters contained in it go not to the heart.

The method in which I shall handle this doctrine is this:

- I. I shall shew you what it is that men make light of.
- II. What this sin of making light of it is.
- III. The cause of the sin.
- IV. The use of the doctrine.

I. The thing that carnal hearers make light of is,

1. The doctrine of the gospel itself, which they hear regardlessly. 2. The benefits offered them therein: which are, 1. Christ himself. 2. The benefits which he giveth.

Concerning Christ himself, the gospel, 1. Declareth his person and nature, and the great things that he hath done and suffered for man; his redeeming him from the wrath of God by his blood, and procuring a grant of salvation with himself. Furthermore, the same gospel maketh an offer of Christ to sinners, that if they will accept him on his easy and reasonable terms, he will be their Saviour, the Physician of their souls, their Husband, and their Head.

2. The benefits that he offereth them are these. 1. That with these blessed relations to him, himself and interest in him, they shall have the pardon of all their sins past, and be saved from God's wrath, and be set in a sure way of obtaining a pardon for all the sins that they shall commit hereafter, so they do but obey sincerely, and turn not again to the rebellion of their unregeneracy. 2. They shall have the Spirit to become their Guide and Sanctifier, and to dwell in their souls, and help them against their enemies, and conform them more and more to his image, and heal their diseases, and bring them back to God. 3. They shall have right to everlasting glory when this life is ended, and shall be raised up thereto at the last; besides many excellent privileges in the way, in means, preservation, and provision, and the foretaste of what they shall enjoy hereafter: all these benefits the gospel offereth to them that will have Christ on his reasonable terms. The sum of all is in 1 John v. 11, 12, "This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son: he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life."
”

II. What this sin of the making light of the gospel is. 1. To make light of the gospel is to take no great heed to what is spoken, as if it were not a certain truth, or else were a matter that little concerned them; or as if God had not written these things for them. 2. When the gospel doth not affect men, or go to their hearts; but though they seem to attend to what is said, yet men are not awakened by it from their security, nor doth it work in any measure such holy

passion in their souls, as matters of such everlasting consequence should do: this is making light of the gospel of salvation. When we tell men what Christ hath done and suffered for their souls, and it scarce moveth them: we tell them of keen and cutting truths, but nothing will pierce them: we can make them hear, but we cannot make them feel; our words take up in the porch of their ears and fancies, but will not enter into the inward parts; as if we spake to men that had no hearts or feeling: this is a making light of Christ and salvation. Acts xxviii. 26, 27, "Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed," &c.

3. When men have no high estimation of Christ and salvation, but whatsoever they may say with their tongues, or dreamingly and speculatively believe, yet in their serious and practical thoughts they have a higher estimation of the matters of this world, than they have of Christ, and the salvation that he hath purchased; this is a making light of him. When men account the doctrine of Christ to be but a matter of words and names, as Gallio (Acts xviii. 4), or as Festus (Acts xxv. 19), a superstitious matter about one Jesus who was dead, and Paul saith is alive; or ask the preachers of the gospel, as the Athenians, "What will this babbler say?" Acts xvii. 18: this is contempt of Christ.

4. When men are informed of the truths of the gospel, and on what terms Christ and his benefits may be had, and how it is the will of God that they should believe and accept the offer; and that he commandeth to do it upon pain of damnation; and yet men will not consent, unless they could have Christ on terms of their own: they will not part with their worldly contents, nor lay down their pleasures, and profits, and honour at his feet, as being content to take so much of them only as he will give them back, and as is consistent with his will and interest, but think it is a hard saying, that they must forsake all in resolution for Christ: this is a making light of him and their salvation. When men might have part in him and all his benefits if they would, and they will not, unless they may keep the world too; and are resolved to please their flesh, whatever comes of it; this is a high contempt of Christ and everlasting life. In Matt. xiii. 21; Luke xviii. 23, you may find examples of such as I here describe.

5. When men will promise fair, and profess their willingness to have Christ on his terms, and to forsake all for him, but yet do stick to the world and their sinful courses; and when it comes to practice, will not be removed by all that

Christ hath done and said; this is making light of Christ and salvation, Jer. xlii. 5, compared with xliii. 2.

III. The causes of this sin are the next thing to be inquired after. It may seem a wonder that ever men, that have the use of their reason, should be so sottish as to make light of matters of such consequence. But the cause is,

1. Some men understand not the very sense of the words of the gospel when they hear them; and how can they be taken with that which they understand not? Though we speak to them in plain English, and study to speak it as plain as we can, yet people have so estranged themselves from God, and the matters of their own happiness, that they know not what we say; as if we spoke in another language, and as if they were under that judgment, Isa. xxviii. 11, "With stammering lips, and with another tongue, will he speak to this people."

2. Some that do understand the words that we speak, yet because they are carnal, understand not the matter. "For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14. They are earthly, and these things are heavenly, John in. 12. These things of the Spirit are not well known by bare hearsay, but by spiritual taste, which none have but those that are taught by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. ii. 12), that we may know the things that are given us of God.

3. A carnal man apprehendeth not a suitableness in these spiritual and heavenly things to his mind, and therefore he sets light by them, and hath no mind of them. When you tell him of everlasting glory, he heareth you as if you were persuading him to go play with the sun: they are matters of another world, and out of his element; and therefore he hath no more delight in them than a fish would have to be in the fairest meadow, or than a swine hath in a jewel, or a dog in a piece of gold: they may be good to others, but he cannot apprehend them as suitable to him, because he hath a nature that is otherwise inclined: he savoureth not the things of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 5

4. The main cause of the slighting of Christ and salvation is, a secret root of unbelief in men's hearts. Whatsoever they may pretend, they do not soundly and thoroughly believe the word of God: they are taught in general to say the gospel is true; but they never saw the evidence of its truth so far, as thoroughly to persuade them of it; nor have they got their souls settled on the infallibility of God's testimony, nor considered of the truth of the particular doctrines revealed in the Scripture, so far as soundly to believe them. Oh did you all but soundly believe the words of this gospel, of the evil of sin, of the need of Christ, and what he hath done for you, and what you must be and do

if ever you will be saved by him; and what will become of you for ever if you do it not; I dare say it would cure the contempt of Christ, and you would not make so light of the matters of your salvation. But men do not believe while they say they do, and would face us down that they do, and verily think that they do themselves. There is a root of bitterness, and an evil heart of unbelief, that make them depart from the living God, Heb. ii. 12; iv. 1, 2, 6. Tell any man in this congregation that he shall have a gift of ten thousand pounds, if he will but go to London for it; if he believe you, he will go; but if he believe not, he will not; and if he will not go, you may be sure he believeth not, supposing that he is able. I know a slight belief may stand with a wicked life; such as men have of the truth of a prognostication, it may be true, and it may be false; but a true and sound belief is not consistent with so great neglect of the things that are believed.

