

Monergism

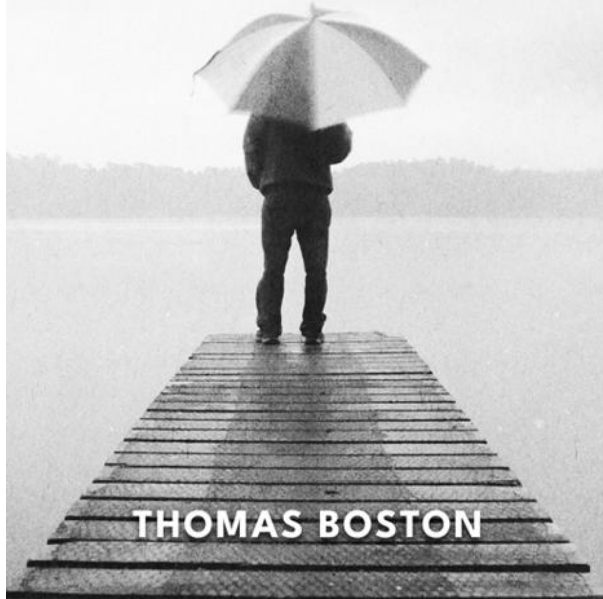
**CHRIST'S INVITATION  
TO THE LABOURING  
AND HEAVY LADEN**



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# **Christ's Invitation to the Labouring and Heavy Laden**

## **by Thomas Boston**

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## **SERMON 1**

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. MATTH. 11:28

THE great and main object of the gospel preaching and gospel practice, is a coming to Christ. It is the first article in Christianity, according to John 5:40, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have

life." It is the connecting chain, 1 Pet. 2:4, "To whom coming as unto a living stone, ye also as lively stones are built up," &c. And it is the last exercise of the Christian; for when finishing his warfare, the invitation is, Matth. 25:34, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." It is virtually the all which God requireth of us: John 6:29, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The words of the text are a moat solemn and ample invitation which Christ gives to sinners. In them I shall consider,

I. The connection. For which look to verses 25 and 26, compare Luke 10:21, "Jesus rejoiced in spirit." It was a joyful time to him when he made this invitation. He rejoiced in the account of the good news, the success with which the message of the disciples was attended; and in the wise and sovereign dispensation of grace by the Father, which he here celebrates, as also upon the view of his own power; where he shows that all power was lodged in him. The keys of the Father's treasures of grace are in his hand, yea, and whatsoever is the Father's. He also shews, that none could know the Father, but by him, for that is given to him only. He, as it were, opens the treasure door to sinners in the text.—From the connection of this verse, as just now stated, I would observe, that the solemnity of this invitation is most observable. There seems something to be about it more than ordinary. As,

1. It was given in the day of Christ's gladness. He was a man of sorrows, all made up of sorrows. Sorrow, sighing, weeping, groaning, were his ordinary fare. Once indeed we read of his being glad, John 11:15; and once of his rejoicing, Luke 10:21. And, again, on this occasion, here that thread of sorrow was interrupted, the sun of joy broke out for a little from under the cloud. His heart was touched, and, as it were, leaped for joy, as the word signifies; compare Matth 5:12, with Luke 6:23. In the Greek, "he was exceeding joyful." At this extraordinary time and frame, he gives the invitation in the text. Hence infer,

1st, That Christ invites sinners with an enlarged heart. Joy enlarges it. His heart is open to you, his arms are stretched wide. You often see him with sorrow and anger in his face, and this works with you that you will not come. Behold him smiling and inviting you now to himself, sending love-looks to lost sinners, from a joyful heart within! Infer,

2dly, May I say, the Mediator's joy is not complete, till you come and take a share? The scriptures will warrant the expression, Isa. 53:11, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." He rejoiceth, but resteth not; but invites sinners to a share, as if all could not satisfy while he goes childless, as to some he has yet an eye upon. Infer,

3dly, That nothing can make Christ forget poor sinners, or be unconcerned for them. Sorrow could not do it, joy could not do it; either of these will drive a narrow-spirited man so into himself, as to forget all others. But never was his heart so filled either with sorrow or joy, but there was always room for poor sinners there. When he was entering the ocean of wrath, he remembered them, John 17; and as our forerunner, he went into the ocean of joy, Heb. 6:20. Like Aaron, he carried our names on his heart, when he went in to appear before the Lord in heaven, Exod. 28:29.

2. The invitation was given at a time when there was a great breach made in the devil's kingdom, compare Luke 10:17, 18. Christ was now beginning to set up a new kingdom, and he sends out seventy disciples, which was the number of the Sanhedrim at first. He was to bring the people out of the spiritual Egypt, compare Gen. 46:27. The success of the disciples was a fair pledge of the devil's kingdom coming down, and the delivery of sinners. And when the news of it comes, his heart rejoices, and his tongue breaks out in this invitation to the devil's captives, to come away upon this glorious signal. As he had begun to perform this part of the covenant, the Father had begun to perform his, which made his heart leap for joy, and sets him on to cry, that they would all come away, as disciples, vigorously to pursue

the advantage which was got, Psalm 110:7, "He shall drink of the brook in the way, therefore shall he lift up the head. Hence infer,

1st, That Christ's heart is set upon the work of sinners' salvation. Ye see no undue haste, but he would have no delays. He holds hands to the work, calling, "Come unto me." He preferred it to the eating of his bread; and what else is the meaning of all the ordinances and providences ye meet with? Infer,

2dly, That Christ would have you to come, taking encouragement from the example of others that have come before you. There is a gap made in the devil's prison; some have made their escape by it already, O! will not ye follow? The Lord has set examples for us, both of judgment and of mercy. In the beginnings of the Jewish church, there was an example of God's sovereignty, in the destruction of Nadab and Abihu, Lev. 10:1, 2; and of the Christian church, in the death of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5; of mercy, in the Jewish church, Rahab the harlot, besides Abraham the father of them all, an idolater, Josh. 24:15, compare Isa. 51:2. Then in the Christian church, Paul the blasphemous persecutor, 1 Tim. 1:16. Infer,

3dly, That however full Christ's house be, there is always room for more; he wearies not of welcoming sinners; the more that come the better. Christ's harvest is not all cut down at once, nor his house built in a day; if the last stone were laid in the building, the scaffolding of ordinances would be taken down, and the world be at an end. But none of these has hitherto taken place; therefore yet there is room: Joel 3:21, "For I will cleanse their blood that I have not yet cleansed, for the Lord dwelleth in Zion."

3. This invitation is given on a solemn review of that fulness, of that all which the Father hath lodged in the hand of the Mediator, and that solely. The Father, as it were, no sooner leads him into these treasures, but he says, "This and this is for you, sinners; here is a treasure of mercies and blessings for you; pardon, life, peace, &c. is all for you. Come, therefore, unto me, the Father has delivered them

into my hand, I long to deliver them over to you. Come, therefore, to me, and hence I shall draw my fulness out to you.' Christ had got a kingdom from the Father; it was as yet thinly peopled, and so he calls you to come to him, that ye may be happy in him. He has no will to enjoy these things alone, but because he has them, he would have you to take a share.—I would draw this

DOCT. That as the fulness lodged in the Mediator hath a free vent in his heart, so it seeks to diffuse itself into the souls of needy sinners.

Jesus Christ longs to make sinners the better of that all-fulness that is lodged in him by the Father. Christ speaks here to us as the true Joseph, Gen. 45:9–11. As Joseph invited his brethren to come and dwell with him, so Jesus cordially invites us, and promises us a share of the fulness which he himself possesses.—In illustrating the above proposition, I shall only,

I. Assign some reasons.

II. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to give some reasons of this doctrine, or shew, why Christ is so kind and liberal to sinners.—He is so,

1. Because the Father hath given him for that end: Isa. 55:4, "Behold, I have given him for a Witness unto the people, a Leader and Commander unto the people. The Father had thoughts of love to man; his love designed to distribute a treasure of mercy, pardon, and grace, to lost sinners; but justice would not allow his giving them immediately out of his own hand; therefore he gives them to the Mediator to distribute. An absolute God being a consuming fire, guilty creatures, as stubble, could not endure his heat, but they would have been burnt up by it; therefore he sets his own Son, in man's nature, as a crystal-wall betwixt him and them; he gives him the Spirit without measure, not only a fulness of sufficiency, but abundance of blessings, is laid up in him; for it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.—He is so,

2. Because he received a fulness of treasure for that very end: John 17:19, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." The first Adam got mankind's stock; he soon lost all. Christ takes the elect's stock in his hand for their security, and so he is given for a covenant of the people; he takes the burden upon him for them, and takes the administration of the second covenant, that it might, with them, be a better covenant than the first.—He is so,

3. Because he bought these treasures at the price of his blood for their behoof: Phil. 2:8, 9, "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name." The Son of God, who is Lord of all, needed no exaltation in the court of heaven, being equal with his Father; but his design was, to exalt man's nature, to make these that were the children of the devil—friends to heaven, and prepare for them room there: "I go (said he) to prepare a place for you," John 14:2. No wonder, then, that he should long to see the purchase of his blood, the fruit of the travail of his soul, come to him.—He is kind and liberal,

4. Because of his love to them. Where true love is, there is an aptness to communicate; the lover cannot see the beloved want what he has. God's love is giving love: "He so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son," John 3:16. Christ's love is also such; he loves indeed: "He loved us, and gave himself for us," Gal. 2:20.—For the improvement of this doctrine, I only add an use of exhortation.

Come to Christ, then, O sinners, upon this his invitation, and sit not his blessed call.—To enforce this, I urge these motives:—

1. There is a fulness in him, all power is given him; want what you will, he has a power to give it to you; the Son of man had power, even on earth, to forgive sins. Grace without you, or grace within you, he is the dispenser of all: John 1:16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." He is the great Secretary of heaven,



the keys hang at his girdle; he shuts, and none can open; he opens, and none can shut.—Consider,

2. You are welcome to it. He has it not to keep up, but to give out, and to whom but to needy sinners? Even the worst of you are welcome, if you will take it out of his own hand: "If any man thirst, (says he), let him come to me, and drink," John 7:37.

3. Would you do Christ a pleasure? then come to him, Isa. 53:11, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Would you content and ease his heart? then come. It is a great ease to full breasts to be sucked. The breasts of his consolations are full, hear how pressingly he calls you to suck! "Eat, O friends! drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!"

Lastly, Would you fall in with the designs of the Father's and the Son's love, in the mystery of salvation? then come to him. Why is a fountain opened, but that ye may run to it, and wash? Seal not, shut not that to yourselves, which God and Christ have opened.

II. The second thing to be considered in the words is, the persons invited. These are they that labour, and are heavy-laden. The word labour signifies not every labouring, but a labouring to weariness, and so some read it weary. Heavy laden are they that have a heavy burden on their back, which they are not able to bear.

Who are meant by these? I cannot agree with those that restrain these expressions to those that are sensible of their sins and misery, without Christ, and are longing to be rid of the same; but I think it includes all that are out of Christ, sensible or insensible; that is, these that have not had, and those that have had, a law-work upon their consciences. And to fix this interpretation, consider,

1. The words agree to all that are out of Christ, and none have any right to restrain them. None more properly labour, in the sense of the text, than those that are out of Christ, seeking their satisfaction in the creatures: Eccl. 1:8, "All things are full of labour, man cannot

utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." And who have such a burden of sin, and wrath upon their back as they have? The word properly signifies a ship's lading, which, though insensible of it, may yet sink under the weight.—Consider,

2. "The whole world lieth in wickedness," 1 John 5:19, as men in a deep mire, still sinking. Christ came to deliver men out of that case; having taken upon him our nature, Heb. 2:16, he caught hold (Greek) as one doth of a drowning man, even as he did of Peter when sinking, Matth. 14:31. And what are the invitations of the gospel, but Christ putting out his hands to sinking souls, sinking with their own weight. Consider,

3. That the words, in other scriptures, are without controversy applied to the most insensible sinners. See what labour and weariness! Hab. 2:13, "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?" In the most solemn invitation to Christ in all the Old Testament, the word "labouring" is so used: Isa. 55:2, "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" Luke 11:46, "Ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne." "Lade" is the same Greek word used in the text. Isa. 1:4, "Ah! sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity." Were they sensible? far from it; for ver. 3, "Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." And, 2 Tim. 3:6, it is said, "Silly women, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts."

