

9:16 *Piece of new cloth*- The stress may be on "a *piece*". Taking parts of Christ's teachings was the temptation being given in to by John's disciples (9:14 and see note there on *fast not*). The torn old garment had to be thrown away and the new one totally accepted and publically worn. The Greek for "new" is not the same as in "new wine" in :17. Here the word means not dressed, not worked by a dressmaker. The only other time the related word occurs is in Mk. 9:3 concerning the clothes of Jesus not having been worked by a dressmaker (AV "fuller"). The Lord Jesus presents Himself here as raw, fresh, unworked to suite the appearance of men.

To get a piece out of a new garment, that new garment would be spoiled; and the old one likewise would be rent further (Mt., Mk.). "New" cloth refers to cloth which hasn't yet been washed; on first washing of the new garment, it would shrink, and thus make a tear. The tragic waste envisioned here is like the new wine running away on the ground from the burst old bottles. Likewise the old wine skins would've had to have the old wine poured out from them to have this new wine put into them. Mixing the old life and the new covenant, a bit of the one here and a bit of the other there, results in this tragic wastage all around. The parables make it seem so obvious that this isn't the way to go; but in reality, we find it hard to be so complete in our devotion to the new covenant.

The unrent garment is that of Christ- the same Greek words are used about the fact that His garment was not rent at His death (Jn. 19:24). Division both within ourselves and within the community is caused by partial response to the new covenant; mixing grace with legalism; it is a rending of Christ's garment, cutting out just a part of it and mixing it with the old way. An old garment that is torn can't be mended by anything new- it must be thrown out and a new garment accepted. The Mosaic system is described as an old garment in Heb. 1:11; it "shall perish" uses the same Greek word as in 5:37, where the bottles "perish". The new garment of Christ is unrent. We are each clothed with the white garment of Christ's imputed righteousness (Rev. 19:8; Mt. 22:11); by dividing with each other we are seeking to rend and thereby destroy that covering. "New" translates a different Greek word than that which in the parallel Mt. 9:16 and Mk. 2:21 is translated "new". The word there means something which has not been carded. "*Agnaphos* is a combination of the negative article *a*, with *knapto*, meaning, "to card". It is sometimes translated undressed, uncombed or, as above, unfinished, and refers to wool or cotton cloth that has not been carded or combed so that the fibers are aligned, giving it both strength and a smoother, more finished appearance". This suggests that the New Covenant is an unfinished work, God's work in us is ongoing and may take apparently unstable turns and changes- e.g. prophecy is often conditional, the intended timing of Christ's return has and may yet still change, dependent upon factors like the freewill repentance of Israel; God may plan one line of possibility for someone or a whole nation, e.g. Nineveh or Israel at the time of Moses- but change His stated intention in response to human prayer and repentance. This open-ended approach simply can't be squared with the "old" set-in-stone approach of the Old Covenant. The same message is taught by the

next parable- *new* wineskins are required, because the New Covenant wine is fermenting, they need to be soft and flexible enough to change; if they are old and set, they will burst because of the movement and dynamism of the new wine. The wine of the Lord Jesus is therefore not about tradition, about a set pattern; but is rather a call to constant change and evolution. Yet paradoxically, religious people become set in their ways more than any, and seek stability in those traditions; whereas the activity of the Lord Jesus is the very opposite.

Old garment- The same phrase is used to describe the Mosaic system in Heb. 1:11.

That which is put in to fill it- This translates one Greek word, *pleroma*, which is elsewhere simply translated 'to fulfil' and refers to the fulfilment of the Law in Christ and "the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

Takes from- Gk. to separate, divide. The encounter with Christ means that ultimately there can be no brinkmanship in remaining partly with the old way, be it the Mosaic way or the way of secular modern life, and partly in the Lord's way. There will only be a painful and messy division in the end.

The rent- Gk. *schisma*, used elsewhere about divisions between people, especially the Jews, concerning Christ (e.g. Jn. 7:43; 9:16). We note the contrast with unrent, untorn garment of the Lord Jesus which even in His death was not rent. Acceptance of the way of Christ means that there will come schism with the old; and more positively, seamless unity is only possible between those who have totally given their lives and way of thinking to Him and His way.

Is made worse- The word and its NT usage has a moral sense. The division is made more evil. In the context, the Lord was addressing John's disciples who had come under the influence of the Pharisees (9:14). He is saying that they must fully commit to Him, or else the schism between them and the Jews and them and Himself will only become worse and more destructive. There could be no middle way between Christ and orthodox Judaism; the early church tried it, as the NT letters demonstrate, but in the end, it came to a sad and bitter end, and the permanent division of the garment. And this is how all schisms go- unless there is a wholehearted acceptance of Jesus and His teachings, the end finally will be a bitter, destructive rending. The pre-existing, initial schism between persons (cp. that between John's disciples and Christ) will only be made worse unless there is a total surrender to the Lord's ways. In all the unhappy church history which most of us have experienced, that is proved true time and again. Likewise there are those who seek to hide their faith in societies and social situations where it is costly to go Christ's way; but ultimately, they have to choose one way or the other. The rent is made worse. A city set on a hill cannot be hid by its nature.

9:17 *New wine-* A clear reference to Christ's blood of the new covenant.

Break- Gk. to shatter, divide. The context is of John's disciples uniting with the Pharisees against the disciples of Jesus. He's saying that if His new wine is not totally accepted, if it is mixed with the old, then lives will be destroyed through further schism. The only basis for avoiding schism is a total acceptance by all parties of the blood of the new covenant.

Runs out- S.w. "shed" (Lk. 20:20). Especially significant is the reference in Mt. 26:28 to Christ's blood of the *new* covenant being "shed". Failed spiritual life, the life which only partially accepts the new wine of Christ but refuses to change, refusing to be new containers for it, results in the blood of Christ being as it were shed, the blood of Calvary wasted in the dust, and Christ crucified afresh by our apostasy (Heb. 6:6). This is the final tragedy of refusing to change upon receipt of the new wine.

The bottles perish- The point is twice emphasized. The bottles are 'broken' or shattered, and they also "perish". The word is used of the final destruction in condemnation at the last day (Mt. 10:28,39; 16:25; Jn. 3:15). The lives of the untransformed recipients of the new wine are shattered ("break") and then finally they are destroyed in final condemnation.