5. Christ and salvation are made light of by the world, because of their desperate hardness of heart. The heart is hard naturally, and by custom in sinning made more hard, especially by long abuse of mercy, and neglect of the means of grace, and resisting the Spirit of God. Hence it is that men are turned into such stones: and till God cure them of the stone of the heart, no wonder if they feel not what they know, or regard not what we say, but make light of all: it is hard preaching a stone into tears, or making a rock to tremble. You may stand over a dead body long enough, and say to it, O thou carcass, when thou hast lain rotting and mouldered to dust till the resurrection, God will then call thee to account for thy sin, and cast thee into everlasting fire, before you can make it feel what we say, or fear the misery that is never so truly threatened: when men's hearts are like the highway that is trodden to hardness by long custom in sinning, or like the clay that is hardened to a stone by the heat of those mercies that should have melted them into repentance; when they have consciences seared with a hot iron, as the apostle speaks (1 Tim. iv. 2), no wonder then if they be past feeling, and working all uncleanness with greediness do make light of Christ and everlasting glory. Oh that this were not the case of too many of our hearers! Had we but *living souls* to speak to, they would hear, and feel, and not make light of what we say. I know they are naturally alive, but they are spiritually dead, as Scripture witnesseth, Eph. ii. 3. Oh if there were but one spark of the life of grace in them, the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ would appear to them to be the weightiest business in the world! Oh how confident should I be, methinks, to prevail with men, and to take them off this world, and bring them to mind the matters of another world, if I spake but to men that had life, and sense, and reason! But when we speak to blocks and dead men, how should we be regarded? Oh

how sad a case are these souls in, that are fallen under this fearful judgment of spiritual madness and deadness! to have a blind mind, and a hard heart, to be sottish and senseless (Mark iv. 12; John xii. 40), lest they should be converted, and their sin should be forgiven them.

6. Christ and salvation are made light of by the world, because they are wholly enslaved to their sense, and taken up with lower things: the matters of another world are out of sight, and so far from their senses, that they cannot regard them; but present things are nearer them, in their eyes, and in their hands. There must be a living faith to prevail over sense, before men can be so taken with things that are not seen, though they have the word of God for their security, as to neglect and let go things that are still before their eyes. Sense works with great advantage, and therefore doth much in resisting faith where it is; no wonder then if it carry all before it, where there is no true and lively faith to resist, and to lead the soul to higher things. This cause of making light of Christ and salvation is expressed here in my text: one went to his farm, and another to his merchandise: men have houses and lands to look after; they have wife and children to mind; they have their body and outward estate to regard; therefore they forget that they have a God, a Redeemer, a soul to mind: these matters of the world are still with them. They see these, but they see not God, nor Christ, nor their souls, nor everlasting glory. These things are near at hand, and therefore work naturally, and so work forcibly; but the others are thought on as a great way off, and therefore too distant to work on their affections, or be at the present so much regarded by them. Their body hath life and sense, therefore if they want meat, or drink, or clothes, will feel their want, and tell them of it, and give them no rest till their wants be supplied, and therefore they cannot make light of their bodily necessities; but their souls in spiritual respects are dead, and therefore feel not their wants, but will let them alone in their greatest necessities; and be as quiet when they are starved and languishing to destruction, as if all were well, and nothing ailed them. And hereupon poor people are wholly taken up in providing for the body, as if they had nothing else to mind. They have their trades and callings to follow, and so much to do from morning to night, that they can find no time for matters of salvation: Christ would teach them, but they have no leisure to hear him: the Bible is before them, but they cannot have time to read it; a minister is in the town with them, but they cannot have time to go to enquire of him what they should do to be saved: and when they do hear, their hearts are so full of the world, and carried away with these lower matters, that they cannot mind the things which they hear. They are so full of the thoughts, and desires, and cares of this world, that there is no room to pour

into them the water of life. The cares of the world do choke the word, and make it become unfruitful, Matt. xiii. 32. Men cannot serve two masters, God and mammon; but they will lean to the one, and despise the other, Matt. vi. 24. He that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him, 1 John ii. 15, 16. Men cannot choose but set light by Christ and salvation, while they set so much by anything on earth. It is that which is highly esteemed among men that is abominable in the sight of God, Luke xvi. 15. Oh, this is the ruin of many thousand souls! It would grieve the heart of any honest Christian to see how eagerly this vain world is followed everywhere, and how little men set by Christ and the world to come; to compare the care that men have for the world, with the care of their souls; and the time that they lay out on the world, with that time they lay out for their salvation: to see how the world fills their mouths, their hands, their houses, their hearts, and Christ hath little more than a bare title: to come into their company, and hear no discourse but of the world; to come into their houses, and hear and see nothing but for the world, as if this world would last for ever, or would purchase them another. When I ask sometimes the ministers of the gospel how their labours succeed, they tell me, People continue still the same, and give up themselves wholly to the world; so that they mind not what ministers say to them, nor will give any full entertainment to the word, and all because of the deluding world: and O that too many ministers themselves did not make light of that Christ whom they preach, being drawn away with the love of this world! In a word, men of a worldly disposition do judge of things according to worldly advantages, therefore Christ is slighted; "He is despised and rejected of men, they hide their faces from him, and esteem him not, as seeing no beauty or comeliness in him, that they should desire him," Isa. liii. 3.

7. Christ and salvation are made light of, because men do not soberly consider of the truth and weight of these necessary things. They suffer not their minds so long to dwell upon them, till they procure a due esteem, and deeply affect their heart; did they believe them and not consider of them, how should they work! Oh when men have reason given them to think and consider of the things that most concern them, and yet they will not use it, this causeth their contempt.

8. Christ and salvation are made light of, because men were never sensible of their sin and misery, and extreme necessity of Christ and his salvation; their eyes were never opened to see themselves as they are; nor their hearts soundly humbled in the sense of their condition: if this were done, they would soon be brought to value a Saviour: a truly broken heart can no more make light of Christ and salvation, than a hungry man of his food, or a sick man of

the means that would give him ease; but till then our words cannot have access to their hearts: while sin and misery are made light of, Christ and salvation will be made light of; but when these are perceived an intolerable burden, then nothing will serve the turn but Christ. Till men be truly humbled, they can venture Christ and salvation for a lust, for a little worldly gain, even for less than nothing: but when God hath illuminated them, and broken their hearts, then they would give a world for a Christ; then they must have Christ or they die; all things then are loss and dung to them in regard of the excellent knowledge of Christ, Phil. iii. 8. When they are once pricked in their hearts for sin and misery, then they cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts ii. 37. When they are awakened by God's judgments, as the poor jailer, then they cry out, "Sirs, what shall I do to be saved?" Acts xvi. 30. This is the reason why God will bring men so low by humiliation, before he brings them to salvation.