4. Consider the parallel text: Isa. 55:1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth;" where by the thirsty is not so much understood those that are thirsting after Christ, as those that are thirsting after happiness and satisfaction, seeking to squeeze it out of the creature; for the thirsty invited are the same that are spending their labour for that which satisfieth not. But those that are thirsting after Christ are not such.

5. If the words be a restriction of the call to sensible sinners, then the most part of sinners are excluded. If they are not included, sure they

are excluded; and if the words are restrictive, sure they are not included; and then, so far from being the truth of the text, that it is no gospel-truth at all; for all, without exception, that hear the gospel, are called to come to Christ; Rev. 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." And if any "one" be not called, they have no warrant to come; and if so, unbelief is not their sin, as in the case of the Pagans, which is absurd.

Lastly, This is a most solemn invitation to come to Christ; and if I say the most solemn, there is some ground for it by what is said before. And shall that be judged restrained, that so expressly and solemnly comes from that fulness of power lodged in Christ, more than that just quoted? Rev. 3:20, where there is no shadow of restriction. Besides, this restriction may well be a snare to an exercised soul, which ordinarily, by a legal disposition in all, will not allow that they may come to Christ, because sin is not heavy enough to them. But although sinners will never come to Christ till they see their need of him, yet this I will ever preach, that all, under pain of damnation, are obliged to come to him, and that they shall be welcome on their coming, be their case what it will; that such as are willing to come ought not to stop on a defect of their sensibleness, but come to him, that they may get a true sense of sin unto repentance; for he is "exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins," Acts 5:31, He is to give, not to stand and wait, till "folly bring repentance with it."

III. Consider in the words, to what the labouring and heavy-laden are invited. They are invited to come to Jesus; that is, to believe on him, to take him as he offers himself in the gospel.

IV. Observe the encouragement afforded to influence a compliance with this invitation. Rest is promised to them here and hereafter: "I will give you rest."—We may afterwards open up these things more largely, in handling the following doctrinal propositions, which we draw from the words thus explained, viz.

DOCT. I. That sinners, while out of Christ, are engaged in a wearisome labour.

DOCT. II. That all who are out of Christ are under a heavy load or burden, which by all their labours they cannot shake off.

DOCT. III. Whatever sinful and vain labours sinners are engaged in, whatever be the loads which are lying on them, they are welcome to Christ; nay, he calls, invites, and commands them to come unto him.

I shall consider these in order.—I begin with DOCT. I. That sinners, while out of Christ, are engaged in a wearisome labour. Were you condemned, till you forsook your lusts, to row in the galleys, chained to the oars, to dig in mines, never to see the light of the sun, it were not to be compared to this wearisome labour, while out of Christ. If sinners feel it not, it is because they are not at all themselves. It is a truth, though a sad one, Isa. 55:2, that they "labour for that which satisfieth not;" (in the Hebrew,) they "labour to weariness." Eccl. 10:15, "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them; because he knoweth not how to go to the city."

In discoursing this point, we may inquire,

I. What it is that sinners out of Christ are labouring for.

II. How it is, that men out of Christ labour for happiness and satisfaction.

III. What sort of labour it is that they have in these things.

IV. Why sinners labour in these things for satisfaction, and do not come to Christ.

V. Make some practical improvement.

Let us inquire,

I. What it is that sinners out of Christ are labouring for. No man engageth in a labour, but for some end he proposeth to himself. Though the devil is oversman of these labourers, yet he does not make them go like clocks, without a design. Every one that labours proposes some profit to himself by his work, and so do these; there is always something, either really or seemingly good, that men seek in all their labours. So, in a word, it is happiness and satisfaction that they are labouring for, as well as the godly. For, consider,

1. The desire of happiness and satisfaction is natural to man; all men wish to see good. It is not the desire of good that may satisfy, that makes the difference between the godly and the wicked, but the different ways they take: Psalm 4:6, 7, "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." In whatever case a man is on earth, in heaven or hell this is still his desire; and he must cease to be a man, ere he can cease to desire to be a happy man. When that desire, mentioned Eccl. 12:5, shall fail, this desire is still fresh and green; and it is good in itself. Our Lord supposeth this in the text, and therefore he promises to them what they are seeking, rest, if they will come to him.

2. This desire is the chief of all: all other things are desired for it. All men's desires, however different, meet here, as all the rivers meet in the sea, though their courses may be quite contrary. Therefore this is what they labour for. The devil has some labourers at his coarse work, others at the more fine, but they all meet in their end.

3. Defects and wants are interwoven with the very nature of the creature; and the rational creature finds that it cannot be, nor is self-sufficient. Hence it seeks its happiness without itself, and must do it, to satisfy these natural desires.

Lastly, Seeing, then, man's happiness is without himself, it must be brought in, which cannot be done without labour. It is proper to God

to be happy in himself; but every creature must needs go out of itself to find its happiness; so that action is the true way to it, that is, rest cannot be found but in the way of action and labour, and because they are not in the right way, it is wearisome labour.

Let us inquire,

II. How it is that men out of Christ labour for happiness and satisfaction. Here it is impossible for us to reckon up particulars, and that in regard,

1. Of the different dispositions of men, and the various, as well as contrary opinions, concerning what may make a man happy. Varro says, there were two hundred and eighty opinions touching the chief good in his time. It is true, Christianity, in the profession of it, hath fixed this point in principle; but nothing less than overcoming grace can fix it in point of practice. The whole body of Christless sinners are like the Sodomites at Lot's door; all were for the door, but one grasps one part of the wall for it, another another part, not one of them found it. The world is, as the air in a summer-day, full of insects; and natural men, like a company of children, one running to catch one, another, another, while none of them is worth the pains. One runs to the bowels of the earth, another to the ale-house, &c.—It is impossible to determine here,

2. In regard of men's still altering their opinions about it, as they meet with new diappointments. Like a man in a mist, seeking a house in a wilderness, when every bush, tree, &c. deceives, till, by coming near, he is undeceived. "O (thinks the man), if I had such a thing, I would be well." Then he falls to labour for it; may be he never gets it, but he ever pursues it. If he gets it, he finds it will not do, for as big as it was afar off, yet it will not fill his hand when he grips it; but it must be filled, or no rest, hence new labour to bring forth just a new disappointment: Isa. 26:18, "We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind."—It is difficult also,

3. Because they cannot tell themselves what they would be at. Their starving souls are like the hungry infant, that gapes, weeps, cries, and sucks every thing that comes near its mouth, but cannot tell what it would have, but is still restless till the mother set it to the breast. It is regenerating grace that does that to the soul. The Hebrew word for believing, comes from a root that signifies to nurse, as if faith were nothing but a laying of the soul on the breasts of Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead. The scripture holds him out as the mother that bare them; hence his people are called, Isa. 53:11, "The fruit of the travail of his soul." He also is their nourisher: hence he says, Isa. 1:2, "I have nourished and brought up children." The breasts of the church, Isa. 66:11, at which they are to suck and be satisfied, are no other than Christ. But, in the general, to see from whence it is that men out of Christ go about to squeeze out their happiness, see Psalm 4:6, 7, quoted above. From which observe two things.

(1.) That it is not God, for these two are set in opposition; go to as many doors as they will, they never go to the right door; hence it follows, that it is the creatures out of which they labour to draw their satisfaction: "Having forsaken the fountain of living waters, they hew out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

(2.) That it is good they are seeking out of them; and indeed men can seek nothing but under that notion, though for the most part they call evil good, and good evil. All good is either profitable, pleasurable, or honest; these, then, are all that they are seeking, not from God, but from themselves, or other creatures. The two former have respect to the cravings of men's desires, the latter to the cravings of the law. And seeing it is not in God that they seek their happiness and satisfaction, I infer hence, that all out of Christ are labouring for their happiness and satisfaction in one or both of these ways, either from their lusts, or from the law; and this I take to be the very labour intended in the text. For which consider these three things:—

1st, That all natural men have two principles in them, (1.) Corruption; (2.) Conscience. Both crave of them: Rom. 2:15, "Which shew the work of the law, written in their heart, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another." Hence, because they do not mortify the lusts, they must be fed or no rest; and therefore they labour for their lusts to satisfy them. Then, because they fly not to Christ for the satisfaction of their conscience, they go to the law.

2dly. The bulk of natural men in the world have still been of two sorts: (1.) The profane party; (2.) The formal party. These have still been among Jews, Pagans, and Christians; the former labouring most in lusts, the latter in the law.

3dly, Adam left us with two yokes on our necks, (1.) Of lusts; (2.) Of the law. The last was of God's putting, but he gave strength with it to bear it; Adam took away the strength, but left the yoke, and put on a yoke of lusts beside; and in opposition to both these, Christ bids us come and take on his yoke, which is easy, and his burden, which is light," Matth. 11:29.

As to the labour they have in their lusts, they call them, and they run after them. These infernal devils in the heart drive the swine of this world into the sea of perdition; nay, turn the soul itself into a very sea, that cannot rest: Isa. 57:20, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." They labour like madmen for satisfaction to them, and no calm, no rest, till the soul come to Christ.

1. They labour hard in the lusts of profit: 1 John 2:16, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The profits of the world are the cisterns they squeeze for satisfaction; they bewitch the hearts of them that have them, and of them that want them; they fly after them with that pains and labour the ravenous bird doth after its prey: Prov. 23:5, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for



riches take to themselves wings, they fly away, as an eagle towards heaven." The strength of men's desires, and the cream of their affections, are spent on them; their happiness depends upon its smiles, their misery upon its frowns; if gone, their god is gone. Hence is that verified, Hab. 2:13, "They labour in the very fire, and weary themselves for very vanity," like a poor fool running to catch a shadow. They have hard labour in lawful profits, how to get them, and how to keep them, but hardest of all, how to squeeze satisfaction out of them; there they labour in the very fire; they labour also in unlawful profits. The soul is an empty thing; lusts are ill to guide; conscience must make a stretch now and then, for the satisfaction of lusts; and the man will leap over the hedge, though the serpent will bite him: 1 Tim. 6:9, 10, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil." Hence the carnal man, I may say, never gets up his back, but on his belly doth he go, and labours, as if he were a slave condemned to the mines, to dig in the bowels of the earth; like the blind moles, his constant labour is in the earth, and he never opens his eyes till he is dying. He has his lade of thick clay upon his back, Hab. 2:6, as the fruit of his labouring in the fire. There is thus a labouring and heavy-laden party. Others take the world in their hand as a staff, nay, tread on it as the dirt, and they get it as a burden on their back; while guilt, many times contracted in the getting of it, whether by oppression, cheatery, or neglecting of the soul for it, is like a sore back under the load, that makes them ready in despair to throw it away, but they know not how to subsist without it.

2. They labour in lusts of pleasure; they go about as the bee, extracting the sweet out of the creatures for their own satisfaction; this and the former usually go together. Profits and pleasures are the world's two great baits, at which all natural men are constantly leaping, till they are caught by the hook, and flung out into the fire of wrath: Prov. 9:17, 18, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there, and

that her guests are in the depths of hell." Pleasure is a necessary ingredient in happiness, and man cannot but seek it; hence God proposeth it to men in himself, who is the fountain of all sweetness: Psalm 16:11, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life, in thy presence there is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." But blind man makes the creature-sweetness his idol, and puts it in the room of God; for "they are lovers of pleasures, (in this sense), more than lovers of God," 2 Tim. 3:4. It is no fault to seek our profit; for, Heb. 11:26, "We are to have respect unto the recompense of the reward." Nor to seek what may be sweet to the soul; for we may wish our souls to be "satisfied with marrow and fatness," Psalm 63:5. But the natural man's misery and sin both is, he forsakes God, and fastens on the breasts of the creatures for these things.

Now, there are two breasts of the creatures at which men may be sucking.

