No. 62.

On the young man coming to Christ.
Matthew XX, 16-22. "And, behold, one came & said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, which? Jesus said, thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, honor thy father & mother, & thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, all these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus saith unto him, if thou wilt be perfect, go & sell what thou hast, give to the poor, & follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."
In this passage, indeed, we have a very interesting account of a very interesting conversation. There is something in the manner of the young man, who came to our house, with the question that opens the text, that I never expected to excite my attention. He seems to have been one of that class of characters, whose feelings are violent, yet liable to change, whose hearts are quickly moved, yet often so grieved that they would not be guided. He was probably one, whose wishes were stronger than his efforts, and who could desire better than he could do. He had met with the kindness and tenderness of God good. The story is in a most amiable light, when he comes with a description so appropriate from the heart, enquiring the best direction from the Lord, and enquiring the best direction from Jesus, who would direct him in that same path, as he had heard the heart inclined him. Such being his condition, and views, his application to Jesus is a subject of deep and tender interest. It was to him, from it, we may derive much valuable instruction, and I would therefore now call your attention to the several parts of the conversation recorded in the text...

1. Let us consider the question with which the young man commenced his inquiries: "Good Master, what thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" The question shows us, in the very outset, what feelings predominated in his heart: What was the interest in which he felt most deeply concerned... It is precisely..."
question, of one mind conscious, 
dissatisfied, aspiring to something better, of which, 
riches, than it had yet been able to find. The 
man did not enquire how he might obtain the 
means of gratifying his passions, how he might raise 
himself to distinction and power, how he might 
become the world's favorite, or make himself a successful com-
petitor in the race of ambition, giving the prize of 
earthly glory. He does not ask for health, or long 
life, or for those enjoyments which perish in the using. 
This mind seems not even to have been full of 
those grand hopes, nor was it the final expectation of 
the Jews to find realised under the reign of this 
Messiah. He seeks not a high place among those, 
who, it was supposed, would share the honour 
offices of the temporal kingdom of X. With some 
these ambitions, as worldly men we should 
have thought his mind would have been occu-
pied, when he came to Jesus, whose dominion even his disciples did not, as yet, understand to be 

a spiritual dominion. But it was not so. His 
were far nobler, & his desires far more pure. He was 
looking to something better, than any of those delu-
sions, which would brighten the scene beyond the grave, & 
his heart was animated by the wish to obtain an 
inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, & that fadeth not 
away. With such feelings, he comes with the question, 
"Lord! Master, what good thing shall I do, that 
I may have eternal life?" — And this question my 
teacher is as important to us, as it was to them. This 
is the enquiry, and its mainly & principally concerns 
as all to make. There are many things in whose may 
ought to be interested, in a greater or a less degree; but 
there is one thing in which alone we should feel that 
our deepest, & best, & most lasting interest is lodged, 
that is the object embraced by the question now be-
fore us. There are many blessings we may earnestly 
merly ask of God, but the blessing of eternal life 
transcends all others. We may ask, what we shall do 
that we may obtain a portion of the good things of 
the world? — Whereas our desires are pure & the pure.
object of the enquiry may be laudable, instead of deserving censure: the prospect of the reward may stimulate to industry, as well as those we know are the virtues of a man, no less than the qualities of a man of the world. We may ask what shall we do to gain wisdom. This enquiry too is well worthy of a claim upon our minds, especially if we prize wisdom, because it will enable us from a higher station, through a more exalted sphere, to diffuse the light of instruction among the treasures of knowledge. We may ask what shall we do to deserve the distinction of a good name and a fair reputation; this question too is a proper and important one. Without character we can do little good. If we have gained no hold in the esteem of others, how shall we ever an influence favorable to the welfare of society? These, and many other reasons, make it a duty, on the part of every individual, to inquire, as it were, in connection with the interests of the great family of our race, how may we best advance our own happiness? and even when we have obtained answers we have led to successful and satisfactory results, do we not feel that that object tends to make us have been conduct-
ed our thinking, while we secure them that the treasures they put into our possession are passing every moment from our sight? Do not feel that there is still a work to be filled up? that there are still some desires yearnings and these pleasing things cannot satisfy, which are constantly arising and striving for some thing better than has yet been attained? That certainly there is an object experient to every one of the of that quest is eternal life. After have reached creation through, I find that the immortal soul must go beyond earth for the fulfillment of its purposes, after we have seen that every thing here below may fail or deceive us, how then, shall we live? How can we be sure that God directs us to a higher and more enduring good? Then, if not before, we turn with anxiety, eagerness to that question, which involves interests of such tremendous consequence to each one of us. What good thing shall we do that we may have eternal life? Here then, this is the point around which we shall rally, here is the question which should be in every heart.

