

S E R M O N XXII.

THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS.

EPHESIANS, Chap. iv. Ver. 20, 21.

But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.

THE epistle before us was written by Paul when he was a prisoner for Jesus Christ at Rome; but though he was bound, the word of God was not bound; though he was straightened in body, yet the Holy Ghost took the advantage of it to enlarge his mind, opening more the eyes of his understanding, giving him more sublime and vast discoveries of the infinity of grace, of the mysteries of the gospel, of everlasting love and free grace, in their high and eternal original, with the perpetual spring and streams of divine clemency which flow therefrom: so that the holy apostle seems to speak of this epistle as the highest proof and instance of his real spiritual knowledge of Jesus, saying, *Whereby when ye read (referring to the two former chapters) ye may understand, my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.* See chap. iii. ver. 4.

He enters into the depth of those things which are hid in God, as far as they concern us; brings them out, opens, explains, and sets them forth to view in the first chapter: in which he treats of that fundamental act in God, which is the one foundation from whence grace and glory are settled on us, and secured to us, *viz.* eternal, personal, unconditional election in Christ, before the foundation of the world. Which act, as it flowed from the free, sovereign, everlasting love, and good pleasure of JEHOVAH the Father's will, gave the elect being and existence in Christ from everlasting; by which means they had union with, interest in, and relation to the person of Christ, God-man, before all worlds. This high and stupendous grace of election is shewn forth by some of the immediate fruits and effects of it. God having, by election, given his people supercreation being and existence in Christ, out of the same love wherewith he loved their persons in Christ, and blessed them in him with all spiritual blessings. And as their election was thus owing to his own sovereign, free, and immutable will, so, by an act of his infinite understanding, he decreed their being and their utmost well-being in Christ, predestinated them to the adoption of children, and accepted their persons in the person of the God-man, his first and eternally beloved. All which high, eternal acts of grace towards the elect, are attributed solely to grace; Christ, as head and mediator, having no influence in them, he being, as such, the object of election as well as his church; therefore these acts

which are eternally established in the mind and will of God, are said to be to the glory and praise of his grace. The apostle descends from these high and ancient mountains of everlasting love and free grace, to speak of Christ the ancient and eternal head of the elect church of human race, as the glorious, all-sufficient mediator of reconciliation, and the redeemer of it from sin and eternal ruin: *in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.* He styles the gospel the mystery of God's will, and calls it the gospel of salvation, which, as accompanied with the efficacy of the Holy Ghost, is the means by which Christ is revealed, made known, believed on, received, and enjoyed. He shews how the Holy Ghost is the sealer of the elect; and closes these subjects with a prayer, in which all the articles of our most holy faith are included, or expressed; and the degrees of Christ's exaltation mentioned in it are, as Dr. Ames observes, answerably opposite to the degrees of his humiliation: his rising from the dead being opposed to his death; his ascension into heaven, to his descent into the grave, and going down into hell, or into the state of death; and, his sitting at God's right hand, to his remaining in the grave, and in the state of death. After which, the apostle sets forth the love, mercy, and grace of God, as the original cause of quickening, raising up, and delivering the elect from that state of sin, guilt, death, and wrath, which they were in by Adam's fall, and in which they remained all the days of their unregeneracy: out of which, through the quickening

influences of the Holy Ghost, they were now brought and delivered. Having finished the doctrinal part of this epistle, in the third chapter of it, he closes with a prayer, the greatest to be found on record, as offered up by him who had been in heaven. As he longs that those eternal truths might be set on afresh, with the seal of the Holy Ghost, on their hearts; that they might more clearly understand them, powerfully experience them, and have fellowship with the Holy Trinity by faith in them; his heart is led out to pray for the greatest blessings God himself could bestow on them, or they could experience and enjoy this side heaven,—*that they might be filled with all the fulness of God.* In what may be styled the second part of this epistle, he exhorts these persons, whom he had thus prayed for, to divers exercises of graces and duties, making use of those divine truths before spoken of, as motives thereunto: *I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, says he, in the chapter before us, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* He sets forth the unity of Christ's church, which hath him for its head, lord, and husband: the true members of which partake of the same like precious faith in him; have the same ordinances of worship, in which they serve him, and have one and the like interest in the one God and Father of them all. Thus he shews, how it became them to be united to each other in the Spirit; to shew it by their