(1.) The breast of lawful comforts. Natural men fall on these, instead of the breasts of God's consolations, and labour, though in vain, to squeeze happiness and satisfaction out of them, and that with the greatest eagerness. They are lawful in themselves, but they often press so hard, that they draw out blood instead of milk from them; and are like men working at a flinty rook, to bring out water, instead of which they get fire flashing in their face, as in that case, Judges 9:15, when "fire came out of the bramble to devour the cedars of Lebanon."—There is,

(2.) The breast of unlawful comforts, Prov. 9:17, "Stolen waters are sweet." Many seek their satisfaction in those things which they ought not so much as to desire, and fill themselves with what God forbids them so much as to taste. O! the misery of Christless sinners, to whom both lawful and unlawful comforts are effectual snares for ruin. Like mad beasts, if they abide within the hedge, they tear up all to the red earth, which doth not yet satisfy, But they most usually break over all hedges; and they do so, because the creature can never

fully answer the craving desires and hungry appetite, and yet, after all, they will not come to Christ, that they may have rest.

These breasts of the creatures have many springs, divers lusts and pleasures, Titus 3:3, and these are served; men must labour in them as a servant at his master's work. I shall reduce them to these two heads, mentioned, Eph. 2:3, the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

1st, They labour for satisfaction and happiness in the pleasures of the flesh. And,—1. In sensuality. This was the door man first went to, after he had left God. And since the world was turned upside down by that means, the soul has lain downmost, and the flesh uppermost, so that they are all sensual, as Jude says, ver. 19, that have not the Spirit; and the soul is made drudge of the body. The belly is a god, and the pleasures of the flesh are squeezed for satisfaction; all the senses are set a-working for it, and yet can never do enough: Eccl. 6:7, "All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled." Many arts and trades are found out to bring this to perfection, though all in vain; and there is no end of these things, which are of no use but to please the flesh, which, like the grave, never says it has enough.—2. Ease, sloth, and quiet, which is a negative kind of sensuality: Luke 12:19, "The rich man said, Thou has goods laid up for many years, soul, take thine ease." All to please the flesh. This costs hard labour many times to the soul, many a throw conscience gets for the sake of this idol, what by neglect of duties, what by going over the belly of light to shun what is grieving to the flesh, as if men's hapness consisted in the quiet enjoyment of themselves.—They labour for satisfaction,

2dly, In the desires of the mind, and pleasures thereof. These, if they terminated on right objects, and were sought in a right manner, it would be well, for our true happiness consists in the soul's enjoyment of God; but in the natural man all is confusion. And,—1. There is much labour in seeking happiness in the pleasures of the judgment. This is the snare of thinking graceless men; this was among the first doors men went to when they turned from God: Gen. 3:5, "Ye shall

be as gods, knowing good and evil." And there is hard labour without a figure, for the punishment of that: Eccl. 1:13, "And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven; this sore travail God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith." And what comes it to at length? to no rest; for, ver. 18, "In much wisdom there is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow." Here is fulfilled, Eccl. 10:15, "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city." Whereas, would they go to Christ, they would be in a fair way to get what they are seeking; for, John 17:3, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." "In whom are hid, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. 2:3. There is labour,—

2. In pleasures of the fancy. What else are all the lusts of the eye? all the abundance of the riches for which men labour so much? Eccl. 5:11, "When goods increase, they are increased that eat them; and what good is there to the owner thereof, saying the beholding of them with his eyes? all they can think or say is, These are mine." What is honour, credit, and the like, but a tickling of our fancy, with the fancies of others about us, adding nothing to real worth? And how busy is the soul oftentimes in that, Eccl. 6:9, "Better is the sight or the eyes, than the wandering of the desire, (Heb.) "walking of the soul." This is also vanity and vexation of spirit. What satisfaction is sought in imagination, sins, lust, revenge, and the like? what restlessness there, 2 Pet. 2:14, "Having eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin." How busy is the soul oftentimes in imagination, of wealth, and the like, as if, when it had tried all other means in vain, it would try, while awake, to dream itself happy! "The thoughts of my heart," says Job, chap. 17:11, (Heb.) "the passions of my heart," "are broken off."

3. The other thing in which natural men labour for rest, is the "law:" compare the text, Matth. 11:28, with vers. 29 and 30. Emphatically is that labour described, Rom. 10:3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness." "Go about;" the word signifies, a seeking, like a disputer in the

schools, or a tormenter of one upon the rack; to establish, to make it stand itself alone. They seek to make it stand, as men that will have a stone to stand on end, which at the same time is ever coming down on them again. Why all this? because it is their own: "Have not submitted." Christ offers a righteousness; but to take it, is to them a point of submission, against which they labour, as the untoward bullock against the yoke. They will never let it on till God break the iron sinew of the neck, Isa. 48:4.

To confirm this, consider,

1. All men desire to be happy, and no man can get his conscience quite silenced, more than he can get the notion of a God quite erased from his mind: Rom. 2:14, 15, "They are a law unto themselves, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or excusing one another." Peace of mind is a natural desire, which none can divest himself of. Hence it follows, men cannot but seek inward peace; and though they may set themselves to murder conscience for that end, yet seeing it will not do for them totally, they do of necessity take some other way. There never was but two ways, either Christ or the law. The former they reject, therefore it follows, they follow the latter. Let us view this in three sorts of natural men.

(1.) In the profane person, who has not so much as a form of godliness; it is hardest to be found in them. But none so profane, but it will readily be found they have some one good thing or another about them, and sometimes they will compliment their consciences with a denial of satisfaction to their lusts, which is a labour so much the harder to them, as they are under the greater power of lusts. This sure they do not with an eye to make themselves miserable, but happy that their consciences may excuse them, Rom. 2:15. Excusing, even those that are most at the devil's will, and taken captive, as hunters who take their prey alive, 2 Tim. 2:26. Importing still a conscience labouring in the law, though lusts, as being stronger, do for the most part prevail.—Let us view this,

(2.) In the formal natural man: some of whom labour in the duties of morality; others in those of religion: who are at no small travail in the law, if we consider it all for nought. Like the Pharisee, Luke 18:11, they take not the gospel-way, yet they labour in the law. Sure lusts remain in them in their life and vigour. It surely costs labour so far to restrain them.—Let us view this,

(3.) In the awakened sinner. I am not for excluding those out of the text, but only that it be not restrained to them: Acts 2:37, "Now, when they heard this, they were pricked to the heart, and said unto Peter, and the rest of the apostles, what shall we do?" These mend their hands at this hard labour, and oftentimes labour so to keep the law, that they are both by themselves, and others taken for saints of the first magnitude, and yet it is but still in the law, till converting grace come, and sued them off the old root.

2. It is natural for men to labour in the law for happiness, and therefore, till nature be overcome by grace, men will not be put off it. The law was Adam's covenant, who, with his children, were to work and win heaven by their works; though they have lost their father's strength, yet they will keep their father's trade; though their stock be small, yet they will keep the merchandising for heaven, and give God good works for good wages. See nature speaking out of him, Matth. 19:16, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" And it often happens, that they who have fewest of good works lay the greatest stress upon them.

3. Consider how this practice has been formed into principles, in the face of the sun of the gospel. Never was an error yet vented in principle, but in compliance with some corruption of the heart; therefore is that made the characteristic of true doctrine, that it is according to godliness, 1 Tim. 6:3. No sooner was the gospel preached, than Cain sets up for works in opposition to faith: Gen. 4:4, 5, "And the Lord had respect to Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect." Paul gives the reason: Heb. 11:4, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice

than Cain." In Abraham's family, to whom the promise of righteousness was more clearly made, Hagar bears her son; compare Gal. 4:24. When the people were in Egypt, the generality of them knew nothing else. They had curtailed the law so very short, as all that labour in it do, that they thought they kept all very well: Rom. 5:13, "For until the law, sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed, when there is no law." For that cause God gave them the law, as in Exod. 20. Gal. 3:29, "The law was added because of transgressions;" it prevailed in the days of the prophets, in Christ's days, and from the beginning of the Christian church to this day;—hence our swarms of Papists, &c.—Consider,

4. They turn the very gospel into law, as unclean vessels sour the sweetest liquor that is put in them. What a real gospel was the ceremonial law to the Jews, holding up blood, death, and translation of guilt, from them to the substitute, every day before their eyes in their sacrifices; But, Rom. 9:11, "Their very table (that is, their altar, so call, Mal. 1:12,) became a snare;" and they went about these things, as if by them they would have made up what was wanting in their observation of the moral law. Just so was it turned in Popery; yea, and alas! among Protestants it is found thus soured, to whom the gospel is the law and faith, repentance, and new obedience, the fulfilling of the law. But would to God it stood in principles only; but as sure as every unrenewed man is out of Christ, as sure even these natural men, whose heads are set right in this point, in their hearts and practice the very gospel is turned into law, and their obedience, their very faith and repentance, such as it is, is put in the room of Christ. For practice, when fairly traced, will show the principles from which it proceeds.

Lastly, Consider, though all would be saved, yet natural men are enemies to the gospel-way of salvation: 1 Cor. 1:23, "It is to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." They must then be in love with the law, for there is no mids; yea, so cleave they to it, that nothing but death can part Adam's sons and it, and this even a violent death in a day of God's power: Psalm 110:3; Rom. 7:4, "Ye

also are become dead to the law;" (Greek,) "deadened, killed, or put to death." As long as a soul sees how to shift without Christ, it will never come to him; add to this, that the godly find the remains of this principle in them to struggle against. Self-denial is the first lesson Christ gives, but they are a-learning it all their days. If it is thus in the green tree, what shall it be in the dry?

## SERMON 2

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. MATTH. 11:28

WE are now,

III. To inquire, What sort of a labour sinners have in these things? For the sake of plainness, it will be necessary to consider this labour, 1st, As it respects their lusts; 2dly, As it respects the law.—We are,

1st, To consider this labour of sinners, as it respects their lusts, their going up and down among the creatures, extracting from them a comfort and pleasures, which they take for happiness.—I shall here show the properties of this labour, and thus confirm the point, that they are engaged in a wearisome labour.

1. It is hard labour, and sore toil: Jer. 9:5, "They weary themselves to commit iniquity." None win the devil's wages for nought, they eat no idle bread where he is taskmaster, and they must needs run, whom he drives. The devil's yoke is of all yokes the heaviest.—To clear this point, consider,

(1.) What the Scriptures compare this labour in lusts unto; whereby it will appear hard labour.—It compares it,



[1.] To the labour of a man going to a city and not knowing the way: Eccl. 10:15, "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city." That is hard labour, as many know by experience. Many a weary foot such must go, many a hardship they must endure, and so must these in pursuit of happiness.—It compares it,

[2.] To a labouring in the fire: Hab. 2:13, "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?" How hard is their labour that lieth about a fire! what sweat! what toil! Jer. 6:29, "The billows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain, for the wicked are not plucked away." But how much more hard in the fire! As when a house is on fire, and men in it, labouring to preserve that which the fire consumes, even among their hands. These labour, 1st, In the fire of lusts, that inflames the heart, and scorches the very soul, Prov. 6:27, 28, "For by means of a whorish woman, a man is brought to a piece of bread, and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?" 2dly In the fire of divine wrath that is kindled by the former: Isa. 9:18, "For wickedness burneth as the fire, it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke." This consumeth what they are working for in the other; so that when, like the spider, they have spun out their own bowels for a covering, yet it is by far too narrow, and they have but wearied themselves for very vanity.—It is compared,

[3.] To labouring under a burden, as in the text itself, which will not let the man get up his back. They are the devil's drudges, labouring under that load that will crush them at last, if they do not, as in Psalm 55:22, cast their burden on the Lord, that he may sustain them. They are laden with divers lusts, which lie on them as a burden on the weary beast, which weary them indeed, but they are bound on as with bands of iron and brass.—It is compared,

[4.] To the labour of a soldier in war; they watch for iniquity as a sentry at his post: Isa. 29:20. The natural man himself is the very field of battle: Jam. 4:1, "From whence come wars and fightings among you, come they not hence, even of your lusts which war in your members?" The war itself you may see described in the three following verses. Who cannot but be well laboured with the feet of men and horse in that confusion? Though there be not grace and corruption to war in them, there are lusts, and lusts opposed to one another, lusts and light also.—It is compared,

[5.] To the labour of the husbandman in plowing: Hos. 10:13, "Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity." They devise wickedness, which the Hebrew calls plowing it: "Devise not evil against thy neighbour," Prov. 3:29. "An ungodly man diggeth up evil, and in his lips there is a burning fire," Prov. 16:27.

It is compared,

[6.] Not to insist on more, to the labour of a woman in child-birth: Psalm 7:4, "Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood." What pangs do raging lusts create to the soul? What cords of death does it straiten with? No small toil at conceiving of sin, and bearing it in the heart, and bringing it forth; but nothing in the abominable brat to satisfy the soul after all.

(2.) It is hard labour, if you consider that eminent emblem of our natural state, the Egyptian bondage. Their deliverance out of Egypt, was typical of their spiritual deliverance by Christ, and so that must needs signify man's natural state; concerning which it may be remarked, (1.) That as the children of Israel went down to Egypt in the loins of their parents, so we in Adam.—(2.) As the deliverance was wrought by the angel of the covenant, by the hands of Moses the lawgiver, and Aaron the priest, so this by the law and the gospel.—(3.) As Pharaoh opposed the children of Israel to the utmost, so the devil opposeth here. Pharaoh was "the great dragon which lieth in

the midst of his rivers, which said, my river is mine own, and I have made it for myself," Ezek. 29:3; and was a type of that great red dragon, mentioned Rev. 12:3, &c. But for that which concerns this point, see Exod. 5. There you will find persons labouring, and heavy laden, vers. 4, 5. It is hard labour to satisfy lusts, the devil's taskmasters: Eph. 2:2, 3, "He worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind." The Israelites had their tasks doubled, to put religion out of their heads and hearts, Exod. 5:10. Lusts also must be satisfied, but wherewith to do it is withheld, as straw was from the Israelites, ver. 11. They are scattered up and down among the creatures for it, but can never squeeze out a sufficiency for them, even as the Israelites could not find stubble enough to prepare their bricks, vers. 12, 13, 14. If any appearance of deliverance, the labour is made the harder. Says Paul, Rom. 7:9, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."—It is hard labour,

(3.) If ye consider the effects this labour hath, 1st, On the souls of men. The minds of men have a toilsome task, where sin is on the throne: Isa. 5:20, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." That soul must needs be in a continual fever, while inordinate affections are in their strength, as in all out of Christ. A fermentation of lasts cannot but make a tossed mind. Anxiety and cares of the world stretch the mind, as on tenter hooks. A conceived flight, like that of Ahab, 1 Kings 21:4, sets the proud man's heart in a fire of wrath and revenge, and squeezes the sap out of all their enjoyments, as in the instance of Haman, Esth. 5:9, 13. Envy slays the silly one, lust strikes as a dart through the liver; anger, malice, discontent, and the like, make a man his own executioner; they are tossed between hopes, fears, and vanity, tumbled hither and thither with every wind of temptation, as a ship without either pilot or ballast. 2dly, Even the body is oftentimes hard put to it in this labour. The covetous rises early, eats the bread of sorrow for what is

not; the drunkard uses his body worse than his beast. More bodies have fallen sacrifices to lust, one way or another, than ever fell by the hardships either in or about religion.

2. It is base, mean, and abject labour: See Jer. 2:21, compared with vers. 23, and 24. Were we to die like beasts, we might live like beasts, with our souls grovelling still downward on the earth. If the soul had been so narrow, as to be satisfied with less than an infinite good, he had not spoke like a fool, who said to his soul, Luke 12:19, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," when his barns were full; in that case, the swine and his soul might have fed together. But we have immortal souls, capable of enjoying an infinite good, and such working in the earth must needs be a base labour for a heaven-born soul, which God breathed into the formed dust, but gave not to be drowned in a mass of flesh and blood, nor to be only as salt, to keep the body a while from rotting.

3. It is a constant labour. The sea rests sometimes, the carnal heart never: Isa. 57:20, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Lusts are ever craving, never say they have enough; they are rolling the stone to the top of the hill, which still comes down on them again and again, and creates new labour; see Psalm 78:18–20, 29, 30. Two things make it a continual labour. 1st, Continual disappointments. These they cannot miss, seeing there is no satisfaction to be had in the creatures; yet their soul still craves, hence no rest, but are urged on to work again: Isa. 57:10, "Thou art weary in the greatness of thy way, yet saidst thou not, There is no hope." Men are like the silly doves without heart, who still go to the same nest where they have been herried never so often before, and will even beg there, where they have got a thousand nay-says. 2dly, What is got in them enlarges the desire, instead of satisfying it; the more that lusts are fed, the more they require to maintain them. Sin is an insatiable tyrant; to labour in its service, is but to cast oil into the flame. The dropsy-thirst can never be quenched.

4. It is vain labour, they can never reach the end of it: Isa. 55:2, "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" They shall as soon fill a triangle with a circle, as the heart with such things; the grave shall sooner give back its dead, than the lusts of the heart say, It is enough. It is impossible to find satisfaction in these things, for they are not suitable to the soul, more than stones for the nourishment of the body. The body gets its nourishment from the earth, because it is of the earth; the soul is from heaven, and so its satisfaction must come from thence. The things of the world cannot satisfy the soul, because they have no word of divine appointment, to be the staff of that bread which nourishes it; without this, grass could no more satisfy the beasts, nor bread the hunger of man, than sand: Matth. 4:4, "Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." God has kept this as his own prerogative, to satisfy the soul, incommunicable to the creatures conjunctly or separately.

Lastly, It is notwithstanding costly labour; for time that is precious is spent on it, which men should husband well, Eph. 5:16, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." By time well improved, we might attain true happiness; time once gone can never be recalled. But, ah! what precious hours are cast away on these things, which might be improved in trading for heaven.—It is costly, because the gifts of the mind are thrown away on it. Reason makes us differ from the beasts, but by the abuse of it men make themselves worse than the beasts: Jer. 8:7, "Yea, the stork in the heaven, knoweth her appointed times: and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming: but my people know not the judgment of the Lord." Men's minds are employed not to know God, but other things; their choice also is not fixed upon him, their affections are bestowed on other things.—Finally, it is costly, because the outward good things of the body, and estate in the world, are bestowed upon it. Health and strength go in the pursuit of vanity, and in the service of their lusts, yea, are sacrificed many times on the altar of intemperance and sensuality. Riches, power, honours, as the feeding of the horse does,

make people kick against him who lays these things to their hands. Yea, to crown all, the soul itself is thrown away upon it: Matth. 16:26, "For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Men seeking vanity, lose what is most excellent; and it is dear bought that is purchased at that rate.—I shall now consider what is meant by,

II. A labouring in the law. And to this most of what has been said may be applied; and besides it may occur afterwards. I shall only say these two things anent it at present.

1. It is most hard labour, for it requires most exact obedience, under pain of the curse: Gal. 3:10, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." Nothing but perfect obedience is accepted, according to the law; and for the least failure, it dooms the sinner to death. Now, no man can perform this, and yet so foolish are men, that they think to please God with their works. Again,—it is hard, because the law neither promiseth nor giveth strength. God gave Adam strength to perform, he lost it, the law does not restore it; so that in this case they must make the brick, and no straw is laid to their hands. This makes hard work, and so, by the Spirit, it at length breaks the heart of the elect, and makes them die to the law, as a wife to a rigorous husband, Gal. 2:19.

2. It is a vain and useless labour. There are much pains, and yet no gain, in this labour. It is vain, in respect of the soul thriving; they that labour in the law do but sow their seed in the sand; all they reap is wind, which may puff them up, but cannot nourish. Why so many barren dry professors? but because they are not trading with Christ, but with the law. Men go to duties, and rest in them; the pipe is laid short of the fountain.—It is vain, in respect of acceptance with God. It is thankless work, for it supersedes the commandment to believe: John 6:29, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." It is a sad word, Rom. 9:31, 32, "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? because they sought it not by faith, but as

it were by the works of the law." Turtles were accepted on the altar at Jerusalem, when bullocks were rejected on those at Dan and Bethel.—Farther, it is vain, in respect of answering the demands of the law, Gal. 3:10. Our curtailed obedience will not answer the measuring reed of the law; it demands satisfaction for what is past, and perfect obedience for what is to come.—Finally, it is vain, in respect of salvation. The way to heaven by the first covenant is blocked up; the angel with the flaming sword guards it, Gal. 3:10. O sirs! duties are a sandy foundation, and great will be the fall of legal professors.—Let us inquire,

IV. Why sinners labour in these things for satisfaction, and do not come to Christ?—They do so because,

1. They have lost God, the fountain of happiness, and therefore they seek to squeeze it out of the creatures: Eph. 2:12, "Having no hope, and without God in the world." For, says God, Jer. 2:13, "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters." The sun is gone down upon them, and therefore they light their candles, and compass themselves with their own sparks; for the empty soul must have something to feed on. The prodigal wanted bread, and therefore fed on husks. Doves' dung is precious, when there is no bread in Samaria.—Sinners labour in these things,

2. Because, by the power of a strong delusion, they still expect satisfaction from them; they are represented in a magnifying glass, as the forbidden fruit was to our first parents, Gen. 3:5, 6. That delusion took with them, is conveyed to their posterity, and will never be cured till grace do it. Hence men, though they meet with a thousand disappointments in these things, yet still from now hopes they renew the attempt.—Sinners labour thus,

3. Because these things are most suitable to the corrupt nature: Rom. 8:5, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh." Fishes swim in the river, and care not for the most pleasant meadow; swine prefer the dunghill to a palace; because everything seeks its

like. Lusts must be nourished with these; even the way of the law, though just and good in itself, is the way that agrees best with self: Rom. 3:27, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith? Sinners are engaged in this labour,

4. Because they know no better. Christ is a hidden Christ to men in their natural estate; they see not his glory, fulness, and excellency; they say, as in Song 5:9, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" The fowl scrapes by the jewels, and takes up a corn beside them, because it knows not their worth: 1 Pet. 2:7, Unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious, but unto them which be disobedient, the stone the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them that stumble at the word, being disobedient."—Sinners continue this labour,

Lastly, Because men naturally are enemies to the way of salvation by Jesus Christ.—I now come,

V. To make some practical improvement of the whole.

Allow me, then, to expostulate with you in the most earnest manner upon this subject. Why spend you your labour for that which satisfieth not? Isa. 55:2. Seeing you would labour, will you not change your work, and labour in God's way, that ye may enter into his rest? It is a wearisome labour that all out of Christ are engaged in. I would have you, then, to give it over, and engage in the service of Christ. I come in his name, to bid you, to beseech you, to cease from this labour. I have these things to say, in regard to it.

1. It is a labour God never put in your hands, but it proceeds from the devil, and a corrupt heart, who yoked you to that work of seeking your happiness in the creatures; in lusts, or in the law, and not in God. To this some may plead, Not guilty! "We know (say such) the world is but a vain thing, and we place our chief happiness in God.



God forbid we should be labouring in any such way!" For your conviction, however, I must speak a few things. You may be deceived; many are as busy as their hands can be at that work, and yet say that they are not: Prov. 30, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness."—I would inquire at you,

(1.) Who loosed you from this labour? Were you never at it? If you think so, you miserably deceive yourselves, Eph. 2:3, already quoted. Since Adam went from God, to pluck his happiness off the forbidden tree, all mankind have followed his steps, and abide at the work, till converting grace loose them. What is conversion, but a turning to God, from whom we are naturally turned away? Alas! there are few converts!—I inquire,

(2.) Was you ever heartily wearied of this labour, seeing your folly in abiding so long with it? Was it ever a heavy task, that you was made to groan out under? All are welcome to Christ that will come, but none will ever give over their labour till they be brought to this. God must bring the soul to a holy despair in this way, ere it be given over, Hos. 2:6, 7. And then the soul, having run itself out of breath, can neither get satisfaction in the creatures, nor go to God; thus it leaves the pursuit, and sits down with that, Jer. 31:18, "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." John 6:44, "No man can come unto me, except the Father who sent me draw him."—I inquire,

(3.) How are you kept from returning to this labour? If you have left it, it will not be without a struggle. There is a natural bias in the hearts of all men this way. Alas! the strong man keeps the house with the greater part; they have no struggle with the world, neither how to get it, nor how to keep it out of the heart.—I inquire,

(4.) Whence is it your greatest dissatisfaction proceeds, from the world's misgiving with you, or God's hiding his face from you? from

your disappointments in the world, or at the throne of grace? Where the disappointment goes deepest, the expectations have been greatest: "Hope deferred makes the heart sick;" an infallible evidence that most men are at this work. Men will not be dissatisfied for missing a thing, where they were not to find it.—I inquire,

(5.) Where do you find your greatest satisfaction and pleasure, if we may call it so? In the enjoyment of God, or of the world, or in getting the cravings of your lusts answered? Ah! there are not a few, from whom, if the world's joy was turned away, that would not have a blythe hour. They never found as much sweetness in the benefits of the covenant, as in those of the world.