New skins- Wine skins were made of goat skin. The goats speak of the rejected, the sinners, in the parable of the sheep and goats. The wine skins may therefore speak of our flesh of sin. It's no sin to be a human being and have human flesh, but because of the nature of the new wine, we must become wholly new- or we will be destroyed. The new wine fermented powerfully- similar to the Lord describing His Gospel as yeast which works through flour (Lk. 13:21). The new covenant will work powerfully in us if we let it, and our skins, the life structure we have, must be prepared to accept that. Each wineskin expanded slightly differently in response to the fermenting of the new wine poured into it; no two wineskins expanded to an identical shape or form. We too will individually and uniquely respond to the new wine.

Both are preserved- The loss is not only to the untransformed person. There is also a loss and damage to the new wine, the Lord Jesus. He is not undamaged by the loss of any of His people. Their failure is His re-crucifixion, the pouring out again of His blood, but in vain. All this signals the danger of not being totally transformed after having received the Truth. Interestingly, a form of the Greek *suntereo* ["preserved"] is used in Jn. 2:10, where it is noted that the Lord Jesus *kept* [Gk. *tereo*] the best wine. *Tereo* is frequently on the lips of the Lord in John's Gospel (and is widely used by John in his letters), in the context of 'keeping' His word. But this is done by totally surrendering human life to be a vessel totally devoted to the new wine we have received, rather than steel willed, nail-biting, white-knuckled struggle for obedience to specific laws.

Luke's record adds that the Lord concluded by observing that "No man also having drunk old

wine immediately desires new: for he says [deep within himself], "The old is better" (Lk. 5:39). This appears to be a concession to the weakness of John's disciples, and to our weakness. Having taught that unless we are transformed, we shall shatter and be destroyed / condemned, the Lord accepts the basic conservatism of human nature- that we will not make the change immediately. There was indeed a changeover period between the Lord's death and the destruction of the temple in AD70. And in human lives today, the Lord recognizes that the total change of life will not come immediately- because we are essentially conservative. In seeking to make the total transformation, we ourselves must realize that however progressive, liberal, flexible, open to new ideas we think we are- when it comes to spiritual change, we are terribly conservative. And it is such unbridled conservatism which stops people changing and accepting the new wine. There is the assumption in many Christian groups and minds that conservative = righteous, and change is likely to be for the worst. And yet the Lord is teaching that it is our native conservatism which stops the vital, transforming change which is necessary to avoid the shattering of life and personality now, and final destruction at judgment day. The Lord here recognizes the basic conservatism of human nature; even those who consider themselves "liberal" are often only so in comparison to others, in relative terms- we are all in fact basically conservative. We stick with what we know and don't easily go outside our comfort zone of the old and familiar. We all find change hard; new wineskins are able to be stretched. He was perhaps, in the context, making some apology for John's disciples, who still couldn't fully allow themselves to be filled with the new covenant wine. The Gospel of Jesus is all about change and being stretched; and He recognizes that we find this so very difficult. People do not immediately / quickly respond to the new wine of the new covenant because, the Lord piercingly observed, they think the old was better (Lk. 5:39). He perceived, with His amazing penetration of the human psyche, that there is a conservatism deep within us all that militates against the immediate response to Him and the new wine of His blood / sacrifice which He so seeks. Yet once we have made this immediate response in a few things, it becomes easier to get into an upward spiral of response to Him. We become truly a new creation in Him, breaking constantly with factor after factor in our past, which has previously defined us as persons. Quite simply, we become new persons, with all the rejection of the 'old' ways which this requires.

The parable of the sower shows how the Lord foresaw that the majority who responded to His word would not hold on; He knew that men would not immediately appreciate the blood of His cross, but would prefer the old wine of the old covenant (Lk. 5:39). He saw that our spiritual growth would be an agonizingly slow business; as slow as a tiny mustard seed growing into a tree, as slow as a man digging a foundation in rock, or a seed growing and bringing forth fruit. Such growth is *very slow from a human perspective*. The parable of the wine exactly predicted the attitude of people to Christ's work in taking the Old Covenant out of the way. The Lord is surely saying: 'I know you won't immediately want the blood of my new covenant. I understand your nature, by nature you'll prefer what you are familiar with, the Old Covenant; you won't

"straightway" desire the new wine, but (by implication) you will, after a while' (Lk. 5:39). He foresaw how the implication of the blood of His sacrifice wouldn't be accepted by His people first of all. It would be a process, of coming to accept how radical the gift of His blood is. As we weekly take the cup of His covenant, we come to see more and more the excellency of that blood, and its supremacy over all else. Christ recognized that conservatism in human nature which will naturally shy away from the marvellous implications of what He achieved for us. And true enough, whenever we talk about the present aspect of the Kingdom of God, our present blessings of redemption in Christ, the sense in which we have already been saved...there is a desire to shy away from it all. And true enough, the early Christian believers desperately clung on to the Mosaic food laws, circumcision and synagogue attendance as far as they could; the command to witness to the Gentiles was likewise not taken seriously for some time. It must have been painful for the Lord to know this and to see it, recognizing in it a lack of appreciation of His life and final sacrifice, a desire to reconcile with God without totally committing oneself to His work. He saw the possibility of His blood being wasted if men didn't change from old to new wineskins. The slowness of the changeover in attitudes amongst the early believers must have been a great pain to Him; as if His blood was being poured out again. The implication is that we shed His blood afresh if we won't change, if we allow the conservatism of our natures to have an iron grip upon us we not only destroy ourselves, but waste the blood of the Son of God. This is the danger of the conservatism that is in our natures; it was this which led men to shed the Lord's blood, and it is this same element within us which He foresaw would lead us to crucify Him afresh. How many times has this conservatism been mistaken as true spirituality! How careful we must be, therefore, not to adopt any attitude which glorifies that conservatism and masks it as the hallmark of a stable believer. The sensitivity of Jesus to the value of the human person was the very opposite of this.

9:18 *While He spake*- The impression is given that the ruler was begging the Lord for the healing of his daughter, but instead the Lord delayed responding in order to complete the teaching He was giving about the vital need for total transformation if we have received the new wine. He felt His message was that important. We also notice something which we see several times in the Gospel records- the Lord appears to not respond to human need, to even be deaf to it. For a while. The reason for that, both then and now, was surely to pique the intensity and urgency of the requests.