christian fellowship to each other; and that to promote this, was one end why the Lord had given both his children and ministers, spiritual gifts differing from each other; which gifts, as bestowed on the latter, he ascribes to Christ as ascended, and speaks of them as the fruits of his ascension: and, as he enumerates them, they were to fit men for the work of the ministry, and the edification of saints; which ministry is to be continued until all the saints arrive to a perfection of spiritual knowledge, and make up one man, or body of men, in Christ. The use, end, and design of the gospel, is to promote the growth of believers up into Christ their head, from whom all supplies of grace are communicated for the increase and edification of every one of his members. In a very solemn manner he dissuades them from a life, walk, and conversation like unto the unconverted Gentiles, testifying in the Lord against it; and shews the vanity, filthiness, and sinfulness of it; adding, *But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.* In which the fruits of learning Christ, of having heard him, and of being taught by him, are pointed out, by whom we know the truth as it is in him. If ye have learned Christ, says Paul, ye have wholly renounced the life and practice of the vile and unregenerate part of mankind. Ye walk not like, nor in conformity with them. If ye have learned Christ, ye prove it by believing on him, receiving him, living on, to, and for him.

Of all science and learning, none is comparable to the knowledge of Christ, and learning him. And truly that man was a good scholar in Christ's school, and had made a proper use of his learning Christ, *viz.* Mr. Stephen Marshall, B. D. who, in the year 1654, being on his death bed, when a reverend brother and others were talking with him about his death, replied, "I cannot say, as one who said, I have so lived that I should not now be afraid to die; but this I can say, I have so learned Christ, that I am not afraid to die." See Neale's History of the Puritans, Vol. II quarto edition, page 478. This was saying indeed. And none of us have learned Christ to any good purpose, nor to any great degree, until we can find reason to say the same. The apostle points out the way and manner of learning Christ—by hearing him, and by being taught of him. Christ not only speaks in the outward ministry of the word, but inwardly also, and that efficaciously, and with energy to the heart, so as to draw, allure, and make the soul to follow him. The voice of Christ is heard inwardly and spiritually; it produceth life, where there was nothing but spiritual death, according to our Lord's own declaration. *Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.* His teaching is divine. By it we discern truth from error; and are brought to know the truth as it is in him. Having read two verses for my text, and opened them thus briefly, I proceed to inform you, that my design is to dwell on a particular sentence only, in them. And if it be

asked, what my subject is, and what I mean to treat of particularly at this time, my reply is, *Truth* is to be the subject; and *the truth as it is in Jesus*, is to be particularly stated, the knowledge of which is an inestimable blessing. My text, then, with a particular view to obtain this end, is these words: *The truth as it is in Jesus*. Which words evidently contain and express a plain distinction of a two-fold knowledge of truth. There is a knowledge of truth, which is not that of *the truth as it is in Jesus*; and, there is the knowledge of *truth as it is in Jesus*: the latter is by Christ's own teaching, which distinguishes it from the other. I will cast the substance of what I am to deliver on this important subject, into the following division, and give you the three following heads of discourse.

First, I will consider the phraseology of our text, as it is designed to point out a two-fold knowledge of truth, and is used entirely for that very purpose.

Secondly, what that knowledge of truth is, and how obtained, which does not come up to this, to be *the truth as it is in Jesus*.

Thirdly, what it is to know *the truth as it is in Jesus*, and that this is the proper fruit and effect of being *taught it by him*.

