

INDEPENDENTS WRONG, STRICT BAPTISTS RIGHT

Second Edition

A SERMON

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“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” Matthew 3:11

SOME few years ago, on the occasion of baptizing in this place sixty-four persons, I then remarked that, as far as my acquaintance with the Greek language went, this verse ought to read in this way; “I indeed immerse you in water unto repentance: but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall immerse you in the Holy Ghost, and fire.” I then said that I did not think that there was a thorough Greek scholar in all England that could overthrow that translation of this verse. And I do feel somewhat pleased, that while the American Bible Union Society have translated the New Testament entire, they render this verse (and I have the translation by me) precisely as I thought it ought to be rendered; and I shall be guided this morning by their translation. You observe the word “baptize” is not a translation but only a transcription. I may first observe that the Independents, or opponents of believers baptism, have been lately very much reveling in their own reasonings: and although we may not be able to unravel all the ingenious network of their arguments, we will deal with those of their arguments that we cannot unravel, for they are very ingeniously put together, we will deal with them as Alexander the Great did with the Gordian knot; when he was told that he who untied that knot should be conqueror of the world, he took his sword, and made his sword find its way through it. “There,” he said, “it is untied, and so I must be conqueror;” and so he was. And so, we will take, when occasion requires it, the sword of the Spirit of God, and instead of unravelling their ingenious network arguments, we will send the sword of the Spirit right through that network, and by the sword of the Spirit maintain our ground, and still remain what we are, Bible and strict Baptists. I have a great aversion to anything controversial, except it be in the essentials of the truth; but I will, by way of introduction, just notice four things in which they revel now most wonderfully, and indeed I do not know that they have not almost dug our graves, ordered our coffins, and going to bury all Baptists, and they are to be heard of no more. In the first place, they tell us that the Greek word *bapto*, or *baptizo* rather, does not always mean to *immerse*, *dip*, or *wash*, but that it sometimes means to *sprinkle*; and as they think it sometimes means to *sprinkle*, they make it always to mean to *sprinkle*. Well, no Greek

lexicon that I have ever looked into yet has ever given the idea of sprinkling to the Greek word *bapto*, or *baptizo*; which word *baptizo* comes from the word *bapto*. All the lexicons that I have by me, and that I have read in other libraries, always render it to plunge, to dip, to immerse, to wash, but never, once to sprinkle, and we must be guided, you know, by lexicons in these matters¹. And therefore, we defy our Independents to find one instance in all the New Testament in which the Greek word *baptizo* means to *sprinkle*: it invariably means *immerse, dip, or wash*: and these three words are the most proper English words for the word *baptizo*. I wonder how a gentleman who lately has rebelled very much against believers' baptism, he wears a white gown in his desk when he reads the prayers. Suppose he were to send his gown to the laundress to wash; the laundress understands that the word *wash* means to *sprinkle* and so she just sprinkles it, perhaps just enough to make it iron pretty well and smooth; she takes it back, and it looks very dingy, and the clergyman says, "Why, you have not washed my gown." "Well, but, sir, wash means sprinkle, and I have sprinkled it, and ironed it, and smoothed it, and brought it back again." I think he would very soon correct her as to the meaning of the word, insist upon his gown being baptized; for if he himself were content merely to be sprinkled, I am sure he would not be content with anything short of his gown being baptized; so, he would have his gown a Baptist, if he himself remained a sprinkler. So, then we still hold that *baptize* means *immerse* or *immersion*. Second, they say, "How could so many people as three thousand be baptized in one day? Well, I have baptized sixty-four persons in this place in sixty-four minutes. Now we will suppose, on the day of Pentecost, that there were sixty baptizers; that would be fifty each; so that the three thousand, by sixty hands, might be baptized in fifty minutes. Now you Independents, for Independents you are, it seems, independent of God's ordinance and God's command, you see that we find no difficulty as to the time. Ah, but, they say, thousands upon thousands came to John every day to be baptized. That is more than the Bible says, and you are quite welcome to that argument, because it is a pure assumption. But then the third difficulty is, with them, where did they get the water from? There is that scarcity of water, and a learned man has lately travelled there, and cannot even find the channel where the waters ran, so scarce the waters. Why, what in the world have we to do with what the land of Canaan is now? In the time of the apostles, sir, the land of Canaan then was a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths of waters springing out of the hills and out of the valleys; that is what it was then, sir. So, if you are at a loss for water, sir, I will bring you my Bible, and will soon find you plenty. Ah, but it is not so now. I should think not, because the land has been under the withering curse of heaven for 1,800 years. Where are its harvests? where its vintage? where its fertility? look at its mountains; why, the mountains are as white as snow; its fertility is gone; there is only here and there a spot to show what it has been. That is the state it is in now, and so you tell us there is not water enough; but we take our Bible, cut that Gordian knot, stand in an attitude of defiance, and still defend the high command and the divine appointment of the great master of all, the King