A certain ruler- Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue (Mk.). Matthew omits his name- perhaps because his Gospel first circulated in areas local to Jairus where the mention of his name could've led to persecution? The Orthodox Jewish opposition claimed that none of the rulers [i.e. rulers of the synagogues] had believed on Jesus (Jn. 7:48), and yet Jn. 12:42 notes that "Among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be cast out of the synagogue". Jairus clearly was one such ruler, and yet he didn't confess Jesus for fear of consequence and disfellowship. Remember that Jairus had come

to Jesus whilst He had been teaching John's disciples the need to totally accept His new wine and not compromise with Judaism and the Pharisees who were standing with them. But whilst He was teaching that, Jairus had been clamouring for Jesus to come and heal his daughter (see on *While He spake*). He rather missed the essential spiritual point because he was distracted by his human need. The Lord's sermon on the mount taught that we are a city set on a hill which cannot be hid, and that if we seek to hide our light under a bucket, then we will lose the light altogether. The omission of Jairus' name in Matthew leads me to fear that perhaps Jairus drifted away from faith, although his great faith at this particular moment in time is recorded positively.

Worshipped Him- Perhaps not in so many words, but in that believing in the Lord's absolute power in action is a form of worshipping Him. The same formula is used in Mt. 8:2- the leper worshipped Jesus in that he expressed faith in His power to cleanse (also in Mt. 15:25). The Greek *proskuneo* is not used (as some Trinitarians wrongly claim) exclusively of worship of God. It is used in the LXX, classical Greek and in the later New Testament for worship of men- e.g. Cornelius worshipped Peter (Acts 10:25), men will worship faithful Christians (Rev. 3:9), the beast is worshipped (Rev. 13:4).

Even now dead- The Greek could carry the idea of 'for now, she is dead' (see the usage in Mt. 3:15; Jn. 13:7; 16:12,31; 1 Cor. 13:12 etc.); in this case, the man believed her death state was only temporary, until the resurrection he believed Jesus would achieve.

Come- The man "came" to Jesus, and now Jesus 'comes' to the man; the same Greek word is used twice. The impression is given of a mutuality between the Lord and those who come to Him in faith.

9:19 This verse zooms in close on the body language and physical movement of the characters, as if the author was the cameraman on the scene. Truly we have eye witness accounts in places like this. The image of the Lord Jesus following a man is unusual, as readers are accustomed to the disciples following the Lord, not Him following men. The point perhaps is that He is responsive to human need and prayer in a sense controls Him, according to His will of course. The picture is of the man racing ahead, so eager to get home. This sets the scene for the interruption to the journey, and serves to heighten the sense we get of his frustration with the woman who is taking up the Lord's time, when for him, every second counted so crucially.

9:20 *Behold*- If Matthew is like a cameraman at these scenes, the word "behold" is as it were a zoom in message, bringing us to focus upon an individual.

Twelve years- Exactly how old the child was. Clearly the hand of providence had been at work in both these lives according to some defined sense of timing.

Came behind- The scene is being developed from 9:19, where the Lord and the disciples are following the rushing man; and now we 'see' the woman coming behind Jesus, as if she in this sense was also one of the disciples who followed behind Him.

Touched the hem- Her example inspired the many others who later sought to do this in Mt. 14:36. It has been suggested that the hem of the garment referred to the blue band which was to be worn by Jews to remind them of their commitment to obedience to God. In this case she would have been seeking to associate herself with the righteousness of Christ and be healed / saved [the same Greek word is used] thereby. In essence, this is what faith and baptism into Christ is all about. But the simpler reading is that she thought that if she associated herself even with the Lord's periphery, she would thereby be saved / healed. Given Jewish phobia about blood and the fact that any touching her would have been ritually unclean, she surely disguised her condition. And yet she didn't consider that her uncleanness could make the Lord unclean. Her view of His righteousness was correct- it can be shared with us, but our uncleanness cannot negate His purity. She was driven to this insight by her desperation, just as Job's desperation led him to understand doctrinal truths that were beyond his time and place.

The Lord allowed this interruption when the man was so earnest that the Lord would haste to his home. The Lord, and the hand of providence, wanted to teach the man that how long a person has been dead is no barrier to resurrection; his faith needed to be developed further. And it fits in with the apparent silence of the Lord, always to develop the intensity of our desire for Him and our focus upon Him. Jesus focused on the essential whilst still being human enough to be involved in the irrelevancies which cloud the lives of all other men. Just glancing through a few random chapters from the Gospels reveals this tremendous sense of focus which He had, and His refusal to be distracted by self-justification. In all of the following examples I suspect we would have become caught up with justifying ourselves and answering the distractions to the point that our initial aim was paralyzed.

Focus	Distraction	Resumed Focus
The sick woman touches His clothes, and He turns around to see her. He wants to talk to her.	The disciples tell Him that this is unreasonable, as a huge crowd is pressing on to Him	"He looked round about [again] to see her that had done this thing" (Mk. 5:30-32). He talks to her.
He says that the dead girl is only sleeping; for	"They laughed Him to scorn"	"But..." He put them all out of the house and raised her (Mk.

He wants to raise her.		5:40,41).
He was moved with compassion for the crowds, and wants to feed them and teach them more.	The disciples tell Him to send the people away as it was getting late	He tells the disciples to feed them so that they can stay and hear more (Mk. 6:35-37)
Again He has compassion on the hunger of the crowd	The disciples mock His plan to feed them	He feeds them (Mk. 8:3-6)
He explains how He must die	Peter rebukes Him	He repeats His message, telling them that they too must follow the way of the cross (Mk. 8:31-34)

9:21 *She said within herself*- Earlier in this chapter the inner thoughts of the Scribes were discerned by the Lord (9:4); here again we have insight into private thoughts. This emphasis upon thoughts continues that of the Sermon on the Mount; and contributes to the general impression Matthew gives of the importance of thought, what Paul later calls 'spirit'. For to be spiritually minded is indeed the very quintessence of Christianity.