I have proposed, and am first to consider, the phraseology of our text, as it is designed to point out a two-fold knowledge of truth, and as used entirely for that very purpose. It may most easily appear to each of you, that the apostle is here carefully and judiciously distinguishing between true believers and

temporary ones. Hence we have a discrimination at the very beginning of our text: *But ye have not so learned Christ.* And we have also an *if* at the very beginning of the sentence before us. *If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus.* And yet we must remember and carefully note, that the apostle is not here speaking of, and distinguishing between truth and error in the doctrines and mysteries of the everlasting gospel, which are the very foundation and basis of Christianity; but in this place, he is only distinguishing the difference between a bare, naked, speculative notion and idea, of that which is really truth; and such a knowledge of it, as conveys a real apprehension of it to the soul in its infinite value and vast importance, which has that in it which satisfies the understanding, sanctifies the will, engages the whole heart, and draws after it all the affections; so that the peculiar mode of expression in the words before us, implies that there is a two-fold knowledge of truth. There is a knowledge of truth which yet is not *as the truth is in Jesus*; and there is a knowledge of truth, which comes up to, and answers this expression, *the truth as it is in Jesus.* This, then, is the sum and substance of the distinction made here by the apostle in the words before us; and that there is such a two-fold knowledge of truth, is expressed by the very phraseology of our text. Therefore, as a just inference drawn from it, it must be of the utmost importance for us to know *the truth as it is in Jesus*; to examine into the grounds, reasons, principles, and original spring from whence our know-

ledge of eternal and divine truth proceeds: to look to, and search very diligently, if we have the saving knowledge of the Godhead, the persons in the Godhead, their essential perfections, their eternal council and covenant, the works and word of the Eternal Three; who, as they coexist in the incomprehensible self-existing essence, so they stand engaged to the church and people of God in an economical office, for the salvation and benefit of all that believe. It most highly concerns us to try if our knowledge is of *the truth, the truth as it is in Jesus*, if it is all received from his word, exactly agreeable with the truths revealed therein: if it is derived from it, and founded solely thereon: and also to look to it and see if the knowledge of truth does produce its divine influences and effects within, upon, and without us, governing our minds, possessing our faculties, and bringing every thought into obedience unto Christ. To search critically, nicely, and exactly, to find whether our knowledge of spiritual truth be received really from him, through his giving us that unction whereby we know all things. For, if ye have been taught by Christ, then his truth will make such an impression on your hearts, in a measure and degree, as it did on his. Having thus briefly opened the first head of our discourse, and shewn that a two-fold knowledge of truth is pointed out and distinguished by the phraseology of the text, I proceed,

Secondly, to consider and set before you what that knowledge of truth is, and how obtained, which does not come up to that of *the truth as it is in Jesus*.

Let it be remembered, that it is truth, and the knowledge of it, are our subject. That all truth in its own nature and importance is valuable. That we are commanded to *buy the truth, and sell it not*. Cost what it will to procure truth will repay all the charge and pains laid out about it. And as it respects the truths of Christ, the least of them, if it be lawful for us so to distinguish them, is of far greater worth than earth or heaven. The knowledge of truth, which I am to treat of, is such a knowledge of truth, as hath the truth of God for its object and subject; and this as revealed in the Holy Scriptures of truth, which are the very foundation of it, and from whence, as from its great fountain, it is derived. So that one, externally enlightened by the general illumination of the Holy Ghost, may know and possess a large measure of truth: he may know truth as truth—love it as such—have a vast judgment and idea of the truths of the everlasting gospel—of every branch of the whole system—of its articles of faith and mysteries of grace—may see the beauty, admire the connection, be charmed with the harmony, order, variety, and divinity of the whole, and be not only charmed and pleased, but even delighted therewith. Such an one may attain and have a vast theoretical and speculative knowledge and judgment to discern between things which differ; be able to distinguish them aright; have a gift and faculty, and even use them to the benefit and admiration of others; whilst the whole, though truth, is not *the truth as it is in Jesus*. Such may have, from the Scriptures, a speculative know-