¹ Wells is correct, immerse is a good translation of the Greek word βαπτίζω 'baptizo'. Strong's dictionary defines it in this way: to make overwhelmed (i.e. fully wet); The New American Standard Dictionaries has: to dip, sink; Yet another source says: βαπτίζω, f. Att. ἰῶ, to dip in or under water; metaph., βεβαπτισμένοι soaked in wine, Plat.; ὀφλήμασι βεβ. over head and ears in debt, Plut. I love the metaphors they this source gives: "soaked in wine" and "over head and ears in debt." Clearly the implication is that of immersion.

Liddell, H. G. (1996). A lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English lexicon (p. 146). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Strong, J. (1996). The New Strong's Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

of Israel. Now the next point I just name, and that is all, before I proceed to notice matters more important comparatively, is, how was it possible such a large number could have changed their apparel; how in the world could they have changed their clothes? how were they baptized? Well, friends, I myself am not able to unravel this ingenious question; I merely say that as we must not judge of what the land of Canaan was then by what it is now, so we must not judge of their dress in that climate by the dress in which we are clad; their light and loose garments, about a couple of garments, I suppose. And our opponents say the difficulty is insurmountable; and yet with the people themselves the difficulty was so small they did not name it. You may depend upon it, if the people found any difficulty as to their clothes, they would have cried out about it fast enough; there are very few of us get into trouble that we do not cry out about it. Hence, when the Lord said, "Command these that they sit down to eat." Oh, but see the difficulty: how can so many eat, and so few loaves? And if they had found any difficulty about getting their clothes off and on, depend upon it they would have cried out about the difficulty. So, then, they found no difficulty about that worth naming; and, therefore, as the Scriptures do not inform us. I will venture no theory about it. I know that Aaron and his sons were washed at the door of the tabernacle, but how they managed as to their clothes I do not know; but I know well the Orientals are not very long in dressing or undressing. I am informed that it takes a lady, in our land, about half an hour or three quarters of an hour to dress pretty tidily, when she has herself to put into a little bit of order; and whereas, I suppose a lady in the East would do the same work in about two or three minutes; no great fuss, just a cool dress. Thus, then, friends, I still believe in immersion; I still believe what I always have believed, that baptism is immersion; I still believe that there was no difficulty as to the time, because of the numbers; I still believe there was plenty of water, and I still believe there was no inconvenience which they did not very easily overcome. Now I have made these remarks not exactly as answers, but merely to show that we are not at all moved. It is true, the faith of some, who have not much faith in it at all, may be somewhat shaken, but it does not move us for one moment. And you must not suppose, when you are beaten in argument, that you are beaten in truth. The simple-minded man may not be able to meet an ingenious man in argument; but the man that has the best in argument, it does not follow, therefore, that he has the best as it regards the truth of God.

I will now proceed to notice the text as it lies before us; and the remarks I have made upon baptism will rather be confirmed as I go along this morning than not. Now first, then, I shall notice *the several significations of baptism which the Holy Scriptures attach thereto*. I shall secondly notice *the superiority of the Savior*: "one mightier than I." Thirdly and lastly, *the baptism of the Holy Ghost, as here set before us*. I think it will all come in as plain as A B C.