If I may but- 'If I can *only*' is the idea; she thought that physical touch was all that was required. She had the same wrong notion as many Orthodox and Catholic believers have today- that some physical item can give healing. The Lord corrected her by telling her that it was *her faith*- not the touch of His garment- that had made her whole (Mt. 9:21,22). As so often, He had focused on what was positive in her, rather than the negative. We know that usually the Lord looked for faith in people before healing them. Yet after this incident there are examples of where those who merely sought to touch His garment were healed (Mk. 6:56; Lk. 6:19). They were probably hopeful that they would have a similar experience to the woman. One could argue they were mere opportunists, as were their relatives who got them near enough to Jesus' clothes. And probably there was a large element of this in them. But the Lord saw through all this to what faith there was, and responded to it. It is perhaps not accidental that Mark records the link between faith and Jesus' decision to heal in the same chapter (Mk. 6:5). When we fear there is interest in our message only for what material benefit there may be for the hearers, we need to

remember this. To identify wrong motives doesn't mean that we turn away; we must look deeper, and hope more strongly.

I shall be whole- The Greek *sozo* is that usually used for 'saved'. She had a wider desire for not only healing (for which other Greek words could have been used) but for salvation on a wider level.

9:22 Turned Him about- Again the emphasis is upon recording the physical movement of the persons involved in the scene, so that we can visually reconstruct it. The Gospel records, Luke especially, often record how the Lord turned and spoke to His followers- as if He was in the habit of walking ahead of them, with them following (Lk. 7:9,44,55; 10:23; 14:25; 23:28; Mt. 9:22; Jn. 1:38). Peter thought that following the Lord was not so hard, because he was literally following Jesus around first century Israel, and identifying himself with His cause. But he simply failed to make the connection between following and cross carrying. And we too can agree to follow the Lord without realizing that it means laying down our lives.

Daughter- Perhaps the Lord was using the term in the Hebraic sense of 'descendant', seeing her as a daughter of Abraham because of her faith in Him.

Be of good comfort- The language has clear parallels with the healing of the paralyzed man recorded earlier in 9:2. "Son" there is matched by "daughter" here, and is followed by the same "be of good comfort". This phrase is used by the Lord four times in the Gospels (Mt. 9:2,22; 14:27; Jn. 16:33); like all of us, He had some phrases He liked to use. But after His resurrection, He used the same phrase when He appeared to Paul (Acts 23:11). He is the same today as yesterday (Heb. 13:8), even down to His word choice and style of speaking. The Jesus whom we shall meet at judgment day is the same Jesus who walked around Galilee; and likewise, our essential personality will be continued eternally throughout the Kingdom. Our spirit will be saved (1 Cor. 5:5), just as His was.

Your faith- The emphasis was on the word "faith"; see on 9:21. The *faith* of the sick woman is commended by the Lord- when it was due to her *understanding* of the significance of the *hem* of the Lord's robe that she had touched Him. She had perceived the connection with the High Priest's hem; perhaps too she had added Job's comment about our touching but the hem of God's

garment into the equation. And certainly she perceived that the sun of righteousness of Mal. 4 had healing in his hems / wings of his garment.

The Centurion's servant was healed for the sake of *his* faith; Jairus' daughter was healed because of *his* faith (Mk. 5:36). Hence the Lord told them to believe and stop wavering, so that she would be made whole, or "saved" (Lk. 8:50). This comes straight after the Lord's commendation of the woman with "an issue of blood": "Thy faith hath made thee whole [or, saved]" (Lk. 8:48). It's as if the two healings are similar in their result- being made whole, or saved- and both required faith. But the woman's own personal faith which led to her healing is paralleled with the faith of the family of the girl who was resurrected.

Luke adds: "There comes one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Your daughter is dead, trouble not the Master" (Lk. 8:49). We naturally ask: *who* was this "one" who came with this message? In the Gospels, it is often the disciples who term Jesus "the Master". The implication is that it was they who thought that Jesus wouldn't have the power to raise the dead, perhaps connecting with their own studied lack of faith in His resurrection later. And the Lord goes on to calm them: "Do not fear *but* believe" (Lk. 8:50). This shows the power of fear- it is fear which stops faith, fear is the opposite of faith. If we know the love that casts out fear, then a whole new style of relationships becomes possible. In so many relationships there is a balance of power which is more realistically a balance of fear- a fear of losing, of being made to look small, a fighting back with self-affirmation against the fear of being subsumed by the other. Be it parents and kids, teachers and students, pastor and flock, so often both sides fear the other. Yet if we are truly affirmed in Christ, no longer seeking victory because we have found victory in Him, His victories become ours... then our whole positioning in relationships becomes so different. For example, our fear of rejection becomes less significant if we believe firmly in our acceptance in the eyes of the Lord, the only one whose judgment has ultimate value. If we can say with Paul that for us the judgment of others has very little value, because we only have one judge... then we will no longer worrying about acting in such a way as to impress others. No longer will it be so important to not express our inner thoughts about people or situations for fear of not using the constant 'nicespeak' which results in judgment from others unless it's used. There will be a congruence between what we feel and think within us, and what we actually show. And thus we will avoid the dysfunction which is so apparent in so many, as they forever struggle to control their outward expressions, hiding their real self, with the real self and the external self struggling against each other in a painful dis-ease.

9:23 *When... He saw...He said-* This is the process of usual human experience, perception and response to perception. It's yet another evidence of the Lord's humanity.

Came into- This Greek phrase is used so often in the Synoptics. Just in Matthew 9, Jesus came into His own city (9:1), came into the ruler's house (9:23) and came into a house (9:28). Consider the other usages of the phrase in Matthew alone: He came into Israel (Mt. 2:21), came into Nazareth (2:23), came into Capernaum (4:13), came into Peter's house (8:14), came into the land of the Gergesenes (8:28); came into a synagogue (12:9), came into a house (13:36), came into His own region (13:54), came into the land of Gennesaret (14:34), came into Magdala (15:39), came into Caesarea (16:13), came into Capernaum (17:24), came into the borders of Judea (19:1), came into Bethphage (21:1), came into the temple (21:23), came into Gethsemane (26:36), came into the place called Golgotha (27:33). Mark and Luke record even other cases of His 'coming into' various towns, areas and situations. It is a huge emphasis. John's Gospel uses the term, but frequently in the more abstract sense of the Lord Jesus 'coming into' the (Jewish) world. The prologue uses the Greek phrase three times alone in describing how Jesus 'came into' the world and into "His own" (Jn. 1:7,9,11). He was the light and prophet that "came into the world" (Jn. 3:19; 6:14). John's references to the Lord Jesus coming "into the world" (Jn. 12:46; 16:28; 18:37) are therefore not to be read as implying that He literally came down out of Heaven into the world; but rather they are John's more abstract equivalent of the Synoptics' direct and repeated statements that the Lord came into the Jewish world of His day, into human situations. His sending of us out "into" the world is therefore inviting us to go forth and enter into our world and its various situations just as He did. We are to replicate His ministry in our world and situations.