9. Men take occasion to make light of Christ by the commonness of the gospel; because they do hear of it every day, the frequency is an occasion to dull their affections; I say, an occasion, for it is no just cause. Were it a rarity it might take more with them; but now, if they hear a minister preach nothing but these saving truths, they say, We have these every day: they make not light of their bread or drink, their health or life, because they possess them every day; they make not light of the sun because it shineth every day; at least they should not, for the mercy is the greater; but Christ and salvation are made light of because they hear of them often; this is, say they, a good, plain, dry sermon. Pearls are trod into the dirt where they are common: they loathe this dry manna: "The full soul loathes the honey-comb; but to the hungry every bitter thing is sweet," Prov. xxvii. 7.

10. Christ and salvation are made light of, because of this disjunctive presumption; either that he is sure enough theirs already, and God that is so merciful, and Christ that hath suffered so much for them, is surely resolved to save them; or else it may easily be obtained at any time, if it be not yet so. A conceited facility to have a part in Christ and salvation at any time doth occasion men to make light of them. It is true, that grace is free, and the offer is universal, according to the extent of the preaching of the gospel; and it is true, that men may have Christ when they will; that is, when they are willing to have him on his terms; but he that hath promised thee Christ if thou be willing, hath not promised to make thee willing: and if thou art not willing now, how canst thou think thou shalt be willing hereafter? If thou canst make thine own heart willing, why is it not done now? Can you do it better when sin hath more hardened it, and God may have given thee over to thyself? O sinners! you

might do much, though you are not able of yourselves to come in, if you would now subject yourselves to the working of the Spirit, and set in while the gales of grace continue. But did you know what a hard and impossible thing it is to be so much as willing to have Christ and grace, when the heart is given over to itself, and the Spirit hath withdrawn its former invitations, you would not be so confident of your own strength to believe and repent; nor would you make light of Christ upon such foolish confidence. If indeed it be so easy a matter as you imagine, for a sinner to believe and repent at any time, how comes it to pass that it is done by so few; but most of the world do perish in their impenitency when they have all the helps and means that we can afford them? It is true, the thing is very reasonable and easy in itself to a pure nature; but while man is blind and dead, these things are in a sort impossible to him, which are never so easy to others. It is the easiest and sweetest life in the world to a gracious soul to live in the love of God, and the delightful thoughts of the life to come, where all their hope and happiness lieth: but to a worldly, carnal heart, it is as easy to remove a mountain as to bring them to this. However, these men are their own condemners; for if they think it so easy a matter to repent and believe, and so to have Christ, and right to salvation, then have they no excuse for neglecting this which they thought so easy. O wretched, impenitent soul! what mean you to say when God shall ask you, Why did you not repent and love your Redeemer above the world, when you thought it so easy that you could do it at any time?

IV. *Use 1.* We come now to the application: and hence you may be informed of the blindness and folly of all carnal men. How contemptible are their judgments that think Christ and salvation contemptible! And how little reason there is why any should be moved by them, or discouraged by any of their scorns or contradictions!

How shall we sooner know a man to be a fool, than if he know no difference between dung and gold? Is there such a thing as madness in the world, if that man be not mad that sets light by Christ, and his own salvation, while he daily toils for the dung of the earth? And yet what pity is it to see that a company of poor, ignorant souls will be ashamed of godliness, if such men as these do but deride them! or will think hardly of a holy life, if such as these do speak against it! Hearers, if you see any set light by Christ and salvation, do you set light by that man's wit, and by his words, and hear the reproaches of a holy life as you would hear the words of a madman, not with regard, but with a compassion of his misery.

Use 2. What wonder if we and our preaching be despised, and the best ministers complain of ill success, when the ministry of the apostles themselves did succeed no better? What wonder if, for all that we can say or do, our hearers still set light by Christ and their own salvation, when the apostles' hearers did the same? They that did second their doctrine by miracles, if any men could have shaken and torn in pieces the hearts of sinners, they could have done it; if any could have laid them at their feet, and made them all cry out as some, "What shall we do?" it would have been they. You may see then that it is not merely for want of good preachers that men make light of Christ and salvation. The first news of such a thing as the pardon of sin, and the hopes of glory, and the danger of everlasting misery, would turn the hearts of men within them, if they were as tractable in spiritual matters as in temporal: but, alas, it is far otherwise. It must not seem any strange thing, nor must it too much discourage the preachers of the gospel, if, when they have said all that they can devise to say, to win the hearts of men to Christ, the most do still slight him; and while they bow the knee to him, and honour him with their lips, do yet set so light by him in their hearts, as to prefer every fleshly pleasure or commodity before him. It will be thus with many: let us be glad that it is not thus with all.

Use 3. But for closer application, seeing this is the great condemning sin, before we inquire after it into the hearts of our hearers, it beseems us to begin at home, and see that we, who are preachers of the gospel, be not guilty of it ourselves. The Lord forbid that they that have undertaken the sacred office of revealing the excellencies of Christ to the world, should make light of him themselves, and slight that salvation which they do daily preach. The Lord knows we are all of us so low in our estimation of Christ, and do this great work so negligently, that we have cause to be ashamed of our best sermons; but should this sin prevail in us, we were the most miserable of all men. Brethren, I love not censoriousness; yet dare not befriend so vile a sin in myself or others, under pretence of avoiding it: especially when there is so great necessity that it should be healed first in them that make it their work to heal it in others. Oh that there were no cause to complain that Christ and salvation are made light of by the preachers of it! But,

1. Do not the negligent studies of some speak it out?

2. Doth not their dead and drowsy preaching declare it? Do not they make light of the doctrine they preach, that do it as if they were half asleep, and feel not what they speak themselves?

3. Doth not the carelessness of some men's private endeavours discover it? What do they for souls? How slightly do they reprove sin! How little do they when they are out of the pulpit for the saving of men's souls!

4. Doth not the continued neglect of those things wherein the interest of Christ consisteth discover it? 1. The church's purity and reformation. 2. Its unity.

5. Do not the covetous and worldly lives of too many discover it, losing advantages for men's souls for a little gain to themselves? And most of this is because men are preachers before they are Christians, and tell men of that which they never felt themselves. Of all men on earth there are few that are in so sad a condition as such ministers: and if, indeed, they do believe that Scripture which they preach, methinks it should be terrible to them in their studying and preaching it.