ledge of the Godhead—the persons in the Godhead—their counsel and covenant, and may apprehend it to be real comfort and happiness to have the thoughts spent on such subjects, and yet not have the saving knowledge of Jesus, and the power of his resurrection. There may be the whole form of truth in the understanding, with the form of sound words clearly to express the same, with a large capacity to treasure up God's written word, and a delight and freeness to speak of it; and which, when compared with the Scriptures, shall be found truly consonant and perfectly agreeable with them; yet, all this is not to know, nor does it amount to the knowledge of *the truth as it is in Jesus*. Yea, this knowledge of truth may produce much conformity to the word, precepts, and commands of Christ, as enjoined and prescribed by him. It may produce sorrow for sin, and abstinence from it: joy in the soul, arising too from what is apprehended to be spoken of a consolatory kind: yea, there may be great quickenings, meltings, comforts, enlargements, ravishments, and ecstasies. Such may have great gifts in prayer, in preaching, in conference, in suiting and applying the word to various and particular cases; with a temper excellent, and a life unspotted, and yet *the truth* not be known *as it is in Jesus*, though many truths about, and which concern and belong to Christ and his salvation, are known. Here then is truth known, and much truth too, with a delight taken in it, and yet *the truth* not known *as it is in Jesus*. Yea, here are the truths of the living God known, and yet Christ,

the sum and centre of them, not spiritually known: for all this knowledge is but in the natural mental faculties, and but on the brim and surface of them. The possessor does not experience the entrance of truth into his heart, producing a new creation in his soul. This knowledge does not make the possessor of it an holy spiritual person, though it may make him exceedingly pleasing and praiseworthy in all his outward deportment. This knowledge does not produce one act of spiritual life, nor fit for one single moment's communion with the Lord. And though a person by this knowledge may escape the pollution that is in the world through lust; yet it does not make him a partaker of the divine nature. I proceed to shew how this knowledge of truth, as truth, is obtained; which yet does not amount to *the truth as it is in Jesus*. This knowledge of the truths of God, Christ, the covenant of grace, and the gospel, is attained and gained by the preaching of the word; by hearing it; fitting under the ministrations of it; and by conversing with the people of God: by reading the word, and by application to, and studying the writings of great and holy men, who have waded into religious controversies, and been engaged in giving forth a glorious scheme of all the truths and doctrines of grace. And, as it is thus derived, so it produces its effects, which are pleasant and beautiful in themselves. There is frequently a practice agreeable to what is known—a natural faith, and love to Christ, as far as the speculative knowledge of divine truth reaches and operates.

There is frequently much zeal for some truths, which are conceived to be of great importance, and a readiness to suffer, in some cases, where it is thought truth is affected; and yet the whole is but the effect of speculation upon divine and eternal truths. There may be great readiness to speak even of what we style properly the deep things of God, even where *the truth, as it is in Jesus*, is not known; it being frequently found to be the case, that many of the truly called people of the Lord, know less of the truths, doctrines, and prime articles of their most holy faith, though taught by Christ, and know *the truth as it is in Jesus*, than others, who have only heard of him by the hearing of the ear. There may be a knowing of the truth, which may put us on worshipping God, as the God of truth, and yet we may be destitute of the spirit of truth, and not worship the Father *in spirit and in truth*. The churches in the apostle's day, and throughout the apostolic age, had abundance of such professors amongst them. You read of such in the sixth chapter to the Hebrews, who are said to have been *enlightened*, to have *tasted of the heavenly gift*, and were made *partakers of the Holy Ghost*, i. e. of his gifts and external operations: yet they are spoken of as very liable to fall from all this, and become apostates. They, though not Arians, Socinians, nor Arminians, by no means heterodox, but quite orthodox; yet were they destitute of a new and spiritual birth, from whence alone, as the effect of such a divine work of the Holy Ghost, could spring true faith and love towards our Lord Jesus Christ; and the apostle

speaks of them, notwithstanding all their knowledge of the whole scheme of scriptural divinity, as thorns and briars, whose end was nigh unto cursing. From what has been delivered, it may be seen and clearly known, that it is possible to have what we style a clear head, a sound judgment as it respects the truths of God, a capacious memory to know and retain them, an aptitude to speak of them; yea, a love to truth and zeal for it, and yet be destitute of knowing *the truth as it is in Jesus*.