Minstrels- Flute players. If these had already been called, the implication is that the girl had been dead for some time. This places a question mark over the ruler's claim that his daughter had only just died (9:18 Gk.). All through these accounts we see the Lord's grace. The man exaggerated, just as the woman thought that merely touching Christ's clothes was all that was needed for a miracle- and yet the Lord graciously worked with all these people and situations to bless them. On the other hand, embalming would've been done quickly, and perhaps the intensity of the tumult and weeping was because she had indeed just died, and the minstrels would have only just arrived. The Lord in this case would've arrived at the very peak of human distress and need. This is why He was 'delayed' on the way, in order for that peak of need to be reached.

Making a noise- Gk. a tumult. Mk. 5:38,39 emphasizes the extraordinary agitation.

9:24 *Give place-* The idea is 'Go away'. He was not particularly attempting to create some calm before doing the miracle; but rather was He telling the hired mourners and flute players that their services were no longer necessary. Often the Lord acts before a miracle as if He is sure the

miracle is going to actually happen. In this He exemplifies faith- believing that we have already received what we asked for, and acting appropriately. We think of Paul being so confident in his release from prison that he asks people to prepare a room for him to stay in (Philemon 22). In this case, the Lord saw the dead as if she was actually alive, although sleeping. This is to be our perspective regarding those whom we believe shall be resurrected.

Laughed Him to scorn- This is recorded in all three of the Synoptics (Mk. 5:40; Lk. 8:53). It made a deep impression upon them all. The Greek could suggest (although not necessarily) that there was a process of derision here which left the Lord looking somehow scorned ("to scorn"). Perhaps He blushed, or looked at the ground- for He was after all human. Clearly these people were just the hired mourners and flute players. There was an element of anger in their derision because clearly money and payment were at issue if they were to just be sent away.

Luke records how Peter, James, John and the parents of the dead girl entered the house where she was *alone*; and then "they" laughed Jesus to scorn when He proclaimed she was merely asleep (Lk. 8:51,53). It's psychologically unlikely that the distraught, desperately hopeful parents would've ridiculed Jesus like this at that time. The reference is surely to the three disciples doing this. This is a profound recognition of the disciples' weakness- there, alone with Jesus and the distraught parents, they mocked Jesus' ability to resurrect the girl. And they have the profound humility to tell the world about that in their record of the Gospel.

9:25 When the people were put forth- The Lord was consciously seeking to reduce the element of hysteria at the miracle He knew He was going to do. He wanted as few as possible to see the dead body actually revive. There was perhaps a similar logic in the way His own resurrection was not done publically and His risen body was only seen by a relatively few rather than being displayed publically. This was not His way, nor the Father's way, even during His ministry.

Took her by the hand...- The whole scene of putting mourners out of the house, taking her by the hand and raising her up was followed exactly by Peter in raising Tabitha. The Lord's style, language and even body language became the pattern for those who had been with Him, and it must be the same for us. The Gospels are written in such a way, that through the power of inspiration we can as it were be there with the disciples likewise watching Jesus and learning of His Spirit.

Mark adds that the Lord said: "Talitha cumi, which is, My child, I say to you, Get up" (Mk. 5:41). "Get up" there isn't from the '*anastasis*' group of words which are used about the 'rising up' of dead people in resurrection. It's *egeiro*, which more literally means 'to get up'. 'Honey, it's time to get up now' was what the Lord was saying- not 'I command you to resurrect'. He had raised her, given her life, and He knew that. In fact, He'd done it a while beforehand. For He told the mourners: "The girl isn't dead, she's only sleeping" (:24; Mk. 5:39). He raised her even before going into the room- and He knew that. And so when He finally saw her, He took her hand and gently asked her to get up out of bed. His gentleness, His faith, His calmness, His certainty that the Father heard Him- are all wondrous. The way the Lord healed people reflects His sensitivity- He commanded food to be brought for this girl who had been dead and was therefore hungry (Lk. 8:55).

The Lord Jesus, in His ministry, had forbidden the extroverts from publicly preaching about Him, as they naturally wanted to (e.g. Mk. 8:26). To keep silent was an act of the will for them, something against the grain. It is hard to find any other explanation for why He told Jairus not to tell anyone that He had raised his daughter (Lk. 8:56)- for it would have been obvious, surely. For they knew she had died (8:53). By contrast, those who would naturally have preferred to stay quiet were told to go and preach (e.g. Mk. 5:19). Perhaps Paul was in this category. The parallel between the Lord's words and works is brought out in Lk. 9:43,44: "They wondered at all things which Jesus *did*...He said...let these *sayings* sink down into your ears". There are no distinct 'sayings' of Jesus in this context; He wanted them to see that His works were His words. There was perfect congruence between what He said and what He did. Perhaps this was why He told the parents of the girl whom He resurrected "to tell no man what was done" (Lk. 8:56), even though it was so obvious; He wanted His self-evident works to speak for themselves, without the need for human words. For His works were essentially His message.

9:26 *The fame*- Gk. 'the rumour'. This is why the Lord seems to have disliked doing public stunts and miracles in front of many eyes; He didn't want this kind of publicity. Rumours, inevitably exaggerated and distorted, started to spread about Him. He wanted to teach God's word, and the miracles were incidental to that. So easily, they created a false message about Him because of the rumours which were created by them. It was inevitable that such rumours would spread, and yet it is hard to find anywhere in the Gospels where the Lord specifically seeks to correct them. Instead He focused upon being Himself and teaching the message He had come to deliver, and living the life He had to live. This focus needs to be remembered by us in our ministries, for the more earnestly we work for Him the more rumours will be generated and come back to our ears. But the Lord appears to have largely ignored them, and to have allowed His own personal example to be the ultimate answer to all rumours.

Abroad into all that land- The Greek *ge* is used for "land" and the language could hint at a global distribution of the Lord's fame, as if Matthew saw in this a foretaste of the future spreading of the Gospel about Jesus.

9:27 Departed- The same word translated "passed forth" in 9:27. It was such a long day for the Lord, wave after wave of need assailing Him. And perhaps He had many such days, this is just one typical day recorded. That He maintained mental perfection despite exposing Himself to such pressure and exhaustion is a window into His love and desire to save humanity. He could easily have reasoned it was better to take it easy locked in a monastery-type existence. But that would've led to sins of omission, and love is simply not like that. The same word is used again in Mt. 20:30, where again two blind men latch onto Him as He 'passes by' or 'departs'. The picture is of circumstances repeating in the Lord's life, just as they do within ours. Doubtless the later two blind men were inspired by the story of these two blind men. The note that the Lord 'passed by' is again an indication of eye witness accounts, with the Gospel writer as a kind of inspired cameraman focusing closely upon the Lord's movements and presenting us with a gripping picture of Him and His movements, so that we may really feel we too are 'there'.

Son of David- A phrase emphasized in Matthew more than the other Gospels. Significantly, he records the phrase on the lips of the wise men who came from a Gentile land (Mt. 2:1-12), a Gentile woman (Mt. 15:22), children (Mt. 21:15) and twice on the lips of two blind men (here and in Mt. 20:30). Perhaps the implication is that the Jewish spiritual leadership didn't perceive Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of David- it was the blind, Gentiles, children, women, i.e. the marginalized, who did so.

Have mercy- There is a definite connection between the appeal for mercy and faith the Jesus is "Son of David", both here and elsewhere (Mt. 15:20; 20:30,31). This surely was because of their understanding that God's mercy would not depart from David's son (2 Sam. 7:14; 22:51), the mercy to David was therefore "sure" (Is. 55:3); thus these people understood that if *Jesus* as the "Son of David" enjoyed the mercy / favour of God, therefore He could share that mercy with them. They believed what the Lord made explicit in John 17- that the relationship He enjoyed with His Father could really be shared with all who believed in Him. No wonder that the Lord healed these thoughtful, marginalized people; they really had meditated deeply upon Him. We should also note that in Hebrew thought, being a 'son of' someone meant sharing their characteristics. And David must be the most merciful of all the Old Testament characters; his grace to Saul and the family of Saul, to Absalom and all who rose up against him, are amazing.

9:28 *When He was come into the house-* The men had been crying (Gk. 'shrieking') to Him as He was walking to the house; but He waited until He was in the house before healing them. This is similar to how on the way to cure Jairus' daughter, the Lord appeared not to be so urgently responsive; He stopped to cure the woman with blood issues. Likewise He remained 'asleep' on the boat as the waves almost submerged it. This is not because He doesn't care, is too busy, or has slow responses to human situations. Rather by this method does He seek to heighten *our* sense of desperation, faith and need for Him.

Do you believe?- It might have seemed obvious that they believed the Lord was able to heal them. But by having to face the question, the issues are focused. And the Lord also perceived a difference between people who simply have desperate need and urgently beg anyone for help- and those who believe in His ability to resolve the issue. The cry of need is not the same as the cry of faith. The cry of need simply is an animal cry of desperation for help, any help, from anyone. Whereas the cry of faith is focused specifically upon the Father and Son and their unique ability and power. The Lord clearly wanted to ensure these men made that distinction, and He works in our lives likewise. The question "Do you believe...?" sounds rather like a question asked before baptizing someone. It's possible that Matthew was aware of that, and was again seeking to develop a continuity between the people Jesus encountered during His ministry, and we whom He encounters today.

That I am able- The Lord wanted to know if they accepted His *ability* to do the cure. He was probing the degree to which they would accept that He could therefore choose not to cure them. He therefore spoke in terms of His *ability* to cure.

Yes, Lord- A poor translation. *Nai* means far more than "yes", it is a solemn affirmation, better rendered 'Truly'. Along with the confession of the Lordship of Jesus, this heightens the impression that we have here some form of early confession of faith, as if these men were being set up as representative of all those who later would likewise profess faith and come from darkness to light. Being blind, these men had never seen Jesus and yet they believed in Him; perhaps there is emphasis in Matthew upon the faith of blind men because these people were in a similar situation to the recipients of his Gospel- believing on having heard but never having actually seen Jesus.

9:29 *Touched*- The eyes of these blind men may well have been secreting ritually unclean body fluid. Actually touching the eyes, when the Lord had all manner of options open to Him, reflects His desire to connect with human weakness and need as directly and intimately as possible. Again, Matthew the cameraman is as it were zooming in close up on the movements of even the Lord's fingers. Around 30 times the Lord is described as touching people to heal them, with the principle "touch not the unclean thing" clearly in view. By doing so, making this conscious allusion to one of the greatest tenets of Judaism and Jewish social interaction, He was redefining 'touching'. He perceived that the ritual requirements not to touch the unclean were not because there was anything unclean in itself on a metaphysical level, but rather to teach against involvement in wickedness. But to save the unclean, we must touch them, be involved with them, enter into their lives, engage with them. And the Lord insistently and repeatedly demonstrated this by touching the unclean. Many conservative Christian believers make the same mistake as the Jews- they consider that the Lord's table must be closed to the unclean. But there is no guilt by association. We are not to "fellowship the unfruitful works of darkness" in the sense of participating in them ourselves, but we are to reach out to and 'touch' the individuals caught up in those things. The Lord's redefinition of 'touch' needs to be taken seriously by many conservative communities today. And we note how just a few verses earlier, earlier that same day, the unclean woman had 'touched' Jesus. And now He in turn touches others. In ritual terms, He was unclean and was spreading His uncleanness to another. But He was actually spreading His holiness by doing so. He was purposefully subverting the understanding of guilt by association and uncleanness by physical touch.

According to your faith be it unto you- This might imply that the extent of their restored vision was dependent upon the degree of their faith. In some cases, the Father and Son operate in a sovereign way, as with the blind man of John 9 who was cured without knowing who Jesus was. In others, their action and the extent of it is directly in proportion to human faith.

9:30 *Opened*- The Lord's work is to be repeated by us, for we are commissioned as Paul was to open the eyes of those in spiritual darkness (Acts 26:18). We therefore are not to simply view Him and His work in Palestine as history, as interesting background... He there, in all His ways, in life and death, is our real pattern to be copied in our own contexts of life.