(6.) If you be not labouring thus, what are you doing then? There is not, and there cannot be, an idle soul among us. If the devil has us not, God has us at work; one of the two must. These things must bring convictions to our breasts.

Allow me still farther to expostulate with you. Why spend you your labour for that which satisfieth not? The labour you are engaged in is a thankless labour; God will not thank you for it; he says, "Who hath required this at your hands?" the devil pays you the wages which are due to it, which are death, Rom. 6:23. He hath no better to give. Besides this, the labour in which you are engaged, is a labouring against God: Jer. 2:13, "Having forsaken the fountain of living waters, ye have hewed out for yourselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." Ye are thus setting the creature in the room of God, and accordingly God is against you in this labour, so that you can never get what you are seeking from it. Oh! then be exhorted to cease from, to give up with this labour. To prevail with you in doing this, I would lay before you the following motives.

1. Why will ye toil so to bring out of the creatures what is not in them? Nothing but God himself is commensurable to the desires of the soul; no man ever saw or will see an end of his desires, till they are swallowed up in God himself. When the creatures were at their

best, there was the forbidden tree in paradise to teach man his happiness was not in them. How much more now, when they are so much worse! Isa. 28:20, "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it."

2. How can ye think to find rest in that which is restless in itself? are not all things here unstable as water, and so cannot excel? Unchangeableness is a necessary property of that which makes truly happy, for otherwise the very fear of losing it mars the conceived happiness. Will we seek our rest in vanity, fill our hands with the wind, sit easy on the rolling waves, or on the top of a wheel that is in continual motion?

3. Did you ever meet with that among creature enjoyments, that was every way as ye would have had it? Dissatisfaction will proceed from any defect, however small, as it was with Haman, Esth. 5:13; but satisfaction requires an universal concurrence of all desirables in the thing that must satisfy; So it is, Song 5:16, "He is altogether lovely." Let a man turn over the whole creation for satisfaction, let all be cast into his lap, yet he will find, as in Job 20:22, "In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits." Who ever got the rose that wanted the prickles? the sweetness in any of them, that wanted a mixture of bitterness?

4. Do not the disappointment of hopes necessarily cleave to them all? They promise more when afar off, than they afford when they are come near. Mountains afar off become mole-hills when near; like a ball of snow, the more closely it is held, it will grow the less.

5. Has not the sap been squeezed out of enjoyments to thee between the hand and the mouth? Hos. 9:2, "The floor and the wine-press shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her." Have you not had fair prospects that have been blasted in a moment, ere you ever tasted of them? As if they had appeared for no other end, but to raise the appetite that was not to be laid with them.

6. Has not the loss of them often brought greater sorrow than ever the having of them gave joy: while God has taken away the desire of thine eyes, thy choice comforts. Wert thou not more grieved then, than thou wert happy before?

7. Has not that wherein thou hast expected the greatest comfort turned out to be the greatest cross? This was the case with Rachel, who said to Jacob, "Give me children, else I die," Gen. 31 compare Gen. 35:16–20. She got children, and death instantly followed.

8. Have not signal mercies, as well as judgments, brought a sting along with them, while conscience has been whispering unto thee, that God was thine enemy.

9. Was ever thy heart truly at rest in these things, so that thou couldst say thou desirest no more? Nay, but the more of these, the more are they desired.

10. There is another way to come at your purpose. Come to Christ, and he will give you rest. This is a short way, for all is in him; whatever perfections are scattered up and down amongst the creatures, all is in him, and infinitely more. It is a sure way, for you will not miss happiness if you come to him.

I would once more expostulate with you. Why do you spend your labour for that which satisfieth not? I would beseech you, in the most earnest manner, not only to cease from, to give up with, your present unpleasant and unprofitable labour, but also to change your labour; I would have you, not only to depart from evil, but even to do good; I would call upon you to engage in the service of a new master, and run in the way of his commandments. You are labouring, you must be labouring, one way or other; will you not then engage in the labour of true religion, real godliness? If we must serve, surely it is better to serve Christ than the devil. The labour that there is in religion affrights the world at it; but why should it, seeing their labour is so great while out of Christ? Consider,

1. We are not calling you from idleness to working, but from labour to labour. And even if we were still to be slaves, better be so to God than to the devil. What will men say to Christ at the last day, who will be at pains in their lusts, but at none in holiness, that will bear a yoke, but not Christ's yoke?

2. We call you, not from one base labour to another, but from a base to an honourable work. Should one be called from the stone-barrow to be a king's cup-bearer, it were not comparable to what is proposed.—1. They will have a more honourable master.—2. More honourable fellow-labourers, for the angels serve him.—3. More honourable work, God himself is glorious in holiness.—4. A more honourable office; from being slaves to the devil, they are made kings and priests unto God.

3. We call upon you from vain labour, to that which shall be prosperous and successful; you are labouring for happiness there, where you will never get it, but here are full breasts; you are in vain striking at the flinty rock for water, here is an open fountain, where none ever went away disappointed.

4. We call you from a barren labour, where you will get nothing but sorrow to take away with you, to a labour which, when you have finished your works, will follow you, Rev. 14:13. Ah! miserable is your present labour, Isa. 59:5, 6. The spider wastes its bowels to spin its web, and when all is done, one stroke of the besom sweeps all away; it is either killed in its web, or drawn by it as a rope unto death; so that it doth but spin its winding-sheet, or plait the rope for itself. Consider,

5. That the worst which can be made of it is, that religion is hard labour. But this should be no prejudice against it with you, seeing, as has been said, the labour out of Christ is also hard labour. But to cast the balance, observe,

(1.) If it is hard labour, it is worth the pains, the other is not so, for, Prov. 2:4, 5, "If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." There is hard labour in digging stones, as well as in digging for gold; nay, it is hard labour digging disappointments, that which is not; whereas the gain of the other is precious and certain.—1. The promise, Prov. 8:21, "That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures."—2. The experience of all the labourers confirms the certainty of it: "I (God) said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain."

(2.) If it is hard labour, it is short; if the work be sore, yet it is not longsome. You shall soon rest from your labours: Rev. 14:13. He that is tired with his journey, his spirits will revive when near the end. The shadow of the evening makes the labourer work heartily, for loosing-time is at hand. The trials, afflictions, weeping, &c. of the saints, endure but for a moment. On the other hand, the labour of other persons knows no end; no rest abides them, but an everlasting toil under wrath that never ends.

6. We call you from a hard to an easy labour: "My yoke is easy;" Christ has said it, we must believe it. But to clear it, consider for this time, only these two things.

(1.) All the difficulties in religion arise from that active corruption which is in men, putting them to labour in their lusts and in the law: Matth. 11:12, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Violence and force, not with God, he opposeth us not, but with our own corruptions. And in this sense only the scripture holds out the labour of religion to be hard. But men do not state the matter fairly. Lay a ton-weight upon a rolling stone, certainly it is harder to roll both together than the stone alone; but is the stone therefore lighter than the ton-weight? Take them separately, and absolutely, the labour in religion is easy, the other hard. Men cannot bear Christ's burden. Why? because they still keep

on the devil's burden, and they cannot bear the one above the other; that is not fair. Lay off the one, take up the other; see which is lightest. A meek and a passionate man, which of them has the hardest task in bearing an affront? the sober man, or the drunkard? the worldly man, or he that lives above the world? The more power grace has, the more easy; the more power lusts have, the more hard is the labour.

(2.) There is true help in the one, not in the other.—The labour in religion has outward helps; the labourers are not helpless, they have a cloud of witnesses gone before them, whom they may see with their crowns upon their heads, Heb. 12:1. Ye are not the forlorn in hope. Armies of saints bare stormed heaven before you and have left it behind them that the work is possible and the reward certain. The other have not this; if they get satisfaction in their lusts, they are the first. They see thousands before them, who have laboured as hard as they, disappointed, and are lain down in sorrow.—This labour has inward helps. Christ bears the heaviest part of his own yoke; he gives strength, he works the will for the work; and the work for us, when we have the will: Phil. 2:13, "For it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Isa. 26:12, "Thou also hast wrought all our works in us." The others have not. True, they have that within them which puts them on to this labour, but the more of the one, the harder is the other, as the wearied beast is goaded by the spur, and worn out by their being beaten when no straw is allowed them. But where is the help to work satisfaction and happiness out of the creatures, or from the law?

7. We call you from a wearisome to a lightsome pleasant labour. I have proved the first; for the last, see Prov. 3:17, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." But let us hear what can be said for both.

(1.) Is there much pleasure in sin? Ans. In some there is none. What pleasure has the passionate man, that kindles a fire in his own bosom? What pleasure has the envious, that gnaws himself like a

serpent for the good that others enjoy? What pleasure has the discontented, that is his own executioner. Consider the calm of spirit that the contrary graces bring, and judge who has the better part.—As for those sins in which pleasure is found,

[1.] It is common to them with these creatures with whom they will not desire to be ranked. For these things that gratify men's sensual appetite are common to them with beasts, as gluttony, drunkenness, filthiness, &c. A sow can drink, and be as drunk as the greatest drunkard, and so on. And they have the better of them, as being under no law, and therefore they can go the full length of their appetite.—2. They do it without remorse.—3. They find satisfaction in these things, seeing they are not capable of desiring greater things. Now, put these together, where is the pleasure? Is it not surpassed by the pain? As to the desires of the mind, these are common to them with devils. The greatest swearer, liar, and proud opposer of religion, have the trade but from the second hand. The devil can satisfy his curiosity better than the most curious, reason more closely against religion than any atheist. Only obstinate despisers of reproof and mockers surpass the devil, for the devils believe and tremble: whereas for a time they do not.

(2.) The pleasure is but momentary, the pain follows hard at the heels, and is eternal. What pleasure can be devised, for which a man would hold his finger over a burning candle for a quarter of an hour? how much more dreadful to endure eternal burnings!

(3.) The struggle that conscience makes against corruption, brings more torment than that which corruption makes against grace. Conscience is more dreadfully armed than corruption; there is here as much difference as there is betwixt the hand of God and the hand of the devil. See now what becomes of the pleasure!

(2.) The labour in religion is truly pleasant. It is truly holy labour; for of that we speak, and scripture-testimony proves its pleasantness; see Prov. 3:17, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths



are peace." Ask David, and he will tell you, in Psalm 84; Paul, in 2 Cor. 12:10.

(1.) It is a labour suited to the nature of the soul, the better part, their divine supernatural nature, 2 Pet. 1:4. Believers are partakers of a divine nature. This must needs create ease and delight; the stream easily flows from the fountain; birds with pleasure fly in the air. The reason of the difficulty in religion to many is, they are out of their element when engaged in it.

(2.) Therein the soul carries on a trade with heaven; entertains communion with God, through the Spirit of Christ, by a mutual intercourse of grace and duty, the soul receiving influences, and returning them again in duties: as the rain falls on the earth freely, so the waters run freely toward the sea again.

(3.) Great peace of conscience usually attends this; and the more labour, the more peace: Psal. 119:165, "Great peace have they who love thy law." Here is a feast which nothing but sin mars: 2 Cor. 1:12, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Men cannot take it from us, John 14:27.

(4.) Sometimes they have great manifestations of Christ, evidences of the Lord's love raising a high spring-tide of joy in their souls, greater than that which the whole congregation of the world enjoys, Psalm 4:6, 7. It is joy unspeakable, and full of glory, 1 Pet. 1:8.

(5.) It is a lightsome way they walk in, whereas the other is darksome; the light of the Lord's word shines in it. The Mahomedans have a tradition, that Moses' law and Christ's gospel were written first with ink made of pure light. Sure the scripture points out duty, as if it were written with a sunbeam.

8. We call you from a labour against yourselves, to a labour for your advantage. We must either do the work of God or the devil. Every sin

is a new impediment in your way to heaven, a new stone laid on the wall of separation. What a mad thing is it to be working out our damnation, instead of our own salvation!