It may be asked, since it is granted that there is, and may be a knowledge of the truth attained by such as know not *the truth as it is in Jesus*, wherein lies the difference between what they know, and what those know, who are acquainted with *the truth as it is in Jesus*.

Seeing it is granted, that those know the truth, and that truth is the object and subject of their knowledge, who know not *the truth as it is in Jesus*, as well as it is the object and subject of those who know it in him: I answer, the difference does not so much consist about the objects and subjects of their knowledge, for the same truths the one knows, the other does also, as about the way and manner in which they know them. Not but that there is, in what is known, as well as in the way whereby this knowledge is received, a specific difference, as will be shewn when we come to our third particular head of discourse. The apostle tells us, that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: neither can he know them*; and gives this as the reason, *because*

they are spiritually discerned. That is the distinction he makes—the want of spiritual discernment, to see spiritual things, truths, doctrines, and promises, in their spirituality, and to be taken with the spirituality contained in them. There is in the possessor of the knowledge of truth whom we have been describing, the want of a spiritual faculty, without which faculty there cannot be an inherent spiritual perception in the mind, of spiritual things, and truths in their spiritual excellencies. This is the reason why a man, though ever so much in a natural way enlightened by the external shinnings of the word and spirit on his mind, cannot take in the least spiritual idea of divine truth, so as to have his heart drawn to, and fixed on the Lord, as the fountain and centre of his happiness and rest. Nor is his soul supernaturally drawn up into holy fellowship with God and the Lamb, though full of speculative wisdom and knowledge concerning divine truth. Such can only say of Christ, as Job to another purpose did, *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear.* For they never saw him in the vision of faith; nor did the shine of his glory ever yet enlighten them: so that all their knowledge of truth does not arrive to knowing *the truth as it is in Jesus.* I proceed, therefore,

Thirdly, to shew what it is to know *the truth as it is in Jesus*; and that this is the proper fruit and effect of being *taught by him.* The expression used by the apostle deserves our attention, *the truth as it is in Jesus*: as though he intimated, that the

common doctrine of Christ, in the lump of it, seems to be despised by none. It is some special points of *the truth as it is in Jesus*, which are the object of contempt and scorn. And truly I have most seriously and positively concluded in the secrets of my own mind, that it is a possible case to preach all the truths, doctrines, and ordinances of the gospel, and yet not know Christ, the very subject and substance of them. Also, that it is a possible case to hear these most excellent matters opened, explained, and judiciously defended; to be well persuaded of the truths, and to yield assent and consent to them, and receive some satisfaction from them, and yet be wholly unacquainted with Christ and his salvation. I conceive there is a vast difference between preaching, and knowing Christ and his salvation; and also between preaching the doctrines of grace, knowing and receiving them, and knowing and receiving *Christ*, the sum and substance of them: not but that doctrinal preaching is most excellent in its place, and deserves to be highly valued. But, to know *the truth as it is in Jesus*, is to know Christ, who is *the truth*, really and spiritually; as he is in himself the ever-blessed God-man, the mediator, saviour, brother, and friend of his church and people. It is to have such a knowledge of him, in his surpassing excellencies, ineffable love, precious blood-shedding, righteousness, fulness, grace, and mercy, as ravishes the whole soul, and draws, by the omnipotent sweetness of his own love, the whole person, heart, and affections to himself. It is to know Jesus Christ inwardly and

spiritually, by the light, teaching, and revelation of the Holy Spirit: and so to know him, as to have as real a knowledge of his person and salvation, as any saint hath in glory, in respect of the reality of it. It is so to know him, as to have him dwelling in the understanding, heart, and affections; quickening, enlivening, and influencing the whole man, who becomes completely blessed, happy, and holy, as he hath Christ in him the hope of glory. This knowledge is the fruit and effect of the grace of the whole trinity. Paul tells us, that God revealed his Son *in* him. And he was so revealed, that the same Paul says, *Christ liveth in me*. And speaking of himself, and others as brought to know *the truth as it is in Jesus*, he saith, *God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ*. There is a beam of light let down from Christ upon the mind and into the heart, whereby the soul views Christ in his own light, glory, and excellencies; which renders him everlastingly precious. The Holy Spirit doth accompany the light and knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ, to the soul, and represents the truth in its reality, *as it is in Jesus*, teaching the soul so to know Christ, as to come to and trust on him, to value him, and count all but dross in comparison with the excellencies of Christ Jesus the Lord of glory: by which means the soul hath an intuitive knowledge of Christ, and the Father in him. He hath a real spiritual idea of Christ begotten in his soul by the Holy Ghost. He

sees the Son, and believeth on him, and it is a real, spiritual, solid, substantial sight of Christ. He hath a new understanding to know the true Christ, to embrace him, and live in sights of him, as he views him in the glass of the gospel, where he shines forth in all his glory. As this is *the truth as it is in Jesus*,—to know Christ, his love, work, grace, and fulness, inwardly and spiritually by the revelation of the Father, through the inward shining of Christ within the soul, and by the anointings of the Holy Ghost; so hereby the true Christ is known, and all of him that is necessary for us to know, for the increase of our faith, and hope in and love to him. And this knowledge is the proper fruit and effect of our Lord's own teaching; who, as he knows all truth, so he, as mediator, received the whole knowledge of it from the Father; and it was set with emphasis on him by the Holy Spirit, who was the sanctifier of his human nature, and who sealed him to the performance of his great work. Now, as divine truth was known by Christ, and spiritually influenced his human soul, so it hath the same effects on the hearts of his people, though not to that high degree which it had on his. Such as know *the truth as it is in Jesus*, having been taught it by him, their souls feel the warmth and vigour of it, in their spiritual affections: which proves them to be taught by a divine agent; because the knowledge, faith, love, and communion of, and with Christ, as spoken of in the word, are actually and spiritually produced in their souls. They are the epistles of Christ, on whose minds is engraven and stamped the

image of Christ, in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension; and they have fellowship with him, as their living, reigning, crowned head, Lord, and Saviour: so that they walk up and down in the name and fear of the Lord of hosts. Being thus taught by Christ in the knowledge, and by the revelation of him, they grow hereby all their lives, and are in due season removed from earth to heaven, to behold their Lord face to face; to see him as he is, and to be filled with all the fulness of God. So that this knowledge of the truth differs from the former, as much as the substance doth from the shadow. The truths of God, as making Christ known to the soul, and letting him into the soul, through the inward evidence and influence of the eternal Spirit, give a subsistence to Christ in all the faculties of the new man. What a possessor of the knowledge of truth knows in theory only, the real believer knows spiritually. What the one cannot see in truths, *viz.* their original, inherent spirituality; that the other does, and hence his mind becomes spiritually affected. And, the more spiritual any truth appears, the more it takes hold of his heart, and draws his affections to Christ, in whom it hath its being and foundation. As they are at best but pleasing to the one, to the other they are means of communion with the Lord, of strengthening hope, enlarging the heart heavenward, and filling it with hopes full of immortality. Having thus briefly filled up the heads of discourse, I leave the subject with you for your improvement. May the Lord command his blessing on it. *Amen.*