Use 4. Beloved hearers, the office that God hath called us to, is by declaring the glory of his grace, to help under Christ to the saving of men's souls. I hope you think not that I come hither to-day on any other errand. The Lord knows I had not set a foot out of doors but in hope to succeed in this work for your souls. I have considered, and often considered, what is the matter that so many thousands should perish when God hath done so much for their salvation; and I find this that is mentioned in my text is the cause. It is one of the wonders of the world, that when God hath so loved the world as to send his Son, and Christ hath made a satisfaction by his death sufficient for them all, and offereth the benefits of it so freely to them, even without money or price, that yet the most of the world should perish; yea, the most of those that are thus called by his word! Why, here is the reason, when Christ hath done all this, men make light of it. God hath shewed that he is not unwilling; and Christ hath shewed that he is not unwilling that men should be restored to God's favour and be saved; but men are actually unwilling themselves. God takes not pleasure in the death of sinners, but rather that they return and live, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. But men take such pleasure in sin, that they will die before they will return. The Lord Jesus was content to be their Physician, and hath provided them a sufficient plaster of his own blood: but if men make light of it, and will not apply it, what wonder if they perish after all? This Scripture giveth us the reason of their perdition. This, sad experience tells us, the most of the world is guilty of. It is a most lamentable thing to see how most men do spend their care, their time, their pains, for known vanities, while God and glory are cast aside; that he who is all should seem to them as nothing, and that which is nothing should seem to them as good as all; that God should set mankind in such a race where heaven or hell is their certain end, and that they

should sit down, and loiter, or run after the childish toys of the world, and so much forget the prize that they should run for. Were it but possible for one of us to see the whole of this business as the all-seeing God doth; to see at one view both heaven and hell, which men are so near; and see what most men in the world are minding, and what they are doing every day, it would be the saddest sight that could be imagined. Oh how should we marvel at their madness, and lament their self-delusion! Oh poor distracted world! what is it you run after? and what is it that you neglect? If God had never told them what they were sent into the world to do, or whither they were going, or what was before them in another world, then they had been excusable; but he hath told them over and over, till they were weary of it. Had he left it doubtful, there had been some excuse; but it is his sealed word, and they profess to believe it, and would take it ill of us if we should question whether they do believe it or not.

Beloved, I come not to accuse any of you particularly of this crime; but seeing it is the commonest cause of men's destruction, I suppose you will judge it the fittest matter for our inquiry, and deserving our greatest care for the cure. To which end I shall, 1. Endeavour the conviction of the guilty. 2. Shall give them such considerations as may tend to humble and reform them. 3. I shall conclude with such direction as may help them that are willing to escape the destroying power of this sin. And for the first, consider,

1. It is the case of most sinners to think themselves freest from those sins that they are most enslaved to; and one reason why we cannot reform them, is because we cannot convince them of their guilt. It is the nature of sin so far to blind and befool the sinner, that he knoweth not what he doth, but thinketh he is free from it when it reigneth in him, or when he is committing it: it bringeth men to be so much unacquainted with themselves, that they know not what they think, or what they mean and intend, nor what they love or hate, much less what they are habituated and disposed to. They are alive to sin, and dead to all the reason, consideration, and resolution that should recover them, as if it were only by their sinning that we must know they are alive. May I hope that you that hear me to-day are but willing to know the truth of your case, and then I shall be encouraged to proceed to an inquiry. God will judge impartially; why should not we do so? Let me, therefore, by these following questions, try whether none of you are slights of Christ and your own salvation. And follow me, I beseech you, by putting them close to your own hearts, and faithfully answering them.

1. Things that men highly value will be remembered, they will be matter of their freest and sweetest thoughts. This is a known case.

Do not those then make light of Christ and salvation that think of them so seldom and coldly in comparison of other things? Follow thy own heart, man, and observe what it daily runneth after; and then judge whether it make not light of Christ.

We cannot persuade men to one hour's sober consideration what they should do for an interest in Christ, or in thankfulness for his love, and yet they will not believe that they make light of him.

2. Things that we highly value will be matter of our discourse; the judgment and heart will command the tongue. Freely and delightfully will our speech run after them. This also is a known case.

Do not those then make light of Christ and salvation, that shun the mention of his name, unless it be in a vain or sinful use? Those that love not the company where Christ and salvation is much talked of, but think it troublesome, precise discourse: that had rather hear some merry jests, or idle tales, or talk of their riches or business in the world. When you may follow them from morning to night, and scarce have a savoury word of Christ; but perhaps some slight and weary mention of him sometimes; judge whether these make not light of Christ and salvation. How seriously do they talk of the world (Psal. cxliv. 8, 11) and speak vanity! but how heartlessly do they make mention of Christ and salvation!

3. The things that we highly value we would secure the possession of, and therefore would take any convenient course to have all doubts and fears about them well resolved. Do not those men then make light of Christ and salvation that have lived twenty or thirty years in uncertainty whether they have any part in these or not, and yet never seek out for the right resolution of their doubts? Are all that hear me this day certain they shall be saved? Oh that they were! Oh, had you not made light of salvation, you could not so easily bear such doubtings of it; you could not rest till you had made it sure, or done your best to make it sure. Have you nobody, to inquire of, that might help you in such a work? Why, you have ministers that are purposely appointed to that office. Have you gone to them, and told them the doubtfulness of your case, and asked their help in the judging of your condition? Alas, ministers may sit in their studies from one year to another, before ten persons among a thousand will come to them on such an errand! Do not these make light of Christ and salvation? When the gospel pierceth the heart indeed, they cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" Acts xvi. 30. Trembling and astonished, Paul cries out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. And so did the convinced Jews to Peter, Acts ii. 37. But when hear we such questions?

4. The things that we value do deeply affect us, and some motions will be in the heart according to our estimation of them. O sirs, if men made not light of these things, what working would there be in the hearts of all our hearers! What strange affections would it raise in them to hear of the matters of the world to come! How would their hearts melt before the power of the gospel! What sorrow would be wrought in the discovery of their sins! What astonishment at the consideration of their misery! What unspeakable joy at the glad tidings of salvation by the blood of Christ! What resolution would be raised in them upon the discovery of their duty! Oh what hearers should we have, if it were not for this sin! Whereas now we are liker to weary them, or preach them asleep with matters of this unspeakable moment. We talk to them of Christ and salvation till we make their heads ache: little would one think by their careless carriage that they heard and regarded what we said, or thought we spoke at all to them.