2. And how is this question answered? This seems to be a topic of consideration. Let us then listen to the
answer, wh. I gave to the earnest enquiry of this amiable young man. Jesus said unto him: "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God. But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." The first thing I observe in this reply, is that habit of devout reference to the Holy Name, in whose name the whole conduct of our Saviour was manifest in the whole conduct of our Saviour. Before giving a distinct and definite answer to the question proposed, he seized the occasion to direct the thoughts of the young man to that Infinite Being, who alone is worthy of the source of all goodness. "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God." How admirably do these words express that distinction of profound regard and deep reverence to God, which seems ever to have pervaded the breast of Jesus of Nazareth! Notwithstanding he was the chosen messenger of the Most High, he had come with his high and holy commission to teach us to serve mankind—notwithstanding he did what no man could not do, he spake as none never spake. Though he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Yet when he was salute to the title, "good master," instantly, instead of proudly availing himself of the distinction of his honorable appellation, he refers it to God, as belonging to his highest cause exclusively to him. By this, our Saviourintendoled us to that God alone is in his own nature essentially and necessarily good. It is that the goodness of all other beings is derived from him, as the stream is from the fountain. This he estimates is the case even with individualities to himself. By this truly acknowledging the superiority of this God, he has taught his followers in all ages to reflect on his example in this respect, as well as in others. After having thus instructed his disciples to look to God alone as supremely good, he proceeds directly to answer the question of the young man: "But," says he, "if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." "Jesus said, this "thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother."
Now, different his conduct in this respect from that of those in modern times. He ascribe to him supreme deity, represent him as equal to that God whom he has declared to be alone good.
there shall have thy neighbour as thyself. Here it is, we have an answer from thine own heart to that great question, "what shall we do that we may have eternal life?" And the answer is, "keep the commandments of God." This is a plain, simple, practical direction, but at the same time it means and is very large, as the obligations under which we are are deep and extensive. It imposes a settled and habitual reverence for God. And what is the object of reverence? We shall not obey his commands; it supposes godly, pure motives. For without these actions cannot be good nor pure; it supposes that our hearts are right with God, for otherwise our lives cannot be pleasing to him. Our Saviour assures us, "that a hope deferred maketh the heart of man bitter." And to the laws of God is necessary condition to the inheritance of eternal life, that if we would be happy hereafter, we must live well here. That if we would enjoy the rewards we must perform the work of faithful servants. Such are the terms in which salvation is offered to us. And go to prove what in fact is proved by every feature of the gospel dispensation, that the preparation for the faith, as well as the works, is strictly by being a moral preparation, that it consists in humbling our hearts to unqualified obedience to the will of god, and obedience to the laws. We are not to suppose, indeed, that these commands, which were pointed out particularly to the young man, are the only ones with which we are called upon to obey. To abstain from murder, adultery, theft, and slander at falsehood, to perform all the duties of filial affection to parents, to love our neighbour as ourselves, these, though insistent facts, are certainly not the whole of that obedience to the laws of God which is required. Nor did our Saviour place these several facts in our sight, intend to teach, that if we would observe strictly these injunctions, we might with safety neglect others. Far from it; his object was, among the numerous and different precepts of the law, to point out the sin of those who. The young man must obey, if he would fulfill the conditions of eternal life. It was not so much to show him to what
the how many commandments his obedience was due, as to show them the kind of commandments he must obey. When he knowing that the Jewish teachers made a distinction between the different parts of the law, enquired what precepts the must obey, the answer of x is the same as he had said. I do not direct you to the ceremonies, the sacrifices, the fasts, the ablations of the law, but to its moral precepts, to such precepts as these; then shall he do no more.

I did not intend to say, there are no other commandments to keep, but it is this kind of commandment, the moral, not the natural, which demands your obedience. Our Lord, then, much has laid down for us this simple rule: if we pass a life of sincerity, devout obedience to the word of life, we may hope for his favour hereafter. Now different is this from the terms of salvation so often laid down by men. If we enquire of them what we shall do that we may have eternal life, the answer in most cases would be, you must believe all the articles of our creed, you must shape your faith and your conscience to some standards: you must pass through certain stages of high expectancy. But if, otherwise you shall not taste the joys of the kingdom of heaven. Ointment is the answer of x if says be thou anointed with the commandments, conform yourself to the required virtues of godly walk in this world, y in the world to come, you shall be welcomed to the reward of a faithful servant.

