

Priest was also anointed with the oil of the Holy Spirit, of which the oil, used in the legal ritual, was a type, John iii. 34.—Heb. i. 9.

VI. "*To preach the Gospel to the poor.*" The word gospel is of Saxon derivation, signifying literally God's news. It is used in different senses in the Scriptures, sometimes meaning the coming and kingdom of Christ, and sometimes the glad tidings of salvation. In the passage under consideration, it is manifestly used in the latter acceptance. The Apostle tells us God hath chosen "the poor of this world rich in faith," James ii. 5. But the expressions poor, broken-hearted, &c., have here, not a literal but a spiritual application. The spiritually poor are those who are conscious that they have nothing of their own to recommend them to the favour and mercy of God. They are sensible that no observance of ordinances, however strict, no morality merely human, can ever avail to justify them before the Righteous Judge. They are self-condemned. The broken-hearted mourn to feel that so far from having anything meritorious, by which they might render themselves acceptable to the Lord, even their best actions are so imperfect, so mixed up with sin, that for them alone they might be justly consigned to everlasting punishment. They feel that all their righteousnesses, in the sight of a Holy God, "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," are but as filthy rags, and that God would be just in passing upon them the sentence of condemnation. The thought of God's infinite justice makes them tremble. Though gentle Mercy might wish their deliverance, Truth and Justice demand their punishment. To these poor, broken-hearted captives, how sweet the glad tidings of salvation through a Redeemer! To them, and to them alone, is Jesus sweet. Until we are brought, by the Spirit of God, to feel that without Christ we are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," the doctrine of the cross must be foolishness and a stumbling-block.

VII. "*They wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth,*" v. 22; but caviled at the obscurity of his condition, and the lowness of his birth. How prone is man to judge of a person not by his intrinsic merits, but by his external circumstances! Jesus, the carpenter's reputed son, was still the "Lord of Glory"—"the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely."—The truly great, owes not his greatness to the circumstances by which he may be surrounded. It is not the crown, or the sceptre that makes the king.

VIII. "*Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum do also here in thy country,*" v. 23. They wished him to attest his mission

by a sign—to perform the same miracles before them, which they had heard of his doing elsewhere. They even insinuated that his miraculous cures should have commenced among them, by applying to him the proverb, "physician heal thyself." Jesus read their thoughts, and would not accede to their demand for miracles. These, without the accompanying influence of the Spirit, would be of no avail in causing them to receive the Gospel. From the cases of the widow of Sarepta, and of Naaman the Syrian leper, he shows them that he is perfectly free in dispensing his favours. None of us have any claim on God's mercy; where all are alike guilty, it is solely of free grace that any are saved.

IX. "*When they in the synagogue heard these things, they were filled with wrath,*" v. 28. Their indignation knew no bounds.—How changeable is man! For a time they listened attentively to his gracious words.—But no sooner was the doctrine of God's sovereign mercy enunciated, than their worst passions were excited. What opposition to the truth of God is there in the human heart! The ministers of Christ cannot expect to fare better than their master. They must also expect to meet with the same bitter hostility.

X. "*But He passing through the midst of them went His way,*" v. 30. Whether by miracle, or whether by the providence of God, he escaped uninjured. His hour was not yet come, and till then no man could harm him. In like manner, however the wicked may rage, will God preserve the lives of His servants, till all his purposes with them on earth are ended.

Learn 1st. We should seek first the welfare of those in our own neighbourhood, John i. 45; iv. 28–29.

2nd. The Gospel is suited to the poor in spirit, Matth. v. 3.

3rd. God is sovereignly free in the dispensation of His favours, Rom. ix. 15–16.

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ISAAC BORN.—GEN. xxi. 1–22.

I. "*And the Lord visited Sarah.*" Not visibly, but by a manifestation of his goodness and faithfulness. Sometimes the Lord visits by conferring upon us temporal or spiritual favours, and sometimes in afflictive dispensations. v. 2. "Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son." This circumstance being miraculous was manifestly from the Lord, but the most ordinary occurrence is no less so.—This event was contrary to the laws of nature; but what are these laws but just God's ordinary way of working? Let us always seek to discern the hand of a gracious Father in