5. Our estimation of things will be seen in the diligence of our endeavours. That which we highest value, we shall think no pains too great to obtain. Do not those men then make light of Christ and salvation, that think all too much that they do for them; that murmur at his service, and think it too grievous for them to endure? that ask of his service as Judas of the ointment, What need this waste? Cannot men be saved without so much ado? This is more ado than needs. For the world they will labour all the day, and all their lives; but for Christ and salvation they are afraid of doing too much. Let us preach to them as long as we will, we cannot bring them to relish or resolve upon a life of holiness. Follow them to their houses, and you shall not hear them read a chapter, nor call upon God with their families once a day: nor will they allow him that one day in seven which he hath separated to his service.

But pleasure, or worldly business, or idleness, must have a part. And many of them are so far hardened as to reproach them that will not be as mad as themselves. And is not Christ worth the seeking? Is not everlasting salvation worth more than all this? Doth not that soul make light of all these, that thinks his ease more worth than they? Let but common sense judge.

6. That which we most highly value, we think we cannot buy too dear: Christ and salvation are freely given, and yet the most of men go without them, because they cannot enjoy the world and them together. They are called but to part with that which would hinder them from Christ, and they will not do it. They are called but to give God his own, and to resign all to his will, and let go the profits and pleasures of this world, when they must let go either Christ or them, and they will not. They think this too dear a bargain, and say they cannot spare these things: they must hold their credit with men; they

must look to their estates: how shall they live else? They must have their pleasure, whatsoever becomes of Christ and salvation: as if they could live without Christ better than without these: as if they were afraid of being losers by Christ, or could make a saving match by losing their souls to gain the world. Christ hath told us over and over, that if we will not forsake all for him we cannot be his disciples, Matt. x. Far are these men from forsaking all, and yet will needs think that they are his disciples indeed.

7. That which men highly esteem, they would help their friends to as well as themselves. Do not those men make light of Christ and salvation, that can take so much care to leave their children portions in the world, and do so little to help them to heaven? that provide outward necessities so carefully for their families, but do so little to the saving of their souls? Their neglected children and friends will witness, that either Christ, or their children's souls, or both, were made light of.

8. That which men highly esteem, they will so diligently seek after, that you may see it in the success, if it be a matter within their reach. You may see how many make light of Christ, by the little knowledge they have of him, and the little communion with him, and communication from him; and the little, yea, none of his special grace in them. Alas! how many ministers can speak it to the sorrow of their hearts, that many of their people know almost nothing of Christ, though they hear of him daily! Nor know they what they must do to be saved: if we ask them an account of these things, they answer as if they understood not what we say to them, and tell us they are no scholars, and therefore think they are excusable for their ignorance. Oh if these men had not made light of Christ and their salvation, but had bestowed but half as much pains to know and enjoy him as they have done to understand the matters of their trades and callings in the world, they would not have been so ignorant as they are: they make light of these things, and therefore will not be at the pains to study or learn them. "When men that can learn the hardest trade in a few years, have not learned a catechism, nor how to understand their creed, under twenty or thirty years' preaching, nor can abide to be questioned about such things; doth not this shew that they have slighted them in their hearts? How will these despisers of Christ and salvation be able one day to look him in the face, and to give an account of these neglects?"

Thus much I have spoken in order to your conviction. Do not some of your consciences by this time smite you, and say, I am the man that have made light of my salvation? If they do not, it is because you make light of it still, for all that is said to you. But because, if it be the will of the Lord, I would fain have this damning distemper cured, and am loth to leave you in such a

desperate condition, if I knew how to remedy it, I will give you some considerations, which may move you, if you be men of reason and understanding, to look better about you; and I beseech you to weigh them, and make use of them as we go, and lay open your hearts to the work of grace, and sadly be-think you what a case you are in, if you prove such as make light of Christ.

Consider, 1. Thou makest light of him that made not light of thee who didst deserve it. Thou wast worthy of nothing but contempt. As a man, what art thou but a worm to God? As a sinner, thou art far viler than a toad: yet Christ was so far from making light of thee and thy happiness, that he came down into the flesh, and lived a life of suffering, and offered himself a sacrifice to the justice which thou hadst provoked, that thy miserable soul might have a remedy. It is no less than miracles of love and mercy, that he hath shewed to us: and yet shall we slight them after all?

Angels admire them, whom they less concern (1 Pet. i. 12), and shall re-deemed sinners make light of them? What barbarous, yea, devilish, yea, worse than devilish ingratitude is this! The devils never had a saviour offered them, but thou hast, and dost thou yet make light of Him?

2. Consider, the work of man's salvation by Jesus Christ is the masterpiece of all the works of God, wherein he would have his love and mercy to be magnified. As the creation declareth his goodness and power, so doth redemption his goodness and mercy; he hath contrived the very frame of his worship so, that it shall much consist in the magnifying of this work; and after all this, will you make light of it? "His name is Wonderful," Isa. ix. 6. "He did the work that none could do," John xv. 24. "Greater love could none shew than his," John xv. 13. How great was the evil and misery that he delivered us from! the good procured for us! All are wonders, from his birth to his ascension; from our new birth to our glorification, all are wonders of matchless mercy—and yet do you make light of them?

3. You make fight of matters of greatest excellency and moment in the world: you know not what it is that you slight: had you well known, you could not have done it. As Christ said to the woman of Samaria (John iv. 10), Hadst thou known who it is that speakest to thee, thou wouldst have asked of him the waters of life: had they known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. ii. 8. So had you known what Christ is, you would not have made fight of him; had you been one day in heaven, and but seen what they possess, and seen also what miserable souls must endure that are shut out, you would never sure have made so fight of Christ again.

O sirs, it is no trifles or jesting matters that the gospel speaks of. I must needs profess to you, that when I have the most serious thoughts of these

things myself, I am ready to marvel that such amazing matters do not overwhelm the souls of men; that the greatness of the subject doth not so overmatch our understandings and affections, as even to drive men beside themselves, but that God hath always somewhat allayed it by the distance: much more that men should be so blockish as to make fight of them. O Lord, that men did but know what everlasting glory and everlasting torments are; would they then hear us as they do? would they read and think of these things as they do? I profess I have been ready to wonder, when I have heard such weighty things delivered, how people can forbear crying out in the congregation; much more how they can rest till they have gone to their ministers, and learned what they should do to be saved, that this great business might be put out of doubt. Oh that heaven and hell should work no more on men! Oh that everlastingness should work no more! Oh how can you forbear when you are alone to think with yourselves what it is to be everlastingly in joy or in torment! I wonder that such thoughts do not break your sleep; and that they come not in your mind when you are about your labour! I wonder how you can almost do anything else! how you can have any quietness in your minds! how you can eat, or drink, or rest, till you have got some ground of everlasting consolations! Is that a man or a corpse that is not affected with matters of this moment? that can be readier to sleep than to tremble when he heareth how he must stand at the bar of God? Is that a man or a clod of clay that can rise and lie down without being deeply affected with his everlasting estate? that can follow his worldly business, and make nothing of the great business of salvation or damnation; and that when they know it is hard at hand! Truly, sirs, when I think of the weight of the matter, I wonder at the very best of God's saints upon earth that they are no better, and do no more in so weighty a case. I wonder at those whom the world accounteth more holy than needs, and scorns for making too much ado, that they can put off Christ and their souls with so little; that they pour not out their souls in every supplication; that they are not more taken up with God; that their thoughts be not more serious in preparation for their account. I wonder that they be not a hundred times more strict in their lives, and more laborious and unwearied in striving for the crown, than they are. And for myself, as I am ashamed of my dull and careless heart, and of my slow and unprofitable course of life; so the Lord knows I am ashamed of every sermon that I preach: when I think what I have been speaking of, and who sent me, and what men's salvation or damnation is so much concerned in it, I am ready to tremble, lest God should judge me as a slihter of his truth, and the souls of men, and lest in the best sermon I should be guilty of their blood. Methinks we should not speak a word to men in matters of

such consequence without tears, or the greatest earnestness that possibly we can: were not we too much guilty of the sin which we reprove, it would be so. Whether we are alone, or in company, methinks our end, and such an end, should still be in our mind, and as before our eyes; and we should sooner forget anything, and set light by anything, or by all things, than by this.

Consider, 4. Who is it that sends this weighty message to you? Is it not God himself? Shall the God of heaven speak, and men make light of it? You would not slight the voice of an angel, or a prince.

5. Whose salvation is it that you make light of? Is it not your own? Are you no more near or dear to yourselves than to make light of your own happiness or misery? Why, sirs, do you not care whether you be saved or damned? is self-love lost? are you turned your own enemies? As lie that slighteth his meat doth slight his life; so if you slight Christ, whatsoever you may think, you will find it was your own salvation that you slighted. Hear what he saith, "All they that hate me love death," Prov. viii. 36.

6. Your sin is greater, in that you profess to believe the gospel which you make so light of. For a professed infidel to do it that believes not that ever Christ died, or rose again; or doth not believe that there is a heaven or hell; this were no such marvel: but for you that make it your creed, and your very religion, and call yourselves Christians, and have been baptized into this faith, and seemed to stand to it, this is the wonder, and hath no excuse. What! believe that you shall live in endless joy or torment, and yet make no more of it to escape torment, and obtain that joy! What! believe that God will shortly judge you, and yet make no more preparation for it! Either say plainly, I am no Christian, I do not believe these wonderful things, I will believe nothing but what I see; or else let your hearts be affected with your belief, and live as you say you do believe. What do you think when you repeat the creed, and mention Christ's judgment and everlasting life?

7. What are these things you set so much by, as to prefer them before Christ and the saving of your souls? Have you found a better friend, a greater and surer happiness than this? Good Lord! what dung is it that men make so much of, while they set so light by everlasting glory! What toys are they that they are daily taken up with, while matters of life and death are neglected! Why, sirs, if you had every one a kingdom in your hopes, what were it in comparison of the everlasting kingdom? I cannot but look upon all the glory and dignity of this world, lands and lord-ships, crowns and kingdoms, even as on some brain-sick, beggarly fellow, that borroweth fine clothes, and plays the part of a king or a lord for an hour on a stage, and then comes down, and the sport is ended, and they are beggars again. Were it not for God's interest in

the authority of magistrates, or for the service they might do him, I should judge no better of them. For as to their own glory, it is but a smoke: what matter is it whether you live poor or rich, unless it were a greater matter to die rich than it is? You know well enough that death levels all. What matter is it at judgment, whether you be to answer for the life of a rich man or a poor man? Is Dives then any better than Lazarus? O that men knew what a poor deceiving shadow they grasp at, while they let go the everlasting substance! The strongest, and richest, and most voluptuous sinners, do but lay in fuel for their sorrows, while they think they are gathering together a treasure. Alas! they are asleep, and dream that they are happy; but when they awake, what a change will they find! Their crown is made of thorns: their pleasure hath such a sting as will stick in the heart through all eternity, except unfeigned repentance do prevent it. O how sadly will these wretches be convinced ere long, what a foolish bargain they made in selling Christ and their salvation for these trifles! Let your farms and merchandise then save you if they can; and do that for you that Christ would have done. Cry then to thy Baal to save thee! Oh what thoughts have drunkards and adulterers, &c. of Christ, that will not part with the basest lust for him! "For a piece of bread," saith Solomon, "such men do transgress," Prov. xxviii. 11.

8. To set so light by Christ and salvation, is a certain mark that thou hast no part in them, and if thou so continue, that Christ will set as light by thee: "Those that honour him he will honour, and those that despise him shall be lightly esteemed," 1 Sam. ii. 30. Thou wilt feel one day that thou canst not live without him; thou wilt confess then thy need of him; and then thou mayest go look for a saviour where thou wilt; for he will be no saviour for thee hereafter, that wouldst not value him, and submit to him here. Then who will prove the loser by thy contempt? O what a thing will it be for a poor miserable soul to cry to Christ for help in the day of extremity, and to hear so sad an answer as this! Thou didst set light by me and my law in the day of thy prosperity, and I will now set as light by thee in thy adversity. Read Prov. i. 24, to the end. Thou that, as Esau, didst sell thy birthright for a mess of pottage, shalt then find no place for repentance, though thou seek it with tears, Heb. xii. 17. Do you think that Christ shed his blood to save them that continue to make light of it? and to save them that value a cup of drink or a lust before his salvation? I tell you, sirs, though you set so light by Christ and salvation, God doth not so: he will not give them on such terms as these: he valueth the blood of his Son, and the everlasting glory; and he will make you value them if ever you have them. Nay, this will be thy condemnation, and leaveth no remedy. All the world cannot save him that sets light by Christ, Heb. ii. 3;

Luke xiv. 24. None of them shall taste of his supper, Matt. x. 37. Nor can you blame him to deny you what you made light of yourselves. Can you find fault if you miss of the salvation which you slighted?