9. We call you not to more, but to other labour. We are all laborious creatures; the greatest idler is in some sort busy. Paul calls even them that work not at all, busy bodies, 2 Thes. 3:11. Our life is nothing but a continual succession of actions, even as the fire is ever burning, and the rivers running. It is in some respect impossible to do more than we do; the watch runs as fast when wrong as when right. Why may we not then keep the highway while we are travelling.—Consider,

10. That the same pains that men are at to ruin themselves, might possibly serve to save them. There are difficulties in the way of sin as well as of religion. Does not sin oftentimes bereave men of their night's rest? Are they more disturbed when communing with their own souls, and with God? Do not men draw sin as with cart-ropes? Isa. 5:18. Why might not labour be employed in drawing the heart to God? If men would but change, and suck as greedily and incessantly at the breasts of God's consolations, as they do of the creatures, how happy would they be!

Lastly, Consider that the labour in religion is not greater, nay, it is less than in sin, for religion contracts our work to one thing: Luke 10:41, 42, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful." Sinners have many lusts to please, the saints have but one God to please; the work of religion is all of a piece, sin not so. There is a sweet harmony betwixt all the graces and all the duties of religion. But lusts are quite contrary, and as they war against grace, so against one another, James 4:1, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not from hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" So that the sinner is dragged by one lust one way, by another, another. And how hard is it to serve contrary masters!

## SERMON 3

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. MATTH. 11:28

I now proceed to the consideration of

Doctrine II. That all who are out of Christ, are under an heavy burden, which, by all their labour, they cannot shake off.

In illustrating of which, I shall only,

I. Offer a few observations.

II. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to offer a few observations; such as,

1. That Satan has a load on all out of Christ; it is a load of sin; Isa. 1:4, "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity." This load is twofold:

1st, A load of guilt, Gen. 4:13, "And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear," (Heb. "sin.") Guilt is the heaviest load ever was on the shoulders of men or angels. The scriptures hold it forth,

(1.) As debt. He that is in debt is under a burden. It is the worst of debts, we cannot pay it, nor escape the hands of our creditor; yea, we deny the debt, care not for count and reckoning, we wave our creditor as much as we can; so it stands uncanceled. But it is a debt that must be paid: 2 Thess. 1:9, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." They shall pay what justice demands.—It is represented,

(2.) As a yoke tied fast on the sinner's neck; hence pardon is called a loosing of it, guilt being, as it were, cords of wrath, whereby the sinner is bound over to God's wrath. Pardon is also called remission or relaxation: Rom. 3:25, "To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."—It is pointed out,

(3.) As a burden: Hos. 14:2, "Take away all iniquity." Take away, namely, as a burden off a man's back. Hence Christ is said to have borne our sins, the burden of the elect's guilt being laid on his back. What a heavy load is it! (1.) It makes the whole creation groan, Rom. 8:22. It caused them take their pains five thousand years since, and they are not yet delivered of their burden. All the groans that ever men gave on earth and in hell were under this burden; it sunk the whole world into ruin: "Christ took our nature," to prevent us going down to the pit, Heb. 2:16; (Greek, "caught hold"), as of a drowning man, not of the whole seed of Adam, for great part of it fell to the ground, but of the seed of Abraham, the elect. (2.) This load sunk the fallen angels, made them fall as stars from heaven to the bottomless pit. And what a load was it to Christ, that made him sweat as it were great drops of blood, that made him groan and die!—It is,

2dly, A load of servitude to lusts, which of themselves are heavy burdens; the very remainder of which made the apostle groan: Rom. 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" What greater burden can be, than for a man to have a swarm of unmortified corruptions hanging about him, whose cravings he is still obliged to answer. This is that which creates that weary labour, of which we have already spoken; better a man were burdened with serpents sticking in his flesh, than with these.—I observe,

2. The law has a load on the Christless sinner; and that,

(1.) A load of duties, as great and numerous as the commandment, which is exceeding broad, can lay on. Though they perform them not,

yet they are bound upon them by the commandment: and they shall sooner dissolve the whole fabric of the world, than make void this commandment. This is a heavy load. True, they that are in Christ have a yoke of duties laid on them, but not by the law, but by Christ. The difference is great; the law exacts perfect obedience, but gives no strength; Christ, when claiming obedience to his law, gives strength for the performance, which makes it an easy obedience.—There is,

(2.) A load of curses: Gal. 3:10, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." Every commandment of the law is fenced with a curse, denounced against the breakers of it. How great must be the load, then, where every action is a sin, and every sin brings a curse! This is a heavy load, that makes the earth reel to and fro, like a drunkard, under the weight of it.—I observe,

3. That God has a load on the Christless sinner, that is, of wrath: Eph. 2:3, "And were by nature children of wrath." This is an abiding load: John 3:36, "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." This load is far heavier than mountains of brass; it is weightier than can be expressed.

II. I am now to make some practical improvement. From what has been said, I infer,

I. That every one must bear his own burden. There is no getting through the world with an even-up back. If people will not take up Christ's burden, they will bear a heavier one; if they will not be Christ's servants, they must be slaves to their lusts; if they will not take on the yoke of holiness, they shall bear a load of wrath; if people will still slip the yoke of Christ, God will wreathe the yoke of their transgressions about their neck, that they shall not get shaken off. We have given sorry entertainment to Christ's burden: it is too likely we may come to get one of another sort. The entertainment we have given to Christ's burden is like to wreathe a threefold yoke about our necks. For,

(1.) We have had little taste for the preaching of Christ, the great mysteries of the gospel. The preaching of sin and duty, as they call it, has been more desired than the preaching of the vitals of religion. I fear it be the plague of the generation, to get such preaching of sin and duty, as that the doctrine of Christ and free grace fall through between the two, and the gospel be turned into a system of morality with us.

(2.) We have little valued pure worship, it has been a burden to us, and we have ground to fear a burden of another sort, the trash of men's inventions in God's worship. There is an attempt already made to set up Dagon by the ark of God; and God knows where it may stop. If the ceremonies appointed by God himself were such, Acts 15:10, "as neither our fathers nor we were able to bear, what must they be that are laid on by men?"

(3.) God took the yoke of the enemy's oppression off our necks, for which we have been very unthankful. It is very like that God intends to lay it on again, that we may know the worth of our despised mercy: Hos. 11:4, 5, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love, and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return."— We may hence lament,

2. The case of the generation living without Christ, heavy laden, but not sensible of their burden, Isa. 1:4; compare ver. 3, both already quoted. Sin sits light upon people, they reign as kings without Christ; the law's authority does not draw them away to Christ; and though wrath lies heavy, they feel it not. Oh! what is the matter? They never feel the weight of it, nor once seriously put the question to themselves, What shall we do to be saved? They are taken up with so many things, that their soul's case cannot come into their minds. Again, they have a dead soul, and a stupid conscience, they complain not. Men's spiritual senses are bound up, and a seared conscience, got by sinning over the belly of daily warnings, is the plague of the

generation. Well, but when conscience is awakened, people will find their sores; when drops of wrath fall on the conscience, it will make a fearful hissing: Isa. 33:14, "The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites; who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"—I only exhort you,

3. To labour to be sensible of your burden, and to be concerned to get rid of it. Is there not a burden of sin upon your backs? mind that you have to do with it.—Consider, That heaven's gate is strait, and will not let in a man with a burden of unpardoned, unmortified sin on his back. The wide gate is that which only will afford room for such. Off it must be, or they will never see heaven.—Consider again, all that they can do will not shake it off, the bonds of iniquity are stronger than to be broken with their weak arms; all the moisture of their bodies, dissolved into tears, will not wash it off.—Consider, finally, it will never fall off of its own accord. Age coming on may wear off the violence of some lusts, but the guilt remains, and the root of sin. Death itself will not put it off, for it will lie down, and also rise with you, and cleave to you through eternity.

What shall we do then? What more proper than come to Christ? He, and he only, can ease you of your burden. This brings us forward to the invitation itself: "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden;" which we have expressed in

DOCT. III. That whatever sinful and vain labours sinners are engaged in, whatever be the loads which are lying on them, they are welcome to Christ; he calls them to come to him, and in coming they shall obtain rest.—Or more shortly thus:—

The devil's drudges and burden-bearers, even the worst of them, are welcome to come to Christ, and shall find rest in him.—In opening which, I shall in general shew,

I. What is meant by coming to Christ.

II. I shall more particularly attempt to unfold the import of the invitation, in the several points deducible from the text.

III. I shall consider what is the rest which Christ promises, and will give to such as come to him.

IV. I shall make some practical improvement.

I. I shall show what in general is meant by coming to Christ. To come to Christ is to believe on him: John 6:35, "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Unbelief is the soul's departing, not from a living law, but from the living God, Heb. 3:12. Christ is the Lord, God is in him, he calls sinners to come to him; faith answers the call, and so brings back the soul to God in Christ. Now, the scripture holds forth Christ many ways answering to this notion of coming to him by faith. And that you may see your privilege and call, I shall hold forth some of these to you.

1. The devil's drudges and burden-bearers are welcome to Christ, as the great gift of the Father to sinners, to come and take it: John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The world was broken by Adam; God sends Christ as an up-making gift, and the worst of you are welcome to him, yea, he bodes (urges) himself upon you. Come to him, then, ye broken impoverished souls, that have nothing left you but poverty, wants, and debt.—Such are to come to him,

2. As the great Physician of souls: Matth. 9:12, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Christ in the gospel comes into the world as to an hospital of sin-sick souls, ready to administer a cure to those that will come to him for it. Our diseases are many, all of them deadly, but he is willing and able to cure them all. He is lifted up on the pole of the gospel, and says, "Look unto me,



and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else," Isa. 45:22.—Such should come to him,

3. As the satisfying food of the soul: Isa. 55:1–3, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." The soul is an empty thing, and has hungry and thirsty desires to be satisfied; the creatures cannot satisfy, Christ can: John 6:35, "My flesh, (says he,) is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." God has made a feast of fat things in Christ, in him all the cravings of the soul may be satisfied; there are no angels to guard the tree of life; no seal on this fountain: Zech. 13:1, "In that day, there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." There is no inclosure about this flower of glory, Cant. 2:1. Here is the carcase,—where are the eagles that should gather together?—Such come to Christ,

4. As one on whom they may rest: Song 8:5, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?" We are not able to do our own torn, but on him we should rely; 2 Chron. 16:8. "Because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered thine enemies into thine hand." Guilt mates the mind in a fluctating condition. By coming to Jesus we are stayed, as is a ship at anchor. In, or from ourselves, we have nothing for justification and sanctification. God has laid help upon one that is mighty; the weary soul is welcome to rest in him.—Such come to him,

5. As one on whom they may cast their burdens: Psalm 55:22, "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." The soul is heavy laden, while out of Christ: Jesus holds out the everlasting arms,

Deut, 33:27, faith settles down on them, casting the soul's burden upon them; "Come (says he) with all your misery, debts, beggary, and wants, I have shoulders to bear them all; I will take on the burden, ye shall get rest." He is content to marry the poor widow.—Such come to him,

6. As one in whom they may find refuge: Heb. 6:18, "Who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us." The law, as the avenger of blood, pursues the soul. Christ is that city of refuge, where none can have power against them. The gates are never shut; here is a refuge from the law, from justice, and from the revenging wrath of God. Here is shelter under the wings of Christ: how, willing is he to gather his people, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!—Such come to him,

7. As one in whom the soul may at length find rest: Psalm 37:7, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." The soul out of Christ is in a restless state, still shifting from one creature to another, not finding content in any. But by coming to Christ, the soul takes up its eternal rest in him, and he becomes a covering of the eyes to it. We are like men in a fever, still changing beds; like the dove out of the ark, we have no rest, till we come to Christ. Such come to Christ,

8. As a husband: Matth. 22:4, "All things are ready, come unto the marriage. Your Maker is content to be your husband, Psalm 45:10. Ministers are sent, as Abraham's servant, to seek a spouse for Christ. He is willing to match with the worst, the meanest of you; he seeks no dowry; he is the richest, the most honourable, the most tender and loving husband.—Such come to Christ.

Lastly, As a powerful deliverer. Christ stands at our prison doors, as in Isa. 61:1, "proclaiming liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." All who come to him, as in 2 Cor. 8:5, first give their ownelves unto the Lord. Whosoever will come to Jesus, must give up themselves to him. It is the work of faith, to give up the soul to Christ, that he may save it, that he may open the

prison doors, take the prey from the mighty, and deliver the lawful captive.

## SERMON 4

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. MATTH. 11:28

HAVING very briefly considered what it is to come to Christ, by pointing out under what characters we are to come to him, and the consequent improvement which this coming denotes, in order to explain the invitation here given more particularly, I go on, as was proposed,

II. To unfold its import, viewed in the several parts of which the text consists.

You will accordingly observe, that there is in the text, the characters invited,—the "labouring and heavy laden;" there is the invitation itself, "Come unto me;" by whom the invitation is given, by Christ; and the encouragement proposed to their complying with it, "I will give you rest."—All these considered complexly, in our view, import the following things.

1. That all men naturally are at a distance from God; if it were not so, they needed not be bid come. This is not a distance of place, but a relative distance, a distance of opposition, which lies in these three things.,

(1.) The original union between God and man is blown up; they were united in a covenant of works, whereby they had common friends and enemies. This was the first marriage-covenant, but Adam broke it, and so broke off from God. Hence God drove him out of paradise,

as a divorced woman out of the house of her husband, spoiled of all her ornaments.

(2.) The hearts of men are naturally turned from God, and are a mass of enmity against him: Rom. 8:7, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." There is a perfect contrariety betwixt the nature of God and ours. That first sin of Adam has been a little leaven, that hath quite soured the whole lump of mankind: so that we are not only away, but far off from the Lord: Eph. 2:13, "Without God in the world."

(3.) The soul is still going farther and farther from God in the whole of our life, while in that state: Heb. 3:12, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Every sin is a step farther from God; therefore the gospel-call is after them that are running away, that they may return to the Lord. We are on the road leading to destruction, and moving very swiftly, as the water, the more it runs, the farther it is removed from the fountain-head whence it came.

From what has been now observed, we may learn the sinfulness and misery of our natural state. It is our duty and privilege to be near God; to be far from him must then be our sin and misery. No wonder, then, we be dead, that we can do no good while in this state of separation from God. God also is departed from us, Jer. 6:7. Will not this end in eternal separation, if we return not?—The invitation imports,

2. That if you have a mind to meet and unite with God again, you must meet with him in Christ, and unite with God in him. "All things (says Jesus) are delivered unto me of my Father. Come therefore unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Would you have peace, pardon, and every blessing? you must come to him for it. God has condescended so far to forward the meeting, that he has come down, and dwelt in the flesh of Christ, there to wait sinners, to promote their meeting with him: 2 Cor. 5:19,

"God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." He needed not to have come so far, but of his own free grace he has done it; but he will never come farther. There, then, and only there, sinners may meet him; God is in him, and is there to make up the peace through him; and if you will not come to him, and meet God there, you shall never see his face in peace.—Here it may be proper to shew, that this is God's contrivance for re-uniting with sinners that are by sin far from him; and that there is no other way. This appears,

(1.) From plain scripture-testimony: John 14:6, "I (said Jesus) am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me." He is the great Secretary of heaven, by whom alone you can be brought into the King's presence: Eph. 2:18, "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." The keys of the house of David hang at his girdle.

(2.) If there were any other way of coming to God again, it behoved to be one of these two: either, 1st, By satisfying the law according to the first covenant; but that is impossible for us, seeing we cannot give perfect obedience, nor satisfy justice for the sins we are guilty of, Gal. 3:10, often quoted: Or, 2dly, in a way of mere mercy, for mercy's sake. But this cannot be: for,—The justice of God necessarily requires satisfaction, and God will not dispense his mercy in prejudice of his justice: Psalm 5:5, "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight, and thou hatest all the workers of iniquity." One part of the character of God is, that "he will by no means clear the guilty," namely, without satisfaction. The law is already made, fenced with threatenings of eternal wrath, and it is broken; God's justice and truth are both, in consequence, engaged to see the threatening accomplished.—Again, God's last will and testament is already made, and sealed by the death of his Son, but there is no such way proposed in it; no mercy but in Christ; yea, God has declared they shall have no mercy that come not to Christ: Matth. 16:16, "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."—Moreover, the very providing of this way makes it evident that there is no other. Were there another way of bringing sinners to God,

would not an infinitely wise God, and a loving Father, have fetched a compass, and dispensed with the blood of his own Son? If any could have been spared, it might have been expected that He would; but, Rom. 8:32, "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all."—Finally, ever since Adam was driven out of paradise, this has been held forth as the only way, as in the first promise. Abel's acceptance was by it, Heb. 11:4. Jesus is the only propitiatory, where God speaks in mercy to sinners.

Here I might also shew, what a suitable contrivance this is, for the purpose of uniting God and sinners.—It is most suitable: For,

1. It is suited to God's honour, the glory of his divine perfections: Heb. 2:10, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many souls unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." God, with the safety of his honour, may be reconciled to the worst of sinners in Christ; yea, the glory of all his perfections shines forth most illustriously in the mystery of Christ; there would be no safety in this plan, if it were not so.

2. It is suited to the comfort of the sinner, the contrivance being such, that it answers all the necessities of the sinner: Rev. 3:18, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, thou then mayest see." So that the soul may confidently come to God by Christ, who can do such things for it.

Let us more particularly consider this contrivance of the sinner's coming to, and uniting with God, by coming to Christ.—With this view, we observe,

1. That Christ is a substantial Mediator, partaking of both natures. He is the Father's fellow, yet bone of our bone. The worst of men are sibber\* to heaven than the fallen angels; for "Jesus took not upon

him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." Here is the true ladder, the foot of which, his humanity, is set on earth, the top of which, his divinity, reaching to heaven, Gen. 28 above which the Lord stands making the covenant. If it consisted with the honour of God, for the divine nature to take into personal union with itself the human nature, it is equally consistent to take men into mystical union with the divine person of our Immanuel, upon this foundation. And when sinners see the first, they are encouraged to look for the second in Christ.

1. In Christ justice is satisfied: He said, "It is finished." In him God has presented to him a sacrifice to offended justice, a satisfaction to his law. God exacted, and he answered, till the utmost farthing was paid: Gal. 3:13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us;" and he got up the discharge. The sinner has in him a defence against justice, an everlasting righteousness, in which God may behold the sinner, and be well pleased with him, and the sinner may see God, and yet live. Mercy has a free vent in him, and pardons run freely through his blood. "We observe,

3. That the covenant is made with him in his blood; and all the promises of the covenant, all the benefits of it, sinners have at the second hand, Gal. 3:16. God has laid up all in him: 2 Cor. 1:20, "For all the promises of God in him, are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God by us." Sinners are to come to him for saving blessings, and to take them from him as the purchase of his blood: John 5:22. Our righteousness, pardon, peace, are all in him, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. 1:30. Grace is in him, "for of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," John 1:16. Glory is from him: "The Lord will give grace and glory."

4. By this means, the grace of God is exalted. It is to the praise of the glory of his grace. This is necessary for the glory of God in the second

covenant, and for the sinner's comfort, which could not be promoted nor secured except in this way.

5. Here the matter is made sure; God is sure of the sinner, and the sinner sure of his union with God: such as are built upon this foundation, made members of him, Jesus will lose none of them. From what has been stated, I would infer,

(1.) That all who come to Christ shall come back to the state of union and communion with God, through him who knits heaven and earth, rent asunder by Adam's sin. Let your sins be never so great, these shall not stop it, for the cry of his blood is louder in God's ears, than that of our sins.—Infer,

(2.) That they that never come to Christ, shall never see God in mercy. Meet they may, but it will be a sad meeting, a meeting as of a malefactor with an inexorable judge, dry stubble with consuming fire, where our leaf will be as rottenness, and the blossoms of Christless duties go up as dust.

Thus you see there is but one door to God; but what if it be shut? No; it is open. For the invitation imports,

3. That sinners are welcome to come to Christ, that they may unite with God by him; Christ is ready to receive you on your coming.—As to this, consider,

(1.) Christ has made a long journey to meet with sinners. What brought him out of the Father's bosom into the world, but to bring sinners to himself, and so back to God again? What was the errand of the great Shepherd, but to seek them, even them that were straying on the mountains of vanity? Luke 19, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."—Consider,

(2.) How dear it cost him to purchase your union with God by him, 2 Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Though ye



should little value his blood, he will not undervalue it himself; for sinners it was shed, and will he not welcome the reward of it, the fruit of the travail of his soul? Why were his arms stretched on a cross, and his side pierced through, but that he might open up our way to God?—Consider,

(3.) How near lost sinners lay to Christ's heart, that he would refuse no hardship, in order that he might see the travail of his soul. His love was ancient love; from eternity, "his delights were with the sons of men," Prov. 8:31; see his choice, Heb. 12:2; and therefore, when he was to suffer, his heart was upon the work: Luke 12:50, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" Jacob's love to Rachel shewed itself by his long service for her, which seemed to him but a few days.—Consider,

(4.) Why has he set up a ministry in the world, but to bring sinners to himself? Matth. 22:3, "And he sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding." He would not have left ambassadors to treat with sinners in his name, if he were not willing to receive them, nay, were he not anxious that they should come to him.—Consider,

(5.) He heartily invites you to come to him; as in the text; in Isa. 55:1, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price;" and in Rev. 3:2, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." These invitations look not like one who cares not whether sinners come or not, far less like one who is not willing to receive them. Consider,

(6.) The earnestness of the invitations; he deals with sinners as one that will not take a nay-say: Luke 14:23, "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." He not only knocks, but stands and knocks: strives with sinners by his word, his providences, and the motions of his Spirit; answers their objections, Isa. 55:1, and

downwards; while none can refuse, but those that rush wilfully on in their ruin; as in Ezek. 33:11, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your wicked ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Consider,

(7.) How he complains of these that will not come: John 5:40, "And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." "He speaks as one that has been working in vain: Isa. 49:4, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." He complains of Jerusalem, Matth. 23:37; yea, he weeps over obstinate incorrigible sinners; Luke 19:41, 42, "And when he came near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." Sure he has lost no bowels of compassion by going to heaven; they flow out as freely and tenderly as ever.— Consider,

(8.) He commands sinners to come to him. The invitations are all commands; they are most peremptory: 1 John 3:23, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ." If you do it not, you can do nothing that will please him: John 6:29, "Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." And he leaves it on us with the most dreadful certification: Mark 16:16, "He that believeth not shall be damned." And hence it follows, that the hearers of the gospel who perish, are inexcusable; the door was open, but they would not enter in.—The invitation imports,

4. That the worst of sinners are welcome to Christ: however great their burden of sin and misery be, it is no hinderance in their way to come to Christ. Where all are invited, none are excluded. But upon this I do not enlarge here, having insisted upon it at some length, when discoursing upon Joel 3:10. All that I shall just now observe is, that this consideration shall shame you out of your slighting of Christ, and strike at the root of that bitter despair which lodges in the

breasts of many, who are yet far enough from absolute despair of their case.—The invitation imports,

5. That Christ allows sinners to come to him, rather on account of the desperateness of their case, than otherwise: "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden." As if he had said, "Ye have been labouring, and yet can get no rest; let that engage you to come to me. Sit down and consider your case, if nothing else will prevail with you, let the desperateness of your disease bring you to the great Physician." You are cordially welcome to do so. For, consider,

(1.) That it is for this very end God discovers the worst of a man's case to himself, drives them to their wit's end, in order that he may begin to be wise: Hos. 2:6, "Therefore, behold I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths." Ver. 7, "Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now."—Consider,

(2.) That Christ has made offers of himself to those in the worst of cases: Isa. 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." And he holds out himself as a Saviour in particular for these, Rev. 3:17, 18; Isa. 55:7.—Consider,

(3.) Such have been made welcome, who have employed such arguments with him: Psalm 25:11, "For thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity, for it is very great;" and so also in the case of the Canaanitish woman with Jesus, Matth. 15:26–28. Consider,

(4.) He has the more glory, the more desperate that the case is, none see the stars so well as from the bottom of a deep pit. His power is the greater to pardon, his grace to overcome, when there is most occasion for these being displayed; it is the worst of diseases, that do best proclaim the Physician's skill, when a cure is effected.

From what has been just now observed, we may see and admire the divine condescension, that Christ is so willing to take the sinner in, when he sees himself cast out at all doors, can get rest nowhere else; that he will give him rest, and embrace the sinner, when he sees he can do no better, when he can make no other shift.—Hence also learn, how to make an excellent use of the badness of your case, even to take up these stumbling-blocks, and break up heaven's door with them; to make a virtue of necessity, and the more that the burden presseth, the more readily to go to Christ with it. True, it is never right coming to Christ, which sense of misery alone produceth; but love may thus crown a work which terror begins, and which when from the Holy Spirit it leads to. In a word, you are absolutely inexcusable, that come not to Christ, be your case what it will.