3. We would remark when the next question of the young man: "all these things," says he, referring to the precepts which had mentioned, "all these things have kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?" This observation of this enquiry may have proceeded either from a dangerous spirit of self-complacency, or from a sincere and devout desire of better attainments. Further progress. If, from the former, it is certainly to be condemned as a mournful boast; if, from the latter, it deserves high praise: may there be any of all imitation. But whatever may have been the motives of the young man, certain it is, that the question, "what lack me yet?" should ever be in our hearts to our Lord: We can never arrive at any stage of attain-
ment, where this question will not be necessary. Whatever may be the virtues we have cherished, whatever good habits we may have formed, whatever good dispositions we may have cultivated—still there is always much, very much, more room before us, than we have already passed over; therefore our enquiries should be, what lack we yet? There are few, alas! very few, who with regard to the commandments of God can say with the young man in the text, "all these have I kept from my youth up." From many of the truths we acknowledge, we should hear the lamentable confession, "all these have we broken from our youth up." But even those, who have grown up under the most favorable circumstances, whose early life was spent in the purifying shade of a pious parent’s example, whose religious principles and feelings have been growing strength and spreading deeper into the heart with the advance of age—we, too, still feel how very defective is their best obedience, how infirm are their faintest services. They will soon see, that although their feet are already in the right course, much of the way lies before them still untraveled. Therefore, the question with them will be, not what have we done, but what lack we yet? Improvements, constant, strenuous, improvements, is the great duty of the soul. The is never at rest satisfied with what he has already attained, as accomplished a duty, but must press on, press on, without measure, without end. There is no stopping place in the path to heaven; you cannot rest; you must press on, you must press on, until your whole soul is engaged in the business of your own salvation. You must hold on in the path of course, your head to open soil with the question—what lack I yet?

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14—We come now to remark upon the last part of this conversation—by here we see a real concern in the feelings and views of the young man. "Jesus said unto him, if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor. Then shall thou have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me." But to whom the young man said that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he loved his possessions. Little probably did he think, that the question with he should first put to God, would receive
being an advanced, zealous, y active disciple of defiance of the new religion. Now to such an one, to one who is by expense, preached, & propagated. Yet at that time, it was necessary to make a sacrifice of wealth, worldly attachment. It therefore bids the young man sell what he has given to the poor, that thus he might more freely devote himself to the service of the poor. There were peculiar times of brought with them peculiar trials. We are not now called to such sacrifices, such privations; still how rare there is much for us to learn from the example of the young man in the respect. We may have passions, & fortunes, from which the love of treasures it, we may be unwilling to part, as he was to sell his great possessions; yet when we are called to some parts of our duty, we are more difficult is performs than others, we, like him, turn away sorrowful wish that we could be received on easier terms. We are very willing perhaps to follow our religion as far as we can go along with ease, or pleasure, but when the sky is overcast, the path is rough, we would not be permitted.

such an answer. The expected, perhaps, that you would, explained them for the attainment to be had, already made, instead of exciting them to still higher donor difficult sacrifices. It came to one soul with eagerness with high hopes, d dote, that with a more desire to be instructed, directed in the faith, but the one is now changed. he goes away and is sorrowful, because he is required to make an exception, too harmful, too costly. This was precisely the point, on which he did not expect a wish to be addressed; it was here, that he wished to be shared; this was the means, by which would join not have obscured... The moment, then, young men, to virtue. I have desires, and... seemed to be straining him in this breast, were touched at this point; they withdrew. Pedled away! I be who at first was the because of becoming a good store dispicable, returns again & dissatisfaction, to be accountedably the place of the world, subject to all the world’s bad influences. When our Lord tells him, if he would be perfect, to go, sell all that he has, give it to the poor, means to understand him, with a peculiar reference to the circumstances of these times. By going perfect, became
to turn aside. While duty and inclination agree, it is not so hard to be obedient & faithful, & with a
right hand to be cut off, if you right eye to be
blinded. Don't let us be, like some describles
spoken of in the time of X, go back ye all who
more with them. Though we are not required to sell
all that we have & give to the poor, yet let us not
surmise that we have nothing to devote to our conto
perform, we have our rebellious passions to hum-
ble & subdue; we have our perverse inclinations to am-
dicate — we have our inordinate desires to banish or to
repress, these things, if we would be true, we must do, though
it may cost us many a tear, many a bitter sigh.

We have thus far employed our thoughts in the
conversation between the young man & X, we have
seen that it is full of instruction. What became
of this young man we are not informed, probably he returns
to his great possessions, if gave himself up to all the tem-
itations of wealth & the indulgences of pleasure. We see
in him how easily even a good heart may be debased by
the want of resolution & the firmness, let us emulate
him in his zeal for instruction & guidance in the good

path, in his ardent desire to know what he should
do to inherit eternal life; but when we are called
to self-denial of the passions in the cause of duty, let
us not hate him, go away sorrowful; for certain it is
that if we are unwilling to make the sacrifice of
virtue & religion requisite in this world, we shall not
receive their compensation in the world to come. If a
recompence so bright & so glorious, oh who would
resist to lose?

May 1810.
'Now where our Master leads in the path of duty, 
suffering in this world, that we may hereafter 
with them in the joys of the Heavenly Kingdom, 
there shall be ye.'

At home, May 26th, 1820. - afternoon.
At Waltham, May 6, 1821. - afternoon.
At Weston, June 30, 1821. - forenoon.
At East Bridgewater, April 14, 1822. - afternoon.
At home, April 15, 1822. - afternoon.
At Dudley, June 23, 1822. - forenoon.
At home, Feb. 24, 1836. - forenoon.