See that no man- The Greek for "see" means just that, indeed it can mean to stare, to look intently at something. Clearly it's a play on ideas- 'Now you can see, use your seeing to ensure that nobody knows about this'. But surely it would be obvious? How can a healed blind man be hidden? How can it not be known what has happened to him? And this was exactly the point. In line with the Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, our witness is essentially in who we

are. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. There is no possibility that a lamp burning in the darkness can be unnoticed. And by this command to tell nobody, the Lord was encouraging them to witness in exactly the way He had outlined in the Sermon. Clearly the man wanted to shout out his good news. But by quietly walking around, seeing life as it really is, being his normal self, this would be an even more powerful witness.

9:31 *But they-* Disobedience to the Lord's desire for witness is a sad feature of the New Testament record, not least in the initial refusal by the disciples to obey the great commission and take the Gospel to the entire Gentile world.

9:32 *As they went out-* S.w. "departed" in :31. This was a very long day for the Lord. Again, Matthew's record focuses upon physical movement of the players in the scene. It was as the cured blind men were going out of the house, intent on disobedience to the Lord's request not to publicize their cure, with the Lord surely guessing that would be the case, that people brought a dumb man to him for healing. Wave after wave of pressure and human need broke against the Lord; we can only admire His stamina and core principle of love which enabled Him to endure and not turn others away because of His own exhaustion.

They brought- Gk. they lead to Him. Again, Matthew focuses close up on the person of the Lord and the physical movements involving Him.

A dumb man possessed with a demon- The statement is not that he was dumb *and* demon possessed. Clearly the idea was that his dumbness was thought to be due to His possession by a demon. The causes of dumbness have now been analysed and explained. It's not caused by demons, and is today usually capable of some degree of cure or improvement. Therapy doesn't partially drive demons away. Clearly, the language of demon possession was used to describe illness and human conditions which could not be otherwise explained in the first century.

9:33 *When the demon was cast out the dumb spake-* Recorded from the perspective of the onlookers. They couldn't perceive that a dumb person could be healed without something exiting them. I have heard doctors in less developed parts of the world using language such as 'This will get it out of you' when persuading uneducated folks to take medicines. This verse proves too much for those who claim demons actually exist- for it suggests that dumbness is cured by a demon being located and cast out from within the person. Yet dumb people are cured by medical

methods that make no reference to demons. The dumb spoke, whilst in the same chapter, on the same day, the lame had been made to walk and the blind been given sight; and the deaf had been given hearing (if Mk. 7:32-37 occurred at the same time). So during this very long day in the Lord's ministry, the Kingdom prophecy of Is. 35:5-7 had been initially fulfilled. Perhaps the people came seeking such healing because they were convinced that Messiah had come and His Kingdom must be beginning. Despite their misunderstanding the nature of the Kingdom, the Lord seems to have responded positively to their faith, just as He does with misbelievers today.

Never seen in Israel- There were people claiming to cast out demons in Israel at the Lord's time. But as Josephus records, they operated by first asking the sick person for the name of the demon within them and then cursing that demon until it supposedly departed. The need to name demons was therefore very important for the exorcists. The problem with dumb people was that they couldn't speak, most were illiterate and couldn't write, so it was thought to be very hard to cure the dumb because they could never name the demon possessing them to an exorcist. The Lord's healing of dumb demons (as the people understood it) therefore placed Him in a category of His own far above the exorcists.

9:34 We sense that the Pharisees were desperate to minimize the Lord's miracles, but they were driven to admit they were miracles, the demons did actually leave (as they saw it), and all they could say was that the Lord must therefore have been in league with the prince of the demons. This of course was a foolish and desperate argument, because as the Lord later pointed out, their sons also claimed to drive out demons, so that would imply that they were also in league with the prince of the demons. This shows that the miracles of Jesus were beyond doubt, as those by Peter were later. Genuine miracles wrought by the Holy Spirit cannot be denied even by the most cynical- contrasting sharply with many Pentecostal claims of healing and supposed exercise of the Spirit gifts of healing.

9:35 *Jesus went about-* As in 4:23, the emphasis seems to be upon the Lord trying to get to as many isolated people as possible. The Greek suggests this idea, and is used again in Mt. 23:15 "You *compass* sea and land to make one proselyte". The Lord's emphasis upon the villages rather than the big cities such as Sepphoris was in line with His mission to specifically get to the marginalized and those whom no itinerant preacher ever would bother trying to get to. The "villages" would've been no more than a few houses, requiring hours of walking to, over hilly tracks. Our own missionary work can take an example from this, but for all of us there should be the spirit of wanting to spread the message to the very corners of society.

Preaching the Gospel- Literally, heralding the Gospel of the Kingdom. Not 'Preaching / heralding the Kingdom', but heralding the preaching of that Kingdom. The difference is significant. The Lord saw Himself as doing the groundwork for another evangelizing of the Kingdom- namely that which would be done by us. Significantly we read that Paul simply preached [s.w.] the Kingdom (Acts 28:31). Matthew, like the other evangelists, often hints at the great commission to spread the Gospel with which the Gospels all end (even John, if you look for it!).

Every sickness... every disease- As if the Lord purposefully tried to engage with every kind of human need and weakness. This means that His unity with humanity, His ability to be a total representative and utterly sympathetic High Priest "in every point" (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:15,16), was not something which was achieved automatically. He consciously worked on it, and His life of engagement with humanity resulted in Him developing into the unique mediator and representative which He is. The language here is repeated in 10:1 concerning the work of the disciples- the Lord's preaching ministry isn't mere history, it is to be replicated in essence in *our* ministry.

Among the people- Literally, "in" the people. There is the hint at internal sickness and healing.

9:36 *When He saw-* This is part of the general summary of His preaching work which we have in :35. Most men would've inwardly groaned whenever they saw the crowds surging towards them. But not the Lord. Every time He saw a crowd of humanity, He was moved with compassion. We too are faced by human need, crowds of it, if only we will have the sensitivity to perceive it. And instead of groaning and raising eyebrows, we ought to be moved with compassion at their need, at how humanity is rudderless- if we have the spirit of Christ.