Now the first *is the several significations of baptism which the Holy Scriptures set before us*. I will mention four, besides the one named in our text. In the first of Mark, it is said that John was baptizing for the remission of sins. Here you will observe that baptism signifies, among the rest of its significations, remission of sins, because, as this immersion is made to set forth the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have remission of sins by the death of Jesus Christ, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ; we have remission of sin, forgiveness of sin, by the death and by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, if this be one part of the meaning which the Holy Scriptures attach, I am sure we ought not to make light of the command itself. Oh, remission of sin; what is so delightful; what can equal it in sweetness? Ah, the woman at the Savior's feet, that washed his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and anointed them with

costly ointment, she is not the only person that has felt the sweetness of the remission of sins, that has felt the same love, that has sat at the dear Savior's feet.

That glorious truth of the remission of sin has gone on from that day to the present, and it will do down to the very end of time; for what is the very business of the gospel but to preach the remission of sin in the Savior's name? "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man, the man Christ Jesus, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sin; that by him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." This is one, then, of the things. Now mind, I am pointing out what the Scriptures attach to it; that is one of its significations; not that the remission is by the ordinance but is by the thing which is signified by baptism. The second thing which the Scriptures attach to it is eternal life; that is, as one of its significations. "Know you not that as many of you as were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death;" thereby to denote that sin is dead, that the curse is dead, that death itself is dead, and that you are risen by the operation of the Spirit of God into newness of life; and what is that new life but that eternal life we have in Jesus Christ; the life of Christ, the life of the Spirit of God, the life of God, the highest life that any creature can live. Christ is our life; "and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear in glory with him." The third thing I notice, before I come back to my text, attached to the meaning, is that of purification. Ananias said to Saul, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins." Now mind, Ananias did not say, "Arise, and be baptized, and *sprinkle* away your sins;" he did not say that; but he said, "Arise, and be baptized, and *wash* away your sins," the same Greek word that is translated "washed" in the 1st of Revelation: "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory for ever and ever." Did Ananias mean that baptism would wash away sin? No; he meant that this immersion in the water was a figure of our being washed in the fountain that is open for sin and for separation; he meant that it was the mighty virtue of atoning blood, that washes us from every stain, and spot, and wrinkle, and blemish, and presents us before God's eternal throne as innocent as is the Savior himself, as spotless as is Immanuel himself; as welcome to heaven as is Immanuel himself: loved with the same love. He entered into the holy of holies by his own blood, and every soul thus favored enters by the same blood; loved with the same love, received with the same welcome, partaker of the same joy, living in the same mansions, ranging over the same inheritance, and possessing the same blessedness forever. Here then, I get, I say, remission, eternal life, and purification. Mark that, not "*sprinkle* away your sins," but "*wash* away your sins." If baptism were by sprinkling, what correspondence would there have been between the figure, "Arise, and be sprinkled" and "wash"? But if baptism be by immersion, it conveys the idea of "wash, arise, and be immersed; wash away your sins;" that is, thereby acknowledge it; it is a practical declaration of your belief in the blood of Christ washing you from sin. The next signification, before I come back to the text, attached by the Holy Ghost to the ordinance, is salvation. Yes; "the like figure whereunto baptism does now save us." But to remind the Puseyite and the Papist that Peter does not mean that the water itself saves us; he does not mean that the water itself is our salvation; no, ("not," he says, "the putting away of the filth of the flesh;" it is not a mere ceremony pertaining to the body, "but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." So, Jesus Christ washes us from sin, and there is our salvation, and there we get a good conscience before God, because it is a pardoned conscience, a justified conscience; washed by the washing of regeneration. "They came up," says Solomon's song, "from the washing." Thus, then, if we keep to the word of God, we have no difficulty; if my Bible shows to me that baptism is immersion, which it does show. Why, what in the name of common sense should the eunuch and Philip go

down into the water for if baptism consists of sprinkling? What in the name of common sense should John go into Jordan for if it were sprinkling? What in the name of common sense should people seek to be where there was much water, when a gallon of water could sprinkle a thousand people, and yet take the people to where there is much water just to sprinkle them? Really it is so childish that one feels it is lost time to notice it.