9. The time is near when Christ and salvation will not be made light of as now they are. When God hath shaken those careless souls out of their bodies, and you must answer for all your sins in your own name; oh then what would you give for a saviour! When a thousand bills shall be brought in against you, and none to relieve you; then you will consider, Oh! Christ would now have stood between me and the wrath of God: had I not despised him, he would have answered all. When you see the world hath left you, and your companions in sin have deceived themselves and you, and all your merry days are gone; then what would you give for that Christ and salvation that now you account not worth your labour! Do you think when you see the judgment set, and you are doomed to everlasting perdition for your wickedness, that you should then make as fight of Christ as now? Why will you not judge now as you know you shall judge then? Will he then be worth ten thousand worlds? and is he not now worth your highest estimation and dearest affection?

10. God will not only deny thee that salvation thou madest fight of, but he will take from thee all that which thou didst value before it: he that most highly esteems Christ shall have him, and the creatures so far as they are good here, and him without the creature hereafter, because the creature is not useful; and he that sets more by the creature than by Christ, shall have some of the creature without Christ here, and neither Christ nor it hereafter.

So much of these considerations, which may shew the true face of this heinous sin.

What think you now, friends, of this business? Do you not see by this time what a case that soul is in that maketh light of Christ and salvation? What need then is there that you should take heed lest this should prove your own case! The Lord knows it is too common a case. Whoever is found guilty at the last of this sin, it were better for that man he had never been born. It were better for him he had been a Turk or Indian, that never had heard the name of a Saviour, and that never had salvation offered to him: for such men “have no cloak for their sin,” John xv. 22. Besides all the rest of their sins, they have this killing sin to answer for, which will undo them. And this will aggravate their misery, that Christ whom they set light by must be their Judge, and for this sin will he judge them. Oh that such would now consider how they will answer that question that Christ put to their predecessors, “How will ye escape the damnation of hell?” Matt. xxiii. 33: or, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” Heb. ii. 3. Can you escape without a Christ? or

will a despised Christ save you then? If he be accursed that sets light by father or mother (Deut, xxvii. 16), what then is he that sets light by Christ? It was the heinous sin of the Jews, that among them were found such as set light by father and mother, Ezek. xxii. 7. But among us, men slight the Father of spirits! In the name of God, brethren, I beseech you to consider how you will then bear his anger which you now make light of! You that cannot make light of a little sickness or want, or of natural death, no, not of a tooth-ache, but groan as if you were undone; how will you then make light of the fury of the Lord, which will burn against the contemners of his grace! Doth it not behove you beforehand to think of these things?

Hitherto I have been convincing you of the evil of the sin, and the danger that followeth: I come now to know your resolution for the time to come. What say you? Do you mean to set as light by Christ and salvation as hitherto you have done; and to be the same men after all this? I hope not. Oh let not your ministers that would fain save you, be brought in as witnesses against you to condemn you; at least, I beseech you, put not this upon me. Why, sirs, if the Lord shall say to us at judgment, Did you never tell these men what Christ did for their souls, and what need they had of him, and how nearly it did concern them to look to their salvation, that they made light of it? We must needs say the truth; Yea, Lord, we told them of it as plainly as we could; we would have gone on our knees to them if we had thought it would have prevailed; we did entreat them as earnestly as we could to consider these things: they heard of these things every day; but, alas, we could never get them to their hearts: they gave us the hearing, but they made light of all that we could say to them. Oh! sad will it prove on your side, if you force us to such an answer as this.

But if the Lord do move the hearts of any of you, and you resolve to make light of Christ no more; or if any of you say, We do not make light of him; let me tell you here in the conclusion what you must do, or else you shall be judged as slights of Christ and salvation.

And first I will tell you what will not serve the turn.

1. You may have a notional knowledge of Christ, and the necessity of his blood, and of the excellency of salvation, and yet perish as neglecters of him. This is too common among professed Christians. You may say all that other men do of him: what gospel passages had Balaam! Jesus I know, and Paul I know, the very devils could say, who believe and tremble, James ii. 19.

2. You may weep at the history of Christ's passion, when you read how he was used by the Jews, and yet make light of him, and perish for so doing.

3. You may come desirously to his word and ordinances. Herod heard gladly; so do many that yet must perish as neglecters of salvation.

4. You may in a fit of fear have strong desires after a Christ, to ease you, and to save you from God's wrath, as Saul had of David to play before him; and yet you may perish for making light of Christ.

5. You may obey him in many things so far as will not ruin you in the world, and escape much of the pollutions of the world by his knowledge, and yet neglect him.

6. You may suffer and lose much for him, so far as leaveth you an earthly felicity; as Ananias; and the young man, Matt. xix. 16-22. Some parcels of their pleasures and profits many will part with in hope of salvation, that shall perish everlastingly for valuing it no more.

7. You may be esteemed by others a man zealous for Christ, and loved and admired upon that account, and yet be one that shall perish for making light of him.

8. You may verily think yourselves, that you set more by Christ and salvation than anything, and yet be mistaken, and be judged as contemners of him: Christ justifieth not all that justify themselves.

9. You may be zealous preachers of Christ and salvation, and reprove others for this neglect, and lament the sin of the world in the like expression as I have done this day; and yet if you or I have no better evidence to prove our hearty esteem of Christ and salvation, we are undone for all this.

You hear, brethren, what will not serve the turn; will you now hear what persons you must be if you would not be condemned as slights of Christ? O search whether it be thus with your souls or no!

1. Your esteem of Christ and salvation must be greater than your esteem of all the honours, profits, or pleasures of this world, or else you slight him: no less will be accounted sincere, nor accepted to your salvation. Think not this hard, when there is no comparison in the matters esteemed. To esteem the greatest glory on earth before Christ and everlasting glory, is a greater folly and wrong to Christ, than to esteem a dog before your prince, would be folly in you, and a wrong to him. Scripture is plain in this; "He that loveth father or mother, wife, children, house, land, or his own life, more than me, is not worthy of me, and cannot be my disciple," Matt. x. 37; Luke xiv. 26.

2. You must manifest this esteem of Christ and salvation in your daily endeavours and seeking after him, and in parting with anything that he shall require of you. God is a Spirit, and will not take a hypocritical profession instead of the heart and spiritual service which he commandeth. He will have the heart or nothing; and the chief room in the heart too: these must be had.

If you say that you do not make light of Christ, or will not hereafter; let me try you in these few particulars, whether indeed you mean as you say, and do not dissemble.

1. Will you for the time to come make Christ and salvation the chiefest matter of your care and study? Thrust them not out of your thoughts as a needless or unprofitable subject; nor allow it only some running, slight thoughts, which will not affect you. But will you make it your business once a day to bethink you soberly, when you are alone, what Christ hath done for you, and what he will do, if you do not make light of it; and what it is to be everlastingly happy or miserable? And what all things in this world are in comparison of your salvation; and how they will shortly leave you; and what mind you will be then of, and how you will esteem them? Will you promise me now and then to make it your business to withdraw yourselves from the world, and set yourselves to such considerations as these? If you will not, are not you slights of Christ and salvation, that will not be persuaded soberly to think on them? This is my first question to put you to the trial, whether you will value Christ or not.

2. Will you for the time to come set more by the word of God, which contains the discovery of these excellent things, and is your charter for salvation, and your guide thereunto? You cannot set by Christ, but you must set by his word: therefore the despisers of it are threatened with destruction, Prov. xiii. 13. Will you therefore attend to the public preaching of this word; will you read it daily; will you resolve to obey it whatever it may cost you? If you will not do this, but make light of the word of God, you shall be judged as such as make light of Christ and salvation, whatever you may fondly promise to yourselves.

3. Will you for the time to come esteem more of the officers of Christ, whom he hath purposely appointed to guide you to salvation; and will you make use of them for that end? Alas, it is not to give the minister a good word, and speak well of him, and pay him his tithes duly, that will serve the turn: it is for the necessity of your souls that God hath set them in his church; that they may be as physicians under Christ, or his apothecaries to apply his remedies to your spiritual diseases, not only in public, but also in private: that you may have some to go to for the resolving of your doubts, and for your instruction where you are ignorant, and for the help of their exhortations and prayers. Will you use hereafter to go to your ministers privately, and solicit them for advice? And if you have not such of your own as are fit, get advice from others; and ask them, What you shall do to be saved? how to prepare for death and judgment? And will you obey the word of God in their mouths? If you

will not do this much, nor so much as inquire of those that should teach you, nor use the means which Christ hath established in his church for your help, your own consciences shall one day witness that you were such as made light of Christ and salvation. If any of you doubt whether it be your duty thus to ask counsel of your teachers, as sick men do of their physicians, let your own necessities resolve you, let God's express word resolve you; see what is said of the priests of the Lord, even before Christ's coming, when much of their work did lie in ceremonials: "My covenant was with him of life and peace: and I gave them to him (to Levi) for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips; he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts," Mai. ii. 5, 6.

Nay, you must not only inquire, and submit to their advice, but also to their just reprehensions, and church censures; and without proud repining submit to the discipline of Christ in their hands, if it shall be used in the congregations whereof you are members.

4. Will you for the time to come make conscience of daily and earnest prayer to God, that you may have a part in Christ and salvation? Do not go out of doors till you have breathed out these desires to God; do not lie down to rest till you have breathed out these desires: say not, God knoweth my necessity without so often praying; for though he do, yet he will have you to know them, and feel them, and exercise your desires and all the graces of his Spirit in these duties: it is he that hath commanded to pray continually, though he know your needs without it, 1 Thess. v. 17. Christ himself spent whole nights in prayer, and encourageth us to this course, Luke xviii. 1. If you will not be persuaded to this much, how can you say that you make not light of Christ and salvation?

5. Will you for the time to come resolutely cast away your known sins at the command of Christ? If you have been proud, or contentious, or malicious, and revengeful, be so no more. If you have been adulterers, or swearers, or cursers, be so no more. You cannot hold these, and yet set by Christ and salvation.

What say you? Are you resolved to let them go? If not, when you know it is the will of Christ, and he hath told you such shall not enter into his kingdom, do not you make light of him?

6. Will you for the time to come serve God in the dearest as well as in the cheapest part of his service? not only with your tongues, but with your purses

and your deeds? Shall the poor find that you set more by Christ than this world? Shall it appear in any good uses that God calls you to be liberal in, according to your abilities? “Pure religion and undefiled before God is this, To visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction,” James i. 27. Will you resolve to stick to Christ, and make sure this work of salvation, though it cost you all that you have in the world? If you think these terms too dear, you make light of Christ, and will be judged accordingly.

7. Will you for the time to come make much of all things that tend to your salvation; and take every help that God offereth you, and gladly make use of all his ordinances? Attend upon his strengthening sacraments; spend the Lord’s own day in these holy employments; instruct your children and servants in these things, Deut. vi. 6, 7; get into good company that set their faces heavenward, and will teach you the way, and help you thither; and take heed of the company of wicked scorers, or foolish, voluptuous, fleshly men, or any that would hinder you in this work. Will you do these things? Or will you shew that you are slights of Christ by neglecting them?

8. Will you do all this with delight; not as your toil, but as your pleasure? And take it for your highest honour that you may be Christ’s disciples, and may be admitted to serve and worship him; and rejoice with holy confidence in the sufficiency of that sacrifice by which you may have pardon of all your failings, and right to the inheritance of the saints in light? If you will do these things sincerely, you will shew that you set by Christ and salvation; else not.

Dearly beloved in the Lord, I have now done that work which I came upon; what effect it hath, or will have, upon your hearts, I know not, nor is it any further in my power to accomplish that which my soul desireth for you. Were it the Lord’s will that I might have my wish herein, the words that you have this day heard should so stick by you, that the secure should be awakened by them, and none of you should perish by the slighting of your salvation. I cannot now follow you to your several habitations to apply this word to your particular necessities; but O that I could make every man’s conscience a preacher to himself that it might do it, which is ever with you!—That the next, time you go prayerless to bed, or about your business, conscience might cry out, Dost thou set no more by Christ and thy salvation? That the next time you are tempted to think hardly of a holy and diligent life (I will not say to deride it as more ado than needs), conscience might cry out to thee, Dost thou set so light by Christ and thy salvation? That the next time you are ready to rush upon known sin, and to please your fleshly desires against the command of God, conscience might cry out, Is Christ and salvation no more worth, than to cast them away, or venture them for thy lusts? That when you are following

the world with your most eager desires, forgetting the world to come, and the change that is a little before you, conscience might cry out to you, Is Christ and salvation no more worth than so? That when you are next spending the Lord's day in idleness or vain sports, conscience might tell you what you are doing. In a word, that in all your neglects of duty, your sticking at the supposed labour or cost of a godly life, yea, in all your cold and lazy prayers and performances, conscience might tell you how unsuitable such endeavours are to the reward; and that Christ and salvation should not be so slighted. I will say no more but this at this time, It is a thousand pities that when God hath provided a Saviour for the world, and when Christ hath suffered so much for their sins, and made so full a satisfaction to justice, and purchased so glorious a kingdom for his saints, and all this is offered so freely to sinners, to lost, unworthy sinners, even for nothing, that yet so many millions should everlastingly perish because they make light of their Saviour and salvation, and prefer the vain world and their lusts before them. I have delivered my message, the Lord open your hearts to receive it. I have persuaded you with the word of truth and soberness; the Lord persuade you more effectually, or else all this is lost. Amen.