Had compassion- Several times used in the Gospels about the Lord's response to people. In His self-revelation in the parables, the Lord uses the same word about Himself and the Father- He is the Samaritan who "had compassion" on the wounded man (Lk. 10:33), as the Father of the prodigal son likewise had compassion on him (Lk. 15:20). Mk. 6:34 adds at this point that He *therefore*, as a result of that compassion, started to "teach them many things". Then He asked His disciples, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest..." (Mt. 9:36-38). It was their spiritual as well as their material and human need which evoked His compassion. I have to say that this spirit of urgent compassion is not as strong among us as it should be. There seem few if any tears shed for the tragedy of humanity. The

world's desperation seems written off as 'they're not interested' rather than felt as a tragedy that should evoke our emotional and practical response. When Jesus saw the leper who wanted to be "clean"- not just 'cured' or eased of his discomfort- He made an emotional response. He put forth His hand, touched him, and made him clean- because He was "moved with compassion" (Mk. 1:40,41). Mt. 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mk. 5:19 and Lk. 7:13 all record other times when the sheer humanity of the situation evoked the Lord's compassion: e.g. the woman in the funeral procession of her dear son, or the hungry crowds, unfed for 3 days...

Fainted and were scattered abroad- Could be rendered "harassed and helpless".

Sheep without a shepherd- The hypocrisy of the Pharisees didn't simply irritate the Lord, He went further to proactively feel sorry for the crowds who were without a shepherd- and He did something about it. Their lack of shepherds is the background for the Lord's command to pray therefore for *workers* to be sent out into the harvest (Mt. 9:37,38). We might think that the crowds being without a shepherd would lead the Lord to urge that good shepherds be sent to them. But instead He chooses another metaphor- seasonal labourers required to go and reap a harvest. Perhaps this was because He didn't consider the disciples nor indeed anyone in Palestine at the time to really be capable for shepherding. He was the only shepherd- the singular good shepherd. Perhaps the point of the change of metaphor was that the Lord's flock doesn't need mere shepherds, those in the positions of leadership, so much as *workers* first and foremost. The Lord is clearly alluding to the concern of Moses that after he died, the people would not be "as sheep which have no shepherd" (Num. 27:17). The hint is that Israel were in effect without Moses- whereas the Jewish religious leadership considered that they were being fiercely faithful to Moses. Perhaps there is also the hint that the Lord realized that He would not always be with these crowds (He had just taught that the bridegroom would be taken away from them in 9:15), and His prayer is that the Father will send out workers to replace Him. For our ministry in this world is effectively that of Jesus reincarnated in us as His body. See on 10:1.

9:37 *The harvest-* The harvest and reaping is ultimately at the Lord's second coming (Mt. 13:30,39). The prayer here could not simply be for more Gospel workers, but for the Angels who are the reapers in Mt. 13:39 to be sent forth- thus, a prayer for the second coming, motivated by the hopeless situation with the shepherds of God's people. But we can surely interpret the Lord as once again teaching the 'now but not yet' aspect of His Kingdom. Insofar as we go out and reap the harvest, we are doing what the Angels will do at the second coming. Note how He saw the crowds who wanted only loaves and fishes as a great harvest. He saw the potential... Note how the phrase "the harvest is *plenteous*" uses the word usually translated "great" in describing the

“great multitudes” that flocked to the Lord (Mt. 4:25; 8:1,16,18; 12:15; 13:2; 14:14; 15:30; 19:2; 20:29) . Those crowds were seen by Him as a harvest.

Is plenteous- His preachers were like harvesters working in the very last hour to bring in the harvest- in fact, the harvest was spoiling because it's not being fully gathered. The fault for that lies with the weak efforts of the preacher-workers ("few" both in number and weakness, as the Greek means). This means that the ultimate degree of success of the Father's work with men to some degree depends upon us. There are people who would be gathered if there were more and stronger, better workers (not so "few"), but who will not be. To some extent the Father has delegated His work into our hands. He will not necessarily raise up another way of harvesting those people into His Kingdom if we fail Him. In this lies the power of the fact that *we* are the labourers who do the reaping in our Gospel work now; and yet it is the Angels who do this reaping at the last day (Mt. 13:39). This means surely that there is a direct correlation between whom *we* reap for the Lord now and who shall finally be gathered into His Kingdom by the Angels at the second coming. Our responsibility for others' eternity and the extent of God's glory on this earth is huge. The Lord Himself here prayed that more labourers would be sent forth into the harvest, but the real answer only came in the sending forth of labourers by the Father in the post-resurrection dispensation (Mt. 20:1). We are all commanded by the great commission at the end of Matthew to go forth and do this work.

Labourers- The parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Mt. 20:1-8) suggests that all who are called to the Gospel are called to be labourers in the harvest. The call is not to learn a few theological truths and preserve them, nor to slump into a culture of meeting attendance or churchianity. It is to labour in harvesting the great potential which there is in this world.

Few- The Greek means in both number and strength. The parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Mt. 20:1-8) suggests that many of those who are called for this work only work a few hours, they are standing idle a long time before being called. They are the weak, the lazy, the handicapped, the old, those with a bad work record, whom nobody wanted to hire. Most of the Lord's workers are like that- we shouldn't be surprised to find the Lord's workforce full of those who seem most unsuited to the work of harvesting others. The disciples were the labourers- for a few verses later we read that He sent them forth in His work with the comment that they were labourers who were worthy of their hire (Mt. 10:10). The Lord only had the 12, perhaps, because that was all there was in Israel able to do the job. And He asked them to pray that there would be more sent forth by the Father. This shows the blessing which will go behind the efforts to spread the Gospel to all the world in the last days. There is a fervent, *urgent* desire of the Lord for this, and so His blessing will surely be with all who catch the same spirit of urgency. According to the

parable of Lk. 14:23, the quality of converts is sacrificed (by the Lord, not us) for the sake of numbers- which connects with the idea that the coming of Christ is to some degree dependent upon the full number of the Gentiles being converted (Rom. 11:25). Likewise the drag net was brought to land once it was full of fish (Mt. 13:48). The Lord speaks of how "few" (the Greek implies physically weak, cp. the unwanted labourers in the market place) the labourers are (Mt. 9:37), and therefore more (numerically) are needed. Any lamentation about the weakness of the latter day ecclesia must be seen in this context; the Lord is desperate for the places at the supper to be filled, although woe to those who come in without a wedding garment (Mt. 22:12).

9:38 *Send forth*- The Lord is praying that the time of the great commission, the sending forth of God's people worldwide to reap the harvest, would be hastened. But it had to wait until after the Lord's resurrection because the disciples were not yet mature enough for it. The Lord *prayed* and urged others to pray, that the great commission would be given as soon as possible. With what eagerness, therefore, does He watch our fulfilment of it; and with what sadness therefore does He observe our negligence and even denial of it.