I now go on to what was proposed,

IV. Which was, to explain the nature of that rest which Christ graciously promises, and which he actually gives to such labouring and heavy-laden sinners, as truly come to him. And here it must be observed, that there is a rest which they may have in Christ; a rest here, and a rest hereafter. In this life there is a fourfold rest to be had in Christ.—A rest,

1. In respect of sin. The rest Christ gives from sin is twofold.

(1.) A rest from the guilt of sin. Guilt is a poison, infecting the conscience, which makes it so to smart that it can get no rest, as in the case of Cain and Judas, and also with those, Acts 2:37, "They were pricked in their hearts." This, when it festers and becomes immoveable, is the gnawing worm in hell. Christ gives rest from it, Heb. 9:4; his blood purges the conscience from dead works. The conscience, when like the raging sea, is stilled by him: Isa. 57:18, 19, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him." The soul finds this rest in the

wounds of Christ, for, "by his stripes we are healed," Isa. 53:5. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's own Son, cleanses from all sin. The soul dipped in this fountain is washed from this poison, and is delivered from this sting of guilt.—There is rest,

(2.) From the reigning power of sin: Rom. 6:14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you." Sin on the throne makes a confused restless soul, like the raging sea, continually casting out mire and dirt. Christ, by his Spirit's efficacy, turns sin off the throne, and restores rest to the soul. He casts down these Egyptian taskmasters, and thus the soul enters into his rest: Heb. 4:10, "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." In the day of the soul's coming to Christ, he acts like a King, setting all in order in the kingdom, that was a mere heap of confusion before his accession to the throne.—There is in Christ,

2. Rest from the law; not that he makes them lawless, but that he takes off them the insupportable yoke of the law, and gives them ease.—He does so,

(1.) From the burden of law-duties, which are exacted in all perfection, under the pain of the curse, while no strength is furnished wherewith to fulfil them: Rom 7:4, "Wherefore, my brethren ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." This is the yoke on all men's necks naturally; Christ put his neck in this yoke, and bare it, satisfying the law's demands completely, and so frees all that come to him from this service. Christ carries his people without the dominions of the law.—He does so,

(2.) From the curse of the law: Gal. 3:13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us." Rom. 8:1. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." These that are come to him, he takes from off them that curse which they are under, and gives them his blessing, which he hath merited; carries them from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion, where they hear the blood of Jesus speaking peace, silencing the

demand of vengeance, and affording a refuge for the oppressed.—  
There is in Christ,

3. Rest from that weary labour in which persons are engaged when in quest of happiness, leading the souls to the enjoyment of God: Psalm 116:7, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." The soul, restless in seeking happiness among the creatures, he leads to God, the fountain of all perfection, opening their eyes, as he did Hagar's, to see the well, and bringing them into the enjoyment of all good in him, uniting the soul with himself; where,

(1.) The soul finds a rest of satisfaction from Christ, which it can find in no other quarter whatever, for the soul finds a rest of satisfaction from him, when by faith it is set on the breasts of his consolations. In these there is an object adequate to all the desires of the soul answering all its needs; thus, Prov. 14:14, "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." There is the triumph of faith in the enjoyment of God: Phil. 4:18. "But I have all and abound."—The soul finds,

(2.) A rest in him of settled abode, insomuch, that the soul goes not abroad as it was wont, among the creatures for satisfaction; John 4:14, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life." Christ becomes precious to the soul. Like the released lady, that did not so much as look on or take notice of Cyrus, notwithstanding of the noble part he acted, but on him (her husband) who said, he would redeem her with his own life. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."—There is in Christ,

4. Rest in respect of troubles. Christ gives rest,

(1.) From troubles in the world, now and then, when he sees meet: Psalm 34:19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all." Zion's God reigneth, be on the throne who will; and when he speaks peace, neither devils nor men can create his people trouble; for, Lam. 3:37, "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not? There is no such security from trouble as the godly have, but that is from heaven, and not from earth. Therefore,

(2.) Christ gives rest in trouble: John 16:33, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." You may, nay, you shall, meet with troubles, but he can make you get sweet rest in your souls; even when you are on a bed of thorns as to the outward man, he can give his people a sweet rest even in troubles. How can these things be? may some say.—In answer,

[1.] Christ gives his people in trouble an inward rest, that is an inward tranquillity of mind in midst of trouble: Psalm 3:1–5, "Lord! how are they increased that trouble me? many are they that rise against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah. I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me." Christ can make the believer as a vessel of water tossed here and there, yet not jumbled. There was a greater calm with the three children in the furnace, than with the king in the palace, Dan. 3:24. Fear may be on every side when there is none in the centre, because Christ makes a blessed calm in their hearts.—Christ gives in trouble,

[2.] A rest of contentment: "I have learned, (says Paul, Phil. 4:11,) in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." This is not only the duty, but the privilege of believers. If the lot of the godly be not brought up to their spirit, Christ will bring their spirit down to their

lot; and there must needs be rest there, where the spirit of the man and his lot meet in one: Psalm 37:19, "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied."—Then follows,

[3.] A rest of satisfaction in the enjoyment of better things. What though the world hath a bitter taste in their mouths? Christ can hold a cup of consolation to them in that very instant, the sweetness of which will master the bitterness of the other: "Your sorrow (says he, John 16:20,) shall be turned into joy." "Our rejoicing (says Paul, 2 Cor. 1:12,) is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." They are not indeed stocks, to be unmoved with troubles, but their sorrow is so drowned in spiritual joy, that it is "but as sorrow," 2 Cor. 6:10, "As sorrowful yet always rejoicing;" even as the joy of the wicked is "but as joy." Troubles may raise a mutiny of lusts within, but the peace of God quells them: "It keeps their hearts and minds through Jesus Christ,"—Christ gives,

(4.) A rest in confidence of a blessed issue: 2 Tim. 1:12, "For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." The soul in Christ has the promise to rest on; and however dark a side the cloud may have, faith will see through it; though they may sink deep, they will never drown, who have a promise to bear them up.—Thus, you see, they rest in Christ in trouble; and this rest is a most secure rest, where people may rest confidently: Isa. 26:3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." The wicked may have rest, but not with God's good will; therefore the more rest, the more dangerous is their case: 1 Thess. 5:3, "For when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as a woman in travail, and they shall not escape." But there is perfect security in Christ, and that in the worst of times, Song 3:7, 8. Again, it is a rest that is so rooted,



that the soul can never be deprived of it: Isa. 32:17, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever." How soon is the rest of the wicked broken, their candle put out! But this, although it may meet with some disturbance by temptations, as the clouds may go over the sun, yet it shall be as sure as the sun fixed in the firmament; it will be proof against the disturbances of the world, against the temptations and accusations of the devil; yea, against the demands of justice, and the threatenings of the law. Then in the life to come, he will give them all complete rest who come to him: Heb. 4:9, "There remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God." He will give their bodies rest in the grave, Isa. 57:2, and both soul and body rest in heaven hereafter; and that is a rest beyond expression.

If it should be inquired, Who is it that gives this rest? this is answered in our text; Christ says to such labouring and heavy-laden sinners, and he is able to make good his word, "I will give you rest." The gift of this rest is his prerogative; they that obtain it must get it out of his hands.—For illustrating and confirming this, consider,

1. That all creatures cannot give rest to a restless soul. Not any thing in them, or the whole of what can be afforded from them, can give it: Eccl. 1:2, "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Men, the best of men, cannot do it. Ministers may be directed to speak a word in season, but the Lord himself can only make that word effectual, 2 Sam. 12:13, compared with Psalm 51. Nay, angels cannot do it, Exod. 33:2, compare ver. 15. It requires a creating power: Isa. 57:18, "I have seen his ways, and I will heal him."—Consider,

2. There can be no rest to the soul without returning to a reconciled God, for it is impossible the soul can find true rest elsewhere; and there is no returning to God but by Christ: John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." He is the only ladder by which the soul can ascend to heaven.

3. Christ is the great Lord Treasurer of heaven. The fulness of power is lodged in him: Matth. 28:18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." There is nothing that any can get from heaven in the way of spiritual favour, but what comes through his hands: John 5:22, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Jesus also hath the keys of hell and death, Rev. 1:18.

4. He is the store-house, where the treasure is laid up, and out of which all needful supplies come: John 1:16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."—Consider,

5. The glorious types illustrating this: Joseph, Gen. 41:40–44; Joshua, that brought the people to the rest in Canaan.—Consider,

6. That high character which he sustains: Heb. 12:2. He is the "author and finisher of our faith."—Consider,

Lastly, It is reasonable it should be so, he hath purchased this rest with his blood: and therefore there is an high propriety that he should be the giver, the dispenser of this glorious blessing.—In the

IV. And last place, it was proposed to make some practical improvement of the whole. To enlarge here, however, would be improper, as a practical improvement has been made of the several parts of the subject all along, as they have been considered. At the same time, your attention may be called to the following brief hints. From what has been observed, you have had set before you,

1. A melancholy picture of the miserable state of all mankind by nature;—they are "labouring and heavy laden," they have various burdens lying on them, the burden of sin, the burden of the law, a burden often of fears, of terrors, arising from the former; and while thus heavy laden, they are labouring, striving to ease themselves of their burdens, struggling hard to get rid of them, while after all they are only labouring in vain in the fire, wearying themselves in the greatness of their way; are spending their "money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not," instead of

obtaining the least ease or quiet. Their situation is in this way rendered more and more grievous and distressing, their burdens become heavier than they can bear, and their labour is rendered quite intolerable.

2. We may learn a special ingredient in the misery of those that thus labour, and are heavy laden. They are under the law as a covenant of works, which requires the full tale of brick, without affording the least straw with which to make them. They are under most grievous taskmasters, who are constantly saying, Give, give, while they are unable to work; and, what is still worse, they are without Christ, without God, and so without hope in the world. It is Jesus only that can help them; while afar from him, and enemies to him, they have no other prospect than that of perishing eternally.—But,

3. There is hence opened up a door of hope, even for such as are labouring and heavy laden, whatever their characters or conditions have been, or at present may be, though they may have long laboured in vain, and spent their strength for nought. However heavy, numerous, and continued these burdens may be, though in their view their condition may not only be distressing and deplorable, but even almost desperate, there is here a door of hope opened up to such. On Jesus is their help laid; in and from him it is to be found. He is saying, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and besides me there is no Saviour." "Hearken ye stout-hearted, and ye that are far from righteousness." Nay, he speaks to such expressly by name; without excluding a single individual, whatever his present character or condition be, his gracious words are, "Come unto me, all ye" the whole of you, and each of you "that labour, and are heavy laden, and," in coming to me without peradventure, "you shall have rest."

In the last place, there is pointed out to us what is the indispensable duty of all the hearers of the gospel. It is to come to Jesus; to comply with the gracious call and invitation here given. It is true, this in the text is addressed only to the labouring and heavy laden; but is not

this a character common to all the hearers of the gospel? Are not all more or less in this situation? A situation so far from being desirable, that it is exceedingly uncomfortable. If such, then, would consult their present or eternal welfare; if they would hearken to the gracious call, the kind invitation which Christ gives them; if they would obey heaven's great command, it must be admitted, that it is their bounden duty to come to Jesus, that is, to believe on him; for it is only in the exercise of faith as coming to him, and according as faith is in exercise, that any can be freed from their heavy burdens, or be released from that vain and irksome labour in which they are engaged.

Let all such, then, be exhorted to cease from the labour which satisfieth not; from these fruitless attempts which they are engaged in to rid themselves from these heavy burdens that they are weighed down under. Be exhorted to come to Jesus, cast all your burdens and your cares over upon him. He is able and willing to sustain both you and your burdens, whatever they are. Come to him, then, as you are, as labouring and heavy laden. There is the most cordial welcome afforded to all such; the greater your burdens, and the more pressing your necessities are, in the way of putting your case unreservedly in his hand, and under his management, you may in due time assuredly expect a comfortable issue. He hates putting away. Whosoever will may come, and him that cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out. "Come unto me" says he, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

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