But there are two reasons why men so oppose immersion. The one is, because it is very inconvenient to the flesh, and very mortifying to the pride of man. Your fine lady, your dandy professor, they cannot adapt to it; there is something so humbling; they do not like the idea of being go humbled as that. And yet they profess to be saved by him that humbled himself, and went down into those deeps wherein he said, "Deep calls unto deep: all your waves and your billows go over me:" and yet these proud professors would feel degraded only just to be immersed, and to walk in that path which the Savior has commanded his disciples to walk in, to set forth in a very simple, humble, and clear way his own unfathomable humiliation, his own wonderful baptism. "I have an immersion" for so my newly translated Testament renders it, "I have an immersion to be immersed with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" He came up from that immersion, left all our sin and woe behind, reigns triumphant, and lives forever; because he lives, we shall live also. But then they say it may be rendered with equal propriety, "John was baptizing *at* Jordan," that the Greek preposition may be rendered *at*. No doubt in some cases it may, and so they would not like it to be rendered *in* at all. Well, we will have it *at* then, and we will carry it through the first verse of this chapter. The first verse says, "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea." Now we will follow our learned men." "*At* those days came John the Baptist, preaching *at* the wilderness of Judea." That is nice reading, is it not? I think you had better let it remain as it is, that "*In* those days came John the Baptist, preaching" not *at* the wilderness, but "preaching in the wilderness" to the people. Now let it remain as it is, and common sense and truth will go together, though you all know that common sense is a very uncommon thing.

Now let us come to our text. In our text it is called the baptism of repentance because John required, in order to baptize them, fruits meet for repentance. I will just mention three fruits that must evidence your repentance. And you will observe that the first part of our text evidently implies more than it expresses: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance" evidently means, I baptize you with water unto the acknowledgment of repentance. The very fact of John baptizing a man, John did thereby acknowledge that God to that man had granted repentance, and that man himself acknowledged that a change was wrought; and if John did not see those fruits, he would not baptize them. I will notice three fruits. Now the proper original meaning of the word *repentance* is that of *change*, and there must be three things to evidence that change. First, there must be faith in the place of unbelief; there must be belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. "If you believe with all your heart, you may." I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And take the words in another place, that "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and shall believe in your heart" so that the heart and mouth will go together. "that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved." Now this faith in Jesus Christ is one of the fruits of repentance; that is, one of the results or consequences of the change that is wrought, and this faith is called the faith of God's elect, the faith of the operation of God. The next fruit I will mention is that of reconciliation to God. There may be faith in Christ without true reconciliation to God, but where that faith does exist, and it be real, reconciliation is sure to follow. I believe that I had in my soul saving faith in Jesus Christ before I was reconciled to God's way of saving a sinner, before I understood election, eternal

election. And no man is completely reconciled to God until he is brought into harmony with the perfect work of Christ, the immutable counsel of God, and the sovereignty of God; he must be brought into harmony with this order of things, or else he is not reconciled to God. The man that is thus reconciled to God, namely, brought into harmony with what the Savior has done. the Lamb of God, taking away the sins of the world; brought into harmony with the immutable new covenant counsel of God; brought into harmony with the sovereignty of God, that man has given up his own sovereignty, given up his own importance, his own supposed righteousness, and he says, "I am nothing, I am nothing, and less than nothing, and if ever I see Jehovah's face with joy it must be entirely by his own mercy, his own grace, and if ever I appear before him without sin, it must be entirely by that blood that cleanses from all sin, and if ever I appear before him righteous, it must be in the righteousness of his own Son, and if ever I gain the victory, he himself must give me the victory." Now then, when you have this faith, this reconciliation, then we say, "You may." One more fruit I will name, and that is love, not only faith in Christ and reconciliation to God, but love. Now you are sure to cleave to that you love sincerely; and if there be anything under the canopy of heaven, one thing that is more sincerely loved than another, and more bitterly hated, it is God's truth. The profane man has not the slightest idea of the endearment existing between your soul and the sworn covenant of the blessed God. The mere professor, that will hold up this new covenant with one hand, speak seraphic-ally of the doctrines of grace in one sermon, kick the whole out of the place in the next sermon, that man holds the doctrines as matters of opinion and as articles of his creed, but they are not implanted in the deep affections of his soul; they are not rooted in the deepest recesses of his heart; he is not so identified with them that the least thing contrary to them jars upon his soul, upon his feelings, and he says, "Oh, that spoils the music." Some of you very nicely and scientifically understand singing, and when you get into a little error, our good clerk perceives it in a moment, and some of you too, you scientific ones. As for my untutored ear, you may commit a thousand breaches, so that you do not break down; I go singing on, and can get through it, but then you would not call me a musician for all that. I enjoy singing, but I am no judge of music, I honestly confess that. **But when I come to the dear truths of the Bible, ah if you get too high or too low, too fast or too slow, if there is the least breach, I catch it in a moment, spoils the music in a moment, Every blessed truth of the new covenant is like the harp, the psaltery, the lute unto my soul, and by them melody is there made, and these truths charm my sorrows away, when nothing else can do it. Now then, if you have true repentance, there will be faith, reconciliation, and this sincere love to the truth of God Ah, say some, I do not care so much about the doctrine of God; it is the God of the doctrine I care about. But does it not say, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"? And if you pervert the Scriptures, then your love is not acceptable to God. When I say the truth, I in reality mean God himself in that representation which the truth gives of him.** How was it that the church of old spoke so highly of the Savior? how was it that he was, in her estimation, not only the chief among ten thousand, but the altogether lovely? By that representation which the truth of God gave him. And the Holy Spirit brought these truths into the souls of the people, and so endeared the blessed God that life is not worth naming, with all its advantages, to set by the side of the truth of God. See the 11th of Hebrews, and look into past and modern ages too, comparatively modern, at least, New Testament ages, see what the people of God have suffered rather than part with God's truth. When Popery has labored to substitute its ceremonies into the place of God's truth, have not our dear brethren that have gone before us willingly laid down their lives rather than lay down one particle of God's truth? They have done so heroically; they did so unhesitatingly; they did so in the name of the Lord; and their souls are

now in heaven as sacrifices acceptable to God, reclining beneath the altar, with the solemn anthem, "How long, O Lord God Almighty, will you not avenge our blood at their hands?" And their blood will be avenged at that tremendous day. So, they loved the truth, they walked in the truth; it was their sword with which they cut their way through hosts of devils, it was their shield and buckler, it was their standing-place, it was their fortress, it was their song, it was their triumph. Now I might have made a remark or two more in relation to the ordinance itself, but I will not occupy time about that; I shall have plenty of time for that hereafter, I hope so at least, as to its proper place in the church. And I think I could show from the Scriptures very clearly that no Christian man or woman stands complete in his or her obedience to the will of God that is not baptized, and that does not come to God's ordinance in God's own order. All I say of such is that there is that that is lacking in their faith and in their practice. Now many of you are not Baptists that I love sincerely, and I make this remark in all kindness; it is my conviction. At the same time, you have too much sense to be baptized by my conviction; the conviction must come into your mind; and if you had the same conviction in your mind that I have in mine upon it, why, of course you would be baptized; and until you have, why, you would not be justified in being baptized. I should not feel justified in baptizing any man or woman if they were not persuaded by the word of God that it was right; because, if they were not, of course the next day they would go away.

But I will go on to the next part of my subject; and I already see I shall not be able to come this morning to the baptism of the Holy Ghost; and I am not sorry for it, because I should certainly like to have a whole sermon upon it; it is so beautiful that I should not like to put it off with the few words that we have merely time and space to throw in this morning, I therefore notice the next part, which must be the last this morning, namely, *the superiority of the Savior*. "I indeed baptize you;" you that I do baptize I immerse in water; and we have shown who the persons were, and what the fruits were; "but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear." There were four reasons, at least, I notice four reasons why the Savior was mightier than John. First, because the Savior had no sin in him. What mean all the aches, and pains, and sicknesses, and what mean all the mortal feelings we have, and death itself? It all means sin; that sin is in us; sin is our weakness. Jesus Christ had no sin in him; his whole soul and body perfectly holy and devoted to God. That is one reason he was mightier than John. Do we not feel a law in our members hindering us? Can I preach as I would; can I pray as I would; can I always walk as I would; can I always think as I would; can I always be devoted to God as I would? Alas, alas! no; I groan, mourn, and sigh, sometimes wish I had never existed; I would give a thousand worlds, if I had them to give, if God would grant me all my desires towards him, and let me live even as the Savior lived, in as perfect freedom from sin within and sin without as he did. But God has not so ordered it; he has placed us here subject to vanity; not that we are willingly subject to that vanity, but we are so placed in hope, and we must wait for the time when the new creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the son of God. That, then, was one reason why Jesus was mightier than John. Do not let us forget that this purity in the Savior was set to John's account, and that the impurity in John was set to the Savior's account. John now enjoys the one; the Savior then atoned for and put away the other. The second reason that the Savior was mightier than John was because, while he had no sin in him, he committed none. He did not commit one sin he did not do one wrong. Sin always weakens faith and hope and weakens the Christian. When our consciences condemn us, it does not say God will condemn us too, because he will not; but he knows all things, and the conscience weakens us. There is nothing recorded of John outwardly wrong, but it does not follow that he had not his faults in some things; he was not

infallible, he was in God's truth, but as a man liable to err as well as other men. And there seems a strong symptom of his weakness, after all he had witnessed, to send two of his disciples to know whether this was the Messiah or not. Why, what an in-rolling flood was there of infidelity! John had baptized him; he had seen the heavens opened, and heard the voice from the excellent glory; had been the means of turning so many towards him and favored as he was; yet with it all, Well, owing to mysterious circumstances here am I, a minister of the gospel, shut up in prison, under the power of a bloodthirsty tyrant, Herod; here is this Messiah, if it is the true Messiah, raising the dead, working miracles on every hand; he could easily touch these prison doors, and bring me out, or slay my tyrant foe; but instead of this he leaves me here. What a mystery! "Are you he that should come, or look we for another?" The Savior sums up his answer, "Blessed is he that is not offended in me." Herod must fill up the measure of his iniquity, and then you must fill up the measure of your sufferings; by-and-bye you shall be comforted, and your mighty foe shall be tormented; which no doubt he is. Now then, the Savior never showed a weakness like that, nor any other; therefore, the Savior never weakened himself by saying or doing anything wrong; he was therefore mightier than John. The third reason why he was mightier than John was because the Spirit was not given by measure unto the Lord Jesus Christ, but without measure, beyond all comprehension. He as man dived into mysteries deeper than John could; the same mysteries, but he dived into them deeper He as man comprehended more extensively the joy to come than John could. He as man climbed higher into the settlements of heaven than John could do. John had just strength enough to do his work, the same as I have and the same as you have; but the Savior, the Spirit was not given by measure unto him. There was no danger of abundant revelations to the Son of God puffing him up, lifting him up above measure; he had no evils in him to render it possible for grace and gifts to be abused by him. Why, says Paul, "he has given me a thorn in the flesh." What for? Lest I should be exalted, puffed up, lifted up above measure. What, is your heart so deceitful as that? Yes, my heart is so deceitful; uplift with God's own gifts; makes even grace a snare; therefore, God has given me this thorn; heavy ballast thrown into my boat, seemed to threaten to sink me; now I see it is to keep me in my proper place; his grace is sufficient for me. Thus, then, the Spirit was not given by measure unto the Savior; so, he was mightier than John. And remember that his outward freedom from sin was also imputed unto John and is imputed to us. He was holy, and no outward faults disturbed him, and he has atoned for ours, and put them away; and he had the Spirit without measure, did not commit one error, nor come short in anything, and that perfection of knowledge that he had is imputed to us; Christ is our wisdom. Fourthly, and lastly, he was mightier than John, because he was God as well as man, Immanuel, God with us. John saw that he was God, that this person was travelling in the greatness of his strength, and therefore always stepped surely, always stepped victoriously, always stepped majestically; he never took an ignoble, stumbling, or wrong step. John knew, therefore, that Christ was the mighty God, the everlasting father, and the Prince of Peace. Here is the mightier than I. Just one word, and then I close; we hope to run through the other part next Lord's day morning. "Whose shoes I am not able to bear." Now to bear a person's shoes is the work in the East of the humblest servant in the establishment of the master; this is the humblest part of the service in the house, to carry the master's shoes. Therefore, the meaning is, So far from my doing God a favor in serving him, he does me a favor in allowing me into the humblest part of his household, into the humblest part of the service; not worthy to take the humblest place in his house; "rather sit at the threshold," as the margin reads it, "of the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness."