

II. The second point we were to consider was the relationship between Christ and those who do the will of God: "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and my sister and mother." There are two main features in relationship by kindred—nearness and affection; we may consider both these to have been meant by our Saviour when he spoke thus.

(1.) A mother, a sister, a brother is a near relative; so Christ looks upon the righteous as nearly connected with himself. He would not have even his nearest kindred after the flesh thought to be more closely joined to him than those who heard his word and kept it. He owns such as his. They belong to him, and are related to him.

(2.) But nearness is only a part of relationship, there is affection also. It is a common expression, "those who are near and dear to us," because even the worldly have a natural love for their kindred. How much more then is there love between Christ and those whom he calls brethren! Our Saviour assures us, therefore, that all who do the will of God are dear to him, and dear to him on that very account. This is not a relationship without love. He loves them, and they love him. They love him because he first loved them.

III. Let us now try to draw from this subject some motives and encouragements.

(1.) Men think much of any connection with human greatness. To be nearly related to one of high rank or great influence, how great an honour is it considered! How then ought we to prize the honour of being admitted into near relationship with the Lord Jesus? Well may we count ourselves unworthy of such an honour, well may the very thought of it humble us. Yet Christ himself gives this honour to the faithful servants of God. Let us believe, embrace, and rejoice.

(2.) Again, we can never think ourselves too closely connected with those earthly friends whom we dearly love. Anything that establishes the connection and strengthens the bond is sought and valued. If we love Christ, then how must we rejoice at this declaration, "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and my sister and mother." And what a motive is here for seeking most earnestly that more of that character may be ours!

(3.) We are accustomed to seek honour from a connection with the great, and the gratification of affection from an union with those we love, though we know that

this honour and pleasure can be but for a little while. With what earnestness then should we seek a relationship to Christ, which, once formed, will never cease! Death will take us away from all honours, and sever us (at least for a time) from all the delights of affectionate intercourse; but it will but bring us nearer to Christ. If now we are regarded by him as his brethren, then death will carry us into a closer intercourse with him than even that relationship could furnish on earth. And this intercourse will last for ever. Age after age, and through countless ages, it will form our unutterable happiness.

(4.) But there is a solemn thought connected with this. As this relationship to Christ will never end, so separation from him hereafter will also be for ever. If we do not become united to Christ here, we must be parted from him throughout eternity. This is a solemn thought, and yet more solemn when we think again of the strictness of the distinction between those who serve God and those who serve him not. "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and my sister and mother." But what becomes of all who do not do the will of God? What is their present state, what their expectations for the future? They are here distinctly separated from the righteous, and so they will be for ever! They are not Christ's now, they will have no portion in him hereafter. O consider this ye who are not doing the will of God, not giving your hearts to him, not seeking his salvation. Think what it is to be without Christ here, and think what it will be to be without him hereafter! Where but in Christ is comfort, and peace, and joy? Where but in him is a refuge from the storm of God's wrath?

(5.) Observe that all may come within the scope of this designation. "Whosoever shall do the will of God." "We all have opportunities of doing that will; it does not require high station or a wide sphere; not an hour passes in which we do not all find something to be done or something to be resisted for God. Right and wrong are continually set before us for our choice. Sinful tempers, evil thoughts, corrupt inclinations, bad habits, outward snares and temptations, are some of the things with respect to which we may either do or not do the will of God. The poorest and humblest may be doing the will of God as much as the greatest and noblest. It is a comfort to any